PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 121

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1987-88

COMPRISING PERIOD
26 OCTOBER—6 NOVEMBER 1987

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26 October 1987

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 121**

FOURTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1987-88

House of Commons

Monday 26 October 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SELECTION

Ordered.

That Mr. David Alton be discharged from the Committee of Selection, and Mr. James Wallace be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Surplus School Places

1. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by Welsh local education authorities to reduce the number of surplus places in their schools.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The Department estimates that some 87,000 primary places and 32,000 secondary places remain surplus to requirements. I hope that authorities will come forward with proposals to the benefit of improved educational standards.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he confirm that it is vital, on both educational and financial grounds, to stop wasting money on empty desks and channel the money to more educationally valid purposes? Does he agree that if education authorities do not reduce expenditure on empty desks they will lay themselves open to challenge by ratepayers, through the district auditor, for wasting public money?

Mr. Roberts: On the last point, I certainly respect my hon. Friend's professional expertise in this business. The cost of the surpluses to which I have referred is about £17 million per annum in Wales. That money could, of course, be applied to better educational purposes.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Minister aware that in many parts of Wales the population is so sparse that spare places have been inevitable for the past 50 years? Is he further aware that Powys has only one child per 45 acres compared with one per two and a half acres in non-urban England? Does he agree that in comparing statistics the Audit Commission must be extremely careful to take account of sparsity factors when dealing with the education system?

Mr. Roberts: Of course I agree that sparsity of population must be taken into account, and I am sure that the Audit Commission does so.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that schools such as Lliswerry comprehensive in my constituency have to rely on school closures and so-called surplus places to obtain replacement desks and chairs because the existing ones are in such a shocking state? Does he agree that this is yet another example of a vital public service being starved of funds, to the long-term detriment of our children?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman should know that spending on education this year is a record high of £980 per pupil. He should also realise that we have recognised that capital expenditure is often necessary to effect rationalisation of schools. That is why we have increased the capital allocation to local authorities by a massive 18 per cent. this year.

North Wales Hospital

2. **Mr. Martyn Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to seek to replace the employment which will be lost in the Denbigh area following the closure of the North Wales hospital.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): If a substantial variation of service is proposed, Clwyd health authority will be required to consult local interests fully. In view of my possible future role, it would be improper for me to comment on the effects of the proposals at this time.

Mr. Jones: In view of that answer, will the right hon. Gentleman consider development area status for the vale of Clwyd, bearing in mind that rural Clwyd is surrounded by areas receiving assistance, including the Welsh Development Agency in Powys and assisted area status for the urban areas to the west?

Mr. Walker: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's suggestion and these matters are, of course, kept under review. There is, however, quite a lot going on in the area. For example, there are five WDA factories ready for occupation. Unemployment has fallen in the past 12 months, and I hope that it will continue to do so. I believe that the substantial improvements to the A55 will also be of considerable importance.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware of the widespread anger in North Wales at the panic hospital closures which are being further considered by Gwynedd health authority even this afternoon as we sit here, and that there will be a loss of some 150 jobs in the programme, many of them within the catchment area of the North Wales hospital? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that no such closures take place without reference to a long-term coherent strategy? If the health authority asks for a meeting with him to discuss financial difficulties, will he agree to that?

Mr. Walker: We are in constant touch with all health authorities and are always ready to have meetings with them on those subjects. We have had meetings with that health authority. I understand that it is meeting today to consider proposals drawn up by the general manager. I shall have to consider any proposals that are made subsequently. I know that the hon. Gentleman is particularly interested in Caernarfon cottage hospital. I have been told today that the health authority is not now being advised to close it on a temporary basis. Instead, the future of the hospital is being considered in the longer term. If any proposal is made for the longer-term closure of such a hospital it has to go through the full route of inquiries and eventually is subject to my consideration.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

3. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in each of the past three years at constant prices.

15. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total of grants paid to voluntary bodies in Wales in 1978-79 and in the latest available financial year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): Welsh Office grants for voluntary bodies including those made under the urban programme and joint finance arrangements, totalled some £8·44 million for the 1986-87 financial year. The comparable figures for 1978-79, 1984-85 and 1985-86 are about £3·46 million, some £6·43 million and some £6·93 million respectively at constant prices.

Mr. Knox: I welcome the increase in the real value of those grants. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a cost-effective form of expenditure and should be further increased?

Mr. Grist: The expenditure certainly has been increased — it has increased by 143 per cent. since the Government came to power. It is certainly cost-effective. It answers the real human need of those who receive benefit from the voluntary organisations and those who contribute to their work and financing.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that the work done by voluntary organisations such as the Urban Ministry is invaluable, that such work cannot be matched by official bodies and that it should be encouraged further as part of the inner cities initiative? By how much has the urban programme increased in grants to voluntary organisations? Will my hon. Friend continue to look sympathetically at all applications for carrying on the work of the Urban Ministry?

Mr. Grist: A large number of bids are in at the moment, which are being considered. All such bids are considered seriously. The urban programme support for the voluntary sector has increased from some £600,000 a year to £2·8 million a year since we came to office.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister says that there has been an increase of 150 per cent. in grants to voluntary bodies and charities. Is it not true that more people in Wales need help from voluntary bodies and charities because the Government are not doing their job?

Mr. Grist: Not at all, because the Government's expenditure on social services, health, education and everything else has been rising faster than inflation and the growth of the economy.

Mr. Thomas: Will the Minister look particularly at the applications from Welsh Women's Aid, in view of the essential service provided by that voluntary body in reducing the amount of violence against women and ensuring the welfare of children in Wales?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman mentions a movement that I personally have always supported, and indeed, so have the Government. Since 1979-80 we have provided substantial programme support for the operational costs of women's refuges in Wales. In 1987-88 alone we are providing over £150,000 in support for that purpose. The running costs of Welsh Women's Aid are currently grant-aided separately by the Welsh Office. That grant has risen from £8,000 in 1978-79 to £70,000 in 1987-88.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is not an additional factor the development of several new voluntary bodies of this character, which formerly were on a United Kingdom basis and now tend to be on a Welsh basis?

Mr. Grist: Yes. That is occurring to some extent. Under certain programmes, such as the urban programme and some of our other funding, it is necessary for those bodies to have a Welsh basis in order to receive assistance through the Welsh Office.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister consider the effect on the voluntary sector in Wales of forthcoming changes in the community programme regulations which may make it much more difficult for the voluntary sector to maintain the level of activitiy, even with increased levels of direct grant? The community pogramme changes now being proposed will impoverish the voluntary sector by far more than the Government's direct urban aid support has enriched it.

Mr. Grist: I can best answer the hon. Gentleman by asking him to write and let me know precisely what he has in mind. I do not recognise any Government programmes that will damage the voluntary sector.

Water Quality

4. **Mr. Win Griffiths** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Welsh water authority to comply in full with directive 76 160 EEC on the water quality standards of designated bathing waters.

Mr. Grist: In 1986 the Welsh water authority embarked upon its 15 year programme of improvements and remedial works to enable listed bathing waters to meet the conditions specified in the EC directive. In 1986, 23 of the 47 listed bathing waters already met the required standard.

Mr. Griffiths: Is the Minister aware that the European Commission is deeply dissatisfied with the British Government's failure to operate the directive since 1976? Is he further aware of any discussions that are taking place between the Commission and the Government that will demand that bathing waters in Wales and elsewhere be brought up to standard in less than 10 years? In the case of Wales, where it will cost about £200 million at current prices to bring the bathing waters up to standard, that will not be done over a 15-year period, but could be done in even less than five years if the Commission went to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Grist: It seems unlikely that we are in any difficulty with the European Commission on that programme.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my hon. Friend assure me that the Government's proposals for the privatisation of water will in no way diminish the already far from adequate investment programme to clean up the beaches?

Mr. Grist: They will certainly not have any such effect as my hon. Friend fears. It is proposed that the national rivers authority will be responsible for the quality of coastal waters and will, of course, take over the responsibilities of the Welsh Water Authority in that respect.

Opencast Mining

5. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he adopts when dealing with applications for opencast mining in Wales by both the public and private sectors.

Mr. Grist: Applications for planning permission which come before my right hon. Friend are considered on their merits having regard to the provisions of the relevant development plans and all other material considerations, including Government policy as published in circulars or elsewhere.

The current guidelines are in Welsh Office circular 13/84. They are under review.

Mr. Coleman: No doubt the Secretary of State used those criteria in recent announcements about opencast mining. He now has in his possession a report from his inspector concerning Ynys Ffarch Fawr farm, in the Dulais valley. May we expect that the same criteria will be applied to that, particularly as the amount of coal that is to be extracted is insignificant—20,000 tonnes—and the amount of employment is almost non-existent — six people? Will the Minister give an assurance that the same kind of consideration will be given to this application as to those announced this week?

Mr. Grist: Certainly. The application of the criteria will be the same in every case.

Mr. Ray Powell: I thank the Minister for his decision about the Llanilid West site in Pencoed. This area has been devastated by opencast mining for some years. I am glad to put on record my thanks for the decision not to proceed with further development in the opencast mining area of Brynna, Llanharan and Llanilid in Pencoed.

Mr. Grist: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said. It is an area that I know well, having lived close to it in years past.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister accept my thanks, too, for the decision announced on Friday on the Brynhenllys site on the upper Swansea valley, where development would have been intolerable because it went into the Brecon Beacons and was also alongside a close-knit community? Will he also condemn wild statements that were made on Friday by the management of the opencast executive, which stated that the decision would have a devastating effect on deep mining, when it is well known that the criteria for deep mining are applied on a pit-by-pit basis?

Mr. Grist: The spokesman's response was possibly one of grave disappointment, of the same intensity as the hon. Gentleman's thanks, which are well received on the Government side.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that, outside times of emergency, opencast coal mining should be restricted as far as possible to areas of dereliction and should not be allowed where it would destroy grade 1, 2 or 3A agricultural land or distinctive historic landscapes that can never be restored, only rehabilitated?

Mr. Grist: Those considerations are certainly taken into account now and will be in the future.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that he is still failing to inform the House about what he is doing to maintain the high standards of health, safety and environmental protection in the working of small sites? What is being done about the long-standing grievance of opencast workers that their terms of employment should compare with the terms of people employed in deep mining?

Mr. Grist: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the point that there is employment in opencast mining and that many hundreds, indeed, thousands of jobs depend on it. That is one of the other aspects that must be taken into consideration when these matters are brought forward.

Gwynedd (Unemployment)

6. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress in reducing unemploymentt in Gwynedd.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since January 1986 the unemployment rate in Gwynedd has fallen by 4·4 percentage points, the largest such fall for any county in Wales. While the present rate remains too high, this fall confirms that the Government's policies are contributing to a real and worthwhile improvement in the economy of the area.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State accept that unemployment levels over large parts of Gwynedd, which generally do not have development area status, are higher than in areas such as Clwyd, which have it? Does he also accept that areas such as Arfon, in the Audit Commission's Shaw classification of social deprivation, categorise themselves with areas such as Merthyr Tydfil? Should there not be a review of regional policy within Wales to ensure that more finance is injected to overcome the unemployment problems in Gwynedd?

Mr. Walker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's viewpoint, but, as I am sure he knows, while one must obviously constantly review these matters, if one is changing the map at frequent intervals it makes for an impossible regional policy. There are other ways and methods by which we can give help to an area. Help can be given by, for example, the activities of the Welsh Development Agency. I am glad to say that at the moment there are six WDA units available for letting and that 32 further units are under construction or planned.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to attract employment to Gwynedd and, indeed, to other parts of Wales is by inward investment and that on the face of it it is better to have inward investment from EC countries, where we are likely to get a share of the research and development and do not run the risk of subsidiaries being shut down when there is a recession, than from Japan or the United States.

Mr. Walker: I have no desire to distinguish between one form of inward investment and another. I am in favour of them all on the maximum that they can be encouraged. My hon. Friend mentioned Japan. It is operating a considerable investment programme into Europe and I am anxious to see that the Principality gets more than its share of that inward investment programme. I agree with my hon. Friend that there is now a great deal of European interest in United Kingdom markets, and I am anxious to see European companies attracted to Wales.

Mr. Foot: In the case of Gwynedd and other hard hit areas in Wales, is it right that the Government are now undertaking a fresh review of regional policy? Will the Minister give an undertaking to consult Welsh hon. Members before he introduces such a review, because every previous change in regional policy introduced by this Government has hit the parts of Wales that were already hardest hit? Will he consider in any such review the re-introduction of the special development area status which some of the hardest hit areas had and which was taken away by his predecessor?

Mr. Walker: In the past 16 months unemployment in Wales has fallen by more than in another part of the United Kingdom. I welcome that. I have considerable flexibility in the regional programme. The Principality requires maximum flexibility, and any regional programme to which I agree will have flexibility and, I hope, an increasing volume of expenditure in the future.

Public Fund Management

Mrs. Clywd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now respond to the Public Accounts Committee's recent report criticising the management of public funds in relation to several Welsh institutions.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government will respond to the Committee of Public Accounts' report in the usual way. A Treasury minute will be published on 28 October.

Mrs. Clywd: Is the Secretary of State aware that the accounts of the National museum of Wales were not available for scrutiny by the Court of Governors on Thursday because they still have not been passed by the Welsh Office? Will he tell us when those accounts will be available? Does he agree with the Public Accounts Committee that the Welsh Office has been totally irresponsible and complacent in failing to oversee a considerable amount of public money, when the people of Wales are crying out for money to be spent on education, housing, health and employment?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her pre-briefing of her supplementary, which appeared in the *Western Mail* this morning. I am as anxious as she is to ensure the maximum efficiency in all public expenditure, be it the National museum of Wales, the health authorities or the local authorities. We decided that independent consultants should be appointed to carry out the financial management and policy review on the national museum. They were appointed in September, proceeded with all due speed, and are expected to report by the end of the year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the National museum of Wales has put forward discussion proposals for streamlining its court and its council? Has he noticed that effectively the first part of its proposal would be to remove from its council the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)?

Mr. Walker: I have not made any such observation.

Mr. Alan Williams: Will the Minister ensure that the consultants report not just on the conduct of the national museum authority but on the conduct of the Welsh Office? Does he recognise that salaries make up the major element of the costs of the museum, and is he aware that those Civil Service salaries are set not by the museum authority but by the Government? Will he bear in mind that virtually the whole of the shortfall that has been commented upon publicly has arisen from the failure of the Government and in particular his predecessor to make provision from public funds for the salary increases that the Government have awarded?

Mr. Walker: I do not agree with that conclusion. I believe, as I think the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) believes, that there is scope for better general and financial management of the museum. The portion of blame with any Government Department as the monitoring Department is something of a delicate nature. If one interferes too much with the detail one is accused of running the national musuem, which the Welsh Office has no desire to do. On the other hand, if one accepts statements as to predictions that then do not take place, one is blamed when they do not take place. It is quite a delicate relationship. All I can say is that in my meetings with the National museum there is a determination to implement the best and most successful financial and general managerial systems, and I hope that that will result.

Student Grants

8. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the levels of grants to students in higher and further education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the last 12 months my right hon. Friend has received 29 representations on matters relating to grants for students in higher and further education.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Minister of State not accept that now is the time for him, as the Minister responsible for most of further and higher education in Wales, to look at the whole pattern of student support and also at the funding of places? Is it not time that we were able to plan the whole of post-16 education in Wales as one unit?

Mr. Roberts: I think the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government are carrying out a review of student grants and that there will be a Green Paper in due course. With regard to looking at the whole of the area, the Welsh advisory body is extremely helpful and is collaborating with the university sector.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that most people who go on to university derive enormous financial benefits as a result of their study, and that some system of grants and loans might be fairer to the rest of the community?

Mr. Roberts: I do not think that it would be wise for me to anticipate the contents of the Green Paper.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister look carefully at the effect on county education budgets of the financial pressures from central Government in respect of discretionary postgraduate grants? In some cases, counties cannot give grants for postgraduate legal education, thus restricting access to the barrister profession to those whose parents have the necessary money.

Mr. Roberts: I had not noticed a shortage of barristers. We have increased the rate support grant, from which such discretionary grants are made, by 15 per cent. per pupil up to last year.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister realise that his first answer, in which he prevaricated on the issue of possible student loans, will cause great disquiet within education circles? Will he bear in mind that students have already had a 21 per cent. cut in their spending power under this Administration? The minimum grant has been abolished, the grant in respect of their costs of travelling to college has been eroded and there has been the presumption of the 207 per cent. increase in the utterly hypothetical parental contribution. Does the Minister realise that there will be grave concern, in the context of a review that is about to take place and in view of his words, because the Government are seen as being not only disinterested in student affairs but as being positively and actively vindictive in their opposition and antipathy towards students?

Mr. Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman should be aware that, between 1985 and 1990, we plan to increase student numbers by 5 per cent. I do not understand how he can say what he did. I must point out to him that this year the student grant increased in line with inflation. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that our grants compare favourably with those available in most other countries. It is certainly not for me to anticipate the contents of the Green Paper.

Sir Raymond Gower: Would it not be a good idea to make second postgraduate degrees, after a primary degree has been obtained, the subject of student loans? That was the recommendation some years ago from an education sub-committee of which I was a member. Will my hon. Friend consider it?

Mr. Roberts: There is much to be said for student loans of some sort, and I am sure that the matter will be dealt with in the Green Paper.

School Class Sizes

9. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to provide resources for local education authorities to limit class sizes to a maximum of 25.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No, Sir. Class sizes are a matter for determination by local education authorities in response to local circumstances.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that such disingenuous answers fool no one, least of all the British public? Half the money provided by local education authorities comes from the Government and the other half is strictly controlled by the Government in the form of rate support grant. Instead of talking about surplus places, why does the Minister not take a leaf out of the book of the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who has promised that by next April no one in need of an urgent operation will have to wait for more than a month, and no one in need of a non-urgent operation will have to wait for more than a year? Why can he not produce a simple, straightforward, easily understood criterion for the level and quality of class sizes in Wales? If 25 is too small, will he accept 30?

Mr. Roberts: The reason why I will not be led along that path is that life is not as simple as the hon. Gentleman makes it out to be. He is asking us to impose a policy on local education authorities — [*Interruption.*] I hear the cries of Opposition Members. They reinforce what I have said, that it is not for us to impose the sort of policy that the hon. Gentleman would wish us to impose on local authorities. There may be perfectly acceptable educational reasons for the wide variations in class sizes within a local education authority. The hon. Gentleman will find his question thoroughly discussed in the recent HMI report on the effects of local authority expenditure on education policy.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister extend his reluctance to place constraints and impose policies on local authorities with regard to class size to other aspects of education and non-educational activities such as housing? Is he aware that the answer that he gave earlier expressing a reluctance to impose policies will cause amazement among local authorities, which experience the imposition of policies every day of the week?

Mr. Roberts: This question is about education. The fact is—and we should not forget this—that we have the best pupil-teacher ratio in Wales at the present time, at 17·5 pupils per teacher. We should be proud of that, and that should not be the cause of over-large classes.

Mold Bypass

12. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the up-to-date position in regard to the proposed Mold bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The result of the traffic surveys undertaken earlier this year have been analysed and further investigations undertaken. These have revealed possible solutions to the traffic problems at Mold in addition to those considered at public consultation early this year. I propose to consult local interests about these alternatives before announcing a preferred route.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Welsh Office will be responding to the following local needs: the need for a line of route acceptable to the residents of Mynydd Isa; the need for an effective solution where the bypass intersects with the A541 so that we do not have traffic congestion along the Chester road and up Wylfa hill; the need for a slip road from the bypass into the Mold business park and most important of all, the need for an early start on the construction of the bypass so that Mold is not disadvantaged in job creation terms in relation to Wrexham and Alyn and Deeside, where road improvements have been proceeding more speedily?

Mr. Roberts: I am sure that all the points made by my hon. Friend will be taken into account before we arrive at a decision. Certainly the April survey proved that there was a need for a bypass and a roundabout at the junction with the A541. We intend, subject to satisfactory procedures and the availability of money, to make a start on the bypass within the time band—that is, before December 1990.

Inward Investment

13. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the progress to date of inward investment in Wales; and what are the latest figures of inquiries by overseas companies.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since WINvest was established in April 1983 to attract inward investment to Wales, a total of 207 projects have been secured from overseas involving over 24,000 jobs and over £760 million of capital investment. WINvest is dealing with many inquiries at the present time.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it not a fact that under successive Governments and particularly under Conservative Governments since 1979, this has been the greatest success story in the whole of the Welsh economy? Does my right hon. Friend expect that success to continue?

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to say that in recent months we have had visitors from overseas companies averaging three every four working days. My hon. Friend is probably aware that in a few weeks' time I will be going to Japan where I will meet representatives of many companies interested in investing in Wales.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Minister said earlier with regard to inward investment that he had considerable flexibility. Does not that claimed flexibility make the recent loss of 300 jobs in the Cotton Mill project look hamfisted, maladroit or positively incompetent on the Welsh Office's part? Will he bear in mind that from the outset the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Office knew very well that that project was interested in a site either in Swansea or one in Dundee, but in no other site? The project lost the site to Scotland. Will he bear in mind that there is considerable bitterness in Swansea and Wales that those jobs were lost to Dundee in response to the very development area grants that the Government took from Swansea when they carried out the last review of regional policy?

Mr. Walker: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman spoke as he did. I agree that he spoke in the same tone as that of the leader of the Swansea council. This morning I met representatives of Tootal, who confirmed to me that they have made no decision whatsoever about the siting of the plant. Therefore, I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman check his facts for once. I hope that he will also carefully consider the fact that the so-called incompetent Welsh Office, to which he constantly refers, has made an offer in the Swansea area amounting to between £7·5 million and £9 million. The Chinese firm and its British partners are willing to put in only £4·6 million. I think that the right hon. Gentleman should more carefully consider how wise it is to spend Government money to the benefit of Swansea.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

14. **Mr. Butler** asked the Secretary of State for Wales by what percentage his Department has increased its annual grant to Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1979-80 support for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin has increased by 304 per cent., an increase in real terms of 132 per cent.

Mr. Butler: I greatly welcome my hon. Friend's reply. Will he join me in paying tribute to the excellence of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, which does wonderful work in promoting the cause of the Welsh language? Does it not underline the Government's commitment to the future of the Welsh language?

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in commending the work of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Since 1979, we have enabled it to increase its groups from 280 to 720. Its full-time staff numbers have increased from seven to 11. It is doing a first-class job. It is typical of many voluntary organisations which, with Government support, are working for the Welsh language.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Visits

20. **Mr. Favell** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his last official visit to the Duchy.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): My last official Duchy duties outside London took place on 24 July, when I received her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh on the Duchy estate at Crewe. Also, that evening, I hosted a reception given for 250 magistrates at the start of their summer conference at Lancaster university.

Mr. Favell: My right hon. and learned Friend will always be welcome in the north-west. His honest and forthright manner is well appreciated. When he makes his next visit, will he please travel by air from London to Manchester? As he is ushered to his seat by a young stewardess in British Airways blue or British Caledonian tartan, will he contemplate what would be the effects on that excellent service if all competition were removed? When he gets to Manchester, now British Airways' second most important base, will he consider how bad the effects would be if Lord King, through British Caledonian, got his hands on Gatwick, unless all Manchester's licensing restraints were swept away and true competition were allowed to permit that excellent airport to develop its full potential?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that I visit Manchester fairly regularly and try to keep in touch with, among other things, the working of the inner city task force in Moss-side. I usually go by train; I rarely fly—I apologise for that. The Government have given considerable support to Manchester airport in recent years and will continue to do so. However, my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot possibly comment on the proposed merger between BA and BCal until we have the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in our hands.

21. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people are currently employed by the Duchy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sixty one, Sir.

Mr. Thurnham: When my right hon. and learned Friend next visits the Duchy to see employment there, perhaps he will stop en route, whether he travels by rail or air, and see what is happening in Bolton. Will he see for himself the large investment schemes which are creating many thousands of jobs and which are justifying Bolton's claim to be the most enterprising town in Britain?

Mr. Clarke: It must be over a year since my hon. Friend last persuaded me to visit Bolton to see one of the schemes which he was promoting and which was encouraging employment for long-term unemployed people in the town. I welcome the opportunity of going there again as soon as I can and seeing the continued work of Bolton Business Venture, the enterprise agency, and that of my hon. Friend. I am delighted that all the efforts are paying off. I am told that unemployment in the Bury and Bolton travel-to-work area is 2·4 per cent. down on the level 12 months ago, althought we all appreciate that it has to go much further.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Rating Reform

22. **Mr. Allen** asked the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what representations the commissioners have made in relation to the effects on the staff of the church for which they are responsible of the proposed poll tax.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The Church Commissioners have worked closely with the churches main committee, which has made representations to Her Majesty's Government on behalf of all the major denominations. Those representations have emphasised the loss of charitable relief on domestic rates and the serious financial implications of the proposed community charge for the churches.

Mr. Allen: Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Church Commissioners to congratulate the Government on doing what many thought was impossible—uniting Jew, Hindu, Muslim and Christian under one banner against the threat of this unjust poll tax on their churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and all places of worship? Will he also make representations to ensure that the Bible, the Koran, and other religious works will not be hit by the VAT which the Government will allow to be imposed on all written documents?

Mr. Alison: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman prepared his supplementary question before he heard my reply. If he had waited he would have learnt that the churches main committee is consulting the Government to see whether some relief can be made available to the churches. The hon. Gentleman's supplementary, which he composed in advance of my reply, is therefore redundant.

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the staff and others involved in the churches have a vote in local authority matters and enjoy the services provided by local authorities in a measure equal to other citizens? Does he therefore agree that it is only equitable and just that all people in a local authority area should be able to vote and should pay their share?

Mr. Alison: That is a very fair comment. Clergy do not pay domestic rates and they will not pay the community charge. The community charge will be paid on their behalf by the churches, and that is one of the reasons why we are consulting the Government.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office (Staff)

25. **Mr. Allen** asked the right hon. Member for Ashton under Lyme, answering on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission, if he will give details of the occasions since 1984 when the Public Accounts Commission has modified, under section 4(2) of the National Audit Act 1983, the estimate prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General so as to provide for an increase in the number of staff employed in the National Audit Office.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission): I have been asked to reply on this occasion.

The Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General have consistently agreed on the desirability of planned expansion of staff numbers in the NAO. In consequence, there was no need for the commission to modify any of the estimates laid before it under the National Audit Act by the C and AG.

Mr. Allen: Will my right hon. Friend list those PAC reports for which the Government still have not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman refer briefly to his notes rather than reading from them?

Mr. Allen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the failure to put the reports before the House is a denial of parliamentary scrutiny? Does my right hon. Friend concede that if additional staff were available for the National Audit Office the House could scrutinise the expenditure of the nationalised industries, M15 and M16, as well as the special employment schemes, which do not currently come within the PAC remit?

Mr. Sheldon: It is, of course, a fact that the National Audit Office has difficulty in recruiting and keeping its staff, mainly because of the salary levels offered in the City, among other places. We have the further problem that nationalised industries lie outside our remit, as defined by the National Audit Act. What we can do is to ask the sponsoring Departments to come before us so that we can question them. However, we do not have direct entry into the nationalised industries? Some people think that that is a pity, but legislation is required to enable the PAC and the National Audit Office to have that entry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate Sir Gordon Downey on his retirement? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the feeling abroad that Sir Gordon's successor should come from outside the Civil Service and from the private sector? If the problem of attracting anyone from the private sector is pay, will my right hon. Friend put it to the Prime Minister that the salary scale for the Comptroller and Auditor General should be substantially increased so that we can attract people of the calibre necessary to ensure that the Department is run effectively?

Mr. Sheldon: I am happy to pay tribute to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, who has been outstanding and a most effective Officer of the House of Commons. He set up the National Audit Office in a way which has commended itself to the whole of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts Commission. In relation to his replacement, there are problems about salary levels which are different in the public service from those which apply outside. That has caused some problems of which my hon. Friend will be aware. These are matters for further negotiation.

Mr. McAllion: My right hon. Friend seemed to suggest that there would be no independent audit for important nationalised industries such as the British Steel Corporation. That being so, how can we have faith in the assessment of performance of plants within the corporation, such as Ravenscraig, other than by believing what we are told by Ministers or BSC management? As it is widely held in Scotland that both BSC management and Ministers are intent on the closure of Ravenscraig, how can we have faith in any assessment that Ravenscraig is losing money compared with any other BSC plant?

Mr. Sheldon: Accountability lies with the Minister of the sponsoring Department coming to the House of Commons. As I said earlier, the Comptroller and Auditor General does not have direct rights to investigate the books and accounts of those nationalised industries. It would require further legislation to do that. Of course, that could be done by a private Member's Bill, if one were considered, but how far it would proceed in the House would be something for the Leader of the House and others to take into account.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cancer Screening

26. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will arrange to provide cancer screening facilities for all those who work in the Palace of Westminster.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I see no reason to go against the unanimous advice of the Services Committee in 1986, when it recommended that on-site cancer screening facilities should not for the time being be provided for women working at the Palace. Female staff are encouraged to undergo regular screening, using the facilities that exist in the community.

Mr. Rooker: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his answer, but I do not accept it. Following the report published in February last year, it was discovered that the local screening facilities would not accept block bookings, and given the unsocial hours involved, the three-month waiting list is not good enough, as women cannot then use the recess. Given that Reckitt and Coleman, ICI, Plessey, Rowntree, British Bakeries and Birds Eye all provide on-site cancer screening facilities, why cannot we, as collective employers of all the female staff who work in the Palace, seek to open up the issue once again? Frankly, having read the report, as did many of my hon. Friends, in my view the matter was not gone into in sufficient detail, given the inquiries that were made afterwards.

Mr. Wakeham: It is always possible to look at these things again. As the hon. Gentleman may know, an on-site screening programme will be provided in mid-November for the female staff of another place. Those results will be studied with interest. We shall also await a full evaluation of an experimental screening programme for women civil servants in Cardiff funded by the Council of Civil Service Unions.

Mrs. Clwyd: Given that the facilities are not available in the community, although the Lord Privy Seal seems to think that they are, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should look at the latest statistics, which show that the Government's programme will not be on stream by March 1988. What are women supposed to do in the meantime —die?

Mr. Wakeham: I am advised that all health authorities, including Riverside, which covers the Westminster area, are expected to have implemented computerised call and recall systems for cervical screening by next spring.

Members (Accommodation)

27. **Mr. Wray** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he has recently visited the working accommodation of hon. Members in the Cloisters.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Wray: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that working conditions in the House are deplorable? In our room in the Cloisters we must stand on top of the writing desk to open a window, we have 5½ sq yd of working floor space, and our research assistants and secretaries must run like greyhounds from St. Stephen's to carry papers to and fro. Has the right hon. Gentleman considered that the room of the former hon. Member for Billericay is still lying empty, while my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is wandering about like Moses? Because of the build-up in frustration among hon. Members, we are thinking about taking over where Guy Fawkes left off.

Mr. Wakeham: It is almost a prerequisite for holding my present job to have had a desk for a time in the Cloisters, as I did some years ago. I accept that accommodation is not fully adequate, but the provision of adequate accommodation for hon. Members and their secretaries is not a new problem. Many hon. Members will, I am sure, agree that the facilities have been greatly improved in the last 15 to 20 years. For instance, we now have 417 desks for secretaries, compared to 199 in 1971; we have 262 single rooms for Members, compared to 164 in 1971; and we have 705 Members' writing desks, compared to 525 in 1971. As the hon. Gentleman will know, work is in hand to improve the facilities further.

Sir Dudley Smith: Echoing what has just been said, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend is aware that some of us are extremely pleased with the progress that has been made by him, and by his predecessors on both sides of the House who have been Leaders of the House, in providing accommodation, given the limitations of the building and its immediate area? Does he accept, however, that one difficulty ought to be attended to in due course; namely, that secretaries of Members in different parties share rooms? In the interests of hon. Members on both sides of the House, should they not be segregated wherever possible?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly take note of my hon. Friend's last point. I am grateful to him, as will be those members of the staff of the House who are working very hard to try to improve the position in what are, admittedly, difficult circumstances.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Leader of the House not agree that, even if we accept that the new Secretary of State for Social Services needs a vast horde of civil servants to look after him in the Richmond terrace development, the space not taken up by the Department of Health and Social Security could provide single rooms for at least 36 Members of Parliament immediately, as well as space for their secretarial staff? Does he not agree that it would be better to use that surplus space for them than to use it for a few assorted staff from the Cabinet Office, the Welsh Office and the Inland Revenue, as is at present intended?

Mr. Wakeham: It was never intended that Richmond terrace should be available for Members and staff. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that a major scheme for new parliamentary accommodation is already in progress on the site adjoining the Palace.

28. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the office accommodation of hon. Members and of hon. Member's secretaries.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my predecessor gave him on 9 February 1987. The situation has not changed significantly since then, but I hope that it will be eased with the completion of Cannon row, which is expected in 1988.

Mr. Harry Greenway Like everyone else, I welcome improvements in conditions for hon. Member's secretaries. However, I would ask for much greater improvements. Secretaries often have to work with an impossible shortage of space, and against cacophonic noise from the typewriters of other secretaries in the office. How can they answer telephones and hold proper conversations in such conditions? Could offices be soundproofed, and could county hall be brought into the operation?

Mr. Wakeham: Responsibility for the disposal of county hall falls to the London residuary body, not to the Government. However, I am sure that the Services Committee will take into account all the available buildings in the vicinity of the Palace of Westminister when considering ways of improving accommodation facilities. I shall certainly discuss with the Services Committee the point that my hon. Friend has raised.

Scottish Law Officers

29. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will review the arrangements for the accountability to the House of the Scottish Law Officers.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the written answer by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfries (Sir H. Monro) on 26 June 1987.

Mr. Wallace: The Lord Privy Seal will be well aware of the admittedly not unprecedented, but nevertheless unsatisfactory, position in which neither of the Scottish Law Officers is personally accountable in the House. Does he not accept that it is most regrettable that that unsatisfactory position has been compounded by the fact that we no longer have a specified period, such as the last 10 minutes of Scottish Question Time, in which the Ministers designated to answer questions on behalf of the Law Officers can be called to account? At present, all questions to the Law Officers go into the ballot, and it may be months before there is an opportunity to air some very sensitive and important issues in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: The same practice has been adopted as on previous occasions when there were no Scottish Law Officers in the House. Questions to the Lord Advocate have an equal chance, with others, of receiving an oral answer, and the time allocated to Scottish Questions is unchanged. I believe that to be generally acceptable to the House, although I recognise that the hon. Gentleman does not accept that to be so.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

VAT

23. **Mr. Chapman** asked the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the cost to the Church Commissioners in respect of the value added tax charged on the repairs of their buildings in the last year; and what effect this has had on their programme for the repair of such buildings.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The Church Commissioners paid over £½m VAT on building repairs in 1986. This adds to the overall cost of repairs and takes up funds which might otherwise be used for the support of the clergy.

Mr. Chapman: Nearly three quarters of Church of England churches are listed. As it is generally accepted that the most beneficial thing that could be done to promote the conservation of listed buildings would be to remove VAT on repairs and as Government Ministers are hiding behind the excuse that they cannot change this because they are tied to European Community regulations, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Church Commissioners ought to get their act together with their counterparts in EEC countries and impress upon the European Commission and the European Parliament the need for change? Is it not appropriate that that should be done in this European Architectural Heritage Year?

Mr. Alison: I have a very great deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend's desire that the churches should have more funds with which to pay stipends and that they should have to contribute less to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I am bound to tell him that as the approaches to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in respect of obtaining a reduction have hitherto proved fruitless, the idea of leading a successful campaign to the European Community, involving all the churches and others, is an even more daunting and, I suspect, an even more profitless, prospect.

Mr. Frank Larsen and Others (Prosecution)

3.31 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision to stop the prosecution proceedings against Frank Larsen and others."

The Attorney-General made a statement to the House on Friday. Although he answered a number of very serious questions that were asked, he left many unanswered. Indeed, he provoked many more — not least the involvement of our security services and the South African security services. One accepts that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not necessarily in a position to answer the questions that were put to him, but they must be answered to the satisfaction of the House, not least because this weekend the Sunday press carried quite clear and attributable statements about a major difference, if not a disagreement, between the anti-terrorist squad and MI5. For example, *The Observer* said:

"After MI5 was consulted on 12 October, officers of the Director of Public Prosecutions' special case work division met Superintendent Talbot. They told him to drop the case and release the men . . . The anti-terrorist squad clearly disagreed: as late as 15 October its officers were pressing on with inquiries in the hope of reversing the decision."

We have to place these events against the background of international attacks on the African National Congress in the last few years, the bombing of the ANC offices in London and the arson attacks upon the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London. Those last two incidents could have resulted in very serious injuries, if not in loss of life. I am sure that Conservative Members would not want British subjects who are working in the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which is a legitimate organisation, to suffer injury.

I highlight those two incidents because they could have resulted in loss of life, but there is a tremendous list of incidents against these two organisations and others. Very important, urgent and specific issues are involved in this case. Only a public and open debate can ensure that those outside this Chamber who are representatives of legitimate organisations are not lifted off the streets of London and possibly assassinated, or bombed out of their offices.

If our security forces were not involved and the head of the security services, the Prime Minister, is satisfied that that is the case, a full debate should be welcomed by all hon. Members. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will grant the debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision to drop the prosecution proceedings against Frank Larsen and others."

I listened with great care to what the hon. Member said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I hope that the hon. Member will find other methods of bringing the matter before the House.

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries

3.35 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing an important, urgent and specific matter, namely,

"the deep sense of outrage felt by people in the north over the below-the-belt tactics being deployed by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries in its bid to take over Matthew Brown Brewery."

The matter is specific because if Scottish and Newcastle Breweries——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please keep his Standing Order No. 20 application in line with the application that he made to me?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall come directly to the point.

The matter is specific because if S and N were to succeed it is likely to close the profitable Matthew Brown brewery in Workington, in which £750,000 has just been invested. The people of Workington are deeply concerned that its closure would further boost the high levels of unemployment.

The matter is important because S and N is turning the stock market collapse to its commercial advantage by stampeding frightened investors into selling their shares in Matthew Brown for cash. The spectacle of S and N's squalid tactics on the stock market can only be likened to the activity of a wartime black marketeer, who profits out of misfortune, or to a looter, whose only opportunity to loot occurs when a natural disaster has struck. Where are the traditional British values of fair play? At a time when desperate attempts are under way to restore sanity to the money markets, surely the greedy and avaricious practices of the Casbah should be condemned.

The matter is urgent because this bid epitomises the contradiction that lies at the heart of merger policy. On the one hand agencies of the Government are promoting enterprise, but on the other we have a merger policy that allows a predator to pursue its quarry with the single objective of stripping out its assets. This hunt is taking place, not in the industrial heartland of the north, but in the City of London, as yuppies clamber over themselves in a desperate attempt to cut their losses.

The matter is also urgent because the affair, which is riddled with irregularities, awaits the findings of the stock exchange surveillance department investigation into insider dealing on the day prior to S and N's bid.

The House will want an assurance from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that this bid will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Scottish and Newcastle Breweries must be stopped in its tracks. A debate will stop it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of the bid for Matthew Brown by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries following upon the 3 o'clock deadline set by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries for the acceptance of cash in the purchase of shares."

I listened with care to what the hon. Member said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised

[Mr. Speaker]

to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Statement)

3.38 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise to note the failure of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a statement to the House about the unusual and perturbing situation that has arisen in the financial markets.

I rise on a point of order because not only is it inadequate that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not come to the House to make a statement, but he has added insult to injury by proposing to speak to the stock exchange this evening. As a result, he will be reporting to the stock exchange on these events, instead of to this House, to which he is properly accountable. The Leader of the House is present, and I hope that it will be possible for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a statement to the House before he addresses the stock exchange—he certainly has time to do so—so that at the earliest opportunity he can account to the House for his responsibilities in this matter.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that today is an Opposition Supply day and that it was up to the Opposition parties to choose the subject for debate? Since events on the stock exchange have been unfolding for some days, we must assume that they did not take sufficient interest in what had been happening to select the matter for debate.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not wholly unprecedented that an economic matter of such significance as the decline of the stock exchange and the importance attached to the economic consequences of the collapse in share values should not lead to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to appear before the House? Many hon. Members see the Chancellor of the Exchequer night after night on the television screen, yet have not had an opportunity to question him in the House. Should that not be remedied without further delay?

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Rooker—*[Interruption.]* That was a slip of the tongue. Mr. Brian Sedgemore.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Speaking in my capacity as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), I think that we need your help. The House is in danger of looking like a Ruritanian assembly, indulging itself at the periphery, but not dealing with the problems at the heart of the nation's affairs. As the financial crisis sends the economies of the Western world spinning perilously close to calamity—we hope that that will not happen—it seems extraordinary that although every commentator in every country is talking about the matter, there has been no discussion in Parliament. I understand that the Government have been asked to make a statement but have said that the matter has nothing to do with them. However, the Chancellor is talking to everybody else about it. I understand also that there have been requests for private notice questions. Some of us find it mind-boggling that such private notice questions should be disallowed.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not refer to any applications of that sort.

Mr. Sedgemore: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to help the House and either urge the Chancellor to make a statement or give an assurance that if one of us asks for a private notice question to be tabled tomorrow you will accept it so that the Chancellor will have an opportunity to explain what could be the most dangerous economic event of the 20th century.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is an additional dimension, in that in a few days' time the Government will be hoping to flog off their holding in British Petroleum. That is obviously linked to what is taking place on the stock market now. I was confronted by somebody in my constituency today who asked whether to go for BP shares or get into gold futures. I could not answer that question. Therefore, I desperately need the help of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you advise us whether it is good for the dignity of the House, as we face the most severe recession since the war, and the fact that before the end of this year we will see mortgage foreclosures and a further rise in unemployment, to hear Conservative Members crying like public schoolboys as we face the scale of that recession?

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think you will agree that we are at a crisis in which the casino-like society created by the Chancellor of the Exchequer is collapsing. Surely he should be here to explain that, particularly before he goes to the stock exchange, if indeed there is a stock exchange left to go to.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last Thursday during business questions I asked the Leader of the House, who is present, to arrange for a statement to be made on this matter. It looks as if either he has no control over the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, or he has completely ignored the wishes of many of those who want a statement to be made. It is high time that the House understood that this is not just a matter for the casino economy. What is happening on the stock exchange and on the stock exchanges internationally will affect the livelihood of all our constituents.

Labour Members are concerned about the unemployment that will follow and about further cuts that will be announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement, when he eventually makes one, whereas Tory Members like unemployment and are not concerned, but that does not mean that there should not be a statement. It is a scandal that the Tory Government do not have the guts to present their case at the Dispatch Box. It is time that they did so.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it proper for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to describe Conservative Members as being unconcerned about unemployment?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. None of this has anything to do with me, but I will take two further points of order from hon. Members who have been rising in their places.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could not the Chancellor's attitude in failing to make a statement to the House about the stock exchange crisis be described as the Nero-Nero option?

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not clear that the Labour party is seeking to make a crisis out of a problem? Stock exchange prices are higher than they were at this time last year, but Labour Members were not calling for a debate then. It is clear that they wish to cause a crisis where none exists.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker. Order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, I am on my feet. I have listened to the points of order because I recognise the concern of the House. I was not previously aware that the Chancellor was to make any statement outside the House. That is why I have allowed these exchanges today. As the whole House recognises, however, this is not a matter for me. The Leader of the House is present. I am certain that he will have noted what has been said about this matter, and no doubt it is one which may properly be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We recognise your dilemma in this matter, but you have a responsibility to try to sustain the reputation of the House. The decline on the stock exchange is being discussed in every pub and wine bar, and the Chancellor is going to the stock exchange to talk about it, but he has not come to the House. That is unreasonable. It is unfair to the House and to the country, and it will bring both you, Mr. Speaker, and the House into disrepute unless the Chancellor reports to this place and explains what he is up to.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that we can carry this any further. I must emphasise what the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said. There could have been an opportunity to discuss this matter today, but there is nothing that I can do about it at this stage.

Mr. John Smith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Conservative Members have been referring to the subjects of today's debates. May I make it clear on behalf of the Opposition that if the Chancellor will come to the House at Seven o'clock to take part in a debate we shall propose that the subject of the debate be changed to cover this urgent topic. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is too serious a matter for shouting across the Chamber.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order on that matter.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Dalyell: Yes. My point of order concerns precedent. The precedent is this. Will you reflect, Mr. Speaker, whether there has been a change of policy in the

[Mr. Dalyell]

rulings of Mr. Speaker? I have checked this with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). In the economic crisis of July 1966, Mr. Speaker King took certain key decisions off his own bat about requiring the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, our former right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, to come to the Dispatch Box against his will. I understand that that was Mr. Speaker's decision at the time. Will you reflect, Mr. Speaker, and possibly rule tomorrow, on whether there has been a change of policy from the precedent set by Mr. Speaker King?

Mr. Speaker: I shall, of course, look up that precedent. However, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I am not responsible for the making of statements. Let us move on to the statutory instruments——

Mr. Dobson: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that if the Opposition wish to change the business for this evening we need the agreement of the Government so to do?

Mr. Speaker: That is so, but I am sure that that matter could, and should, properly be discussed through the usual channels.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 10) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1804) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Durant.*]

Opposition Day

[1st Allotted Day]

Mr. Speaker: I regret that the order of the two motions on the Order Paper for today's Opposition business does not accord with what was announced by the Leader of the House last Thursday. It is proposed to revert to what was the original intention—that the firearms debate should come first and the education debate second.

In addition, today's Order Paper is not in the normal full printed version. As hon. Members will have noted, this is not the first deficiency in the House's papers since we resumed last Wednesday. I am investigating the cause of the difficulties that have occurred. My preliminary inquiries show that the recent introduction of new printing methods is at the root of the problem. There have also been abnormal amounts of copy in some areas of work. I understand that the Stationery Office is seeking to ensure that delays and other difficulties are kept to a minimum.

Firearms

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.52 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House supports the need for legislation which will provide additional and stringent controls over the possession and use of firearms: calls upon the Home Secretary to include within that legislation the requirement of a separate certificate for each individual firearm, a central register of all approved firearms, a prohibition of the private sale and use of all automatic and semi-automatic weapons and a total ban on all mail-order sales of firearms: and further calls upon the Home Secretary immediately to introduce such a Bill in this House.

I should like to express my surprise and regret that the Government propose to divide the House at 7 o'clock on what should and could be a subject of unanimous agreement. It was in the hope of such an agreement that we tabled a motion that is constructive rather than polemical. The motion proposes a strengthening of the gun laws, which is demanded by the general public, and happens to be a strengthening of the gun laws that is supported by the police forces of this country, yet the Home Secretary has tabled an amendment that amounts to no more than a string of platitudes. I presume that he is still not ready to stand up either to the shotgun lobby or to the mail order lobby, but whatever the motives of that vacuous amendment, the result is obvious and will be clear to the country. What Conservative Members will vote for this evening is a form of words that can be described only as wet. It is also risibly complacent, for it promises firearms legislation during this Session of Parliament.

The Home Secretary will recall that when, two weeks ago, he was kind enough to consult me about legislation concerning the limitation on knives and related weapons I asked, in his presence, the officials who advise him what legislation on these matters in this Session of Parliament meant. They told me that there was no hope within the present scheme of things for any new laws to be on the statute book before the summer of 1988. Frankly, the Home Secretary makes himself ridiculous by first identifying a problem that he describes as urgent and then announcing that he proposes to remedy it some time during the middle of next year.

Throughout the country there is widespread agreement that we need more stringent, comprehensive and effective firearms regulations. I had hoped that that widespread agreement would be reflected in the House, despite the barrage of gun club propaganda to which we have been subjected in recent weeks. Some of that propaganda has been so irrational, blatant and obviously of a special pleading nature that it must have damaged its own cause, though clearly it has, in part, intimidated the Home Secretary. Public anxiety is inevitably high, and it has been heightened by the Hungerford tragedy and the other terrible shootings of the summer.

It is important to make absolutely clear that those terrible events demonstrated, rather than created, the urgent need for gun control. Indeed, as long ago as last March London Labour Members of Parliament wrote to the Home Secretary setting out and warning of the dangers of guns in London, and asking for a revision of the laws governing the ownership and use of guns and knives. That was in March, and I think the Home Secretary will tell us today that if he is to respond to that letter at all it will not be until next March—several months after a year has passed since that plea from London was presented to him.

I propose to spend little or no time this afternoon arguing the case for tighter gun control. That, I believe, is generally accepted, at least outside the House. However, I propose to concentrate on the way in which that tighter gun control should be achieved. I repeat that, in my view, it would be achieved most successfully if there were agreement in Parliament about how the desired objective could be achieved.

Arms control depends on three factors: the content of the law; the enforcement of the law; and the acceptance by those who own guns of the need to co-operate fully in the law's application. Such co-operation would most likely come about if the House came to a unanimous conclusion about stronger regulation. Even though that is not possible this afternoon, I hope that, on reflection, and when he has had his necessary consultations with the sporting interests and others, the Home Secretary will come to accept the virtues of a common approach and realise that if he desires an agreement on both sides he may have to rally round a central position which, although not altogether attractive either to the gun clubs or the Country Landowners Association, is nevertheless demanded and wanted by the country. I hope he understands that if there is to be the co-operation over gun control that I suspect he still seeks, he has to move into that central position. We shall do our best to accommodate him if he is reasonable enough to try to accommodate us.

In such a spirit, I want to make one thing plain. The Opposition accept that the possession and use of firearms is often legitimate and sometimes necessary. Farmers need guns. A man or woman has the right to spend leisure time shooting in competitions or in properly organised target practice. I admit that farmers, members of gun clubs and legitimate owners and users may be inconvenienced by what I propose this afternoon. However, I hope that most of them will regard that inconvenience as a small price to pay for a reduction in the number of guns that are illegally possessed, illegitimately used and irresponsibly carried from place to place. That inconvenience is also the price that they must pay for the necessary reduction in the amount of ammunition that is insecurely kept and unnecessarily transported in areas where it may be stolen and may be misused.

Before I describe the nature and extent of the controls that I propose for firearms, I should like to refer briefly to the parallel problem of knives and other edged weapons, not least because we can learn from the principles of the Home Secretary's proposals and from the way in which he went about proposing them and thus obtained a great deal of agreement throughout the House. The Home Secretary proposes to prohibit the manufacture, sale and possession of various martial arts weapons, despite the objection that he will get from the martial arts clubs. We shall support the Government in that.

The Home Secretary proposes to define in law the circumstances in which it is legitimate and legal to carry a knife. Possessing a knife or a similar weapon in a public place, except for those defined purposes, is to become illegal. We shall support the Government's proposal about that. The inevitable consequence of those new regulations will be to place an added responsibility on those who sell knives, military memorabilia and what is euphemistically called survival equipment. When the shopkeepers and their associations complain, as complain they will, we shall support the Government. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to see our high streets totally free from the so-called martial arts shops and so-called survival shops. The several that exist in my constituency make no contribution to the life and work of the area and represent a perpetual danger and temptation to young men. We shall support the Home Secretary when the complaints come in.

Equally, we shall support the Home Secretary on the prohibition of the sale of knives and similar weapons by post, catalogue and mail order. Notwithstanding that, the Home Secretary's scheme about knives carries with it two great problems. The first is his intention to shift the onus of proof to the person found carrying a knife. To require a suspect to prove his innocence is, in general, wholly unacceptable in a free society. However, in the case of the possession of knives it is possible to construct powers that preserve essential liberties and enable the police effectively to act against those who unlawfully carry knives and similar weapons. I hope that the Home Secretary will enter into early discussions with us on that precise point in order to present a chance of obtaining agreement on knives and their prohibition in the way that I want to see agreement on the safer use of guns.

The second problem about the proposal on knives is what the Home Secretary describes as an extension of the stop-and-search powers. I opposed the introduction of stop and search when five years ago it was first proposed in the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. I still oppose that general power, because it is open to abuse and is certain to result in harassment. During the passage of that Bill I made it clear that in my judgment the right to stop on reasonable suspicion and the right to search with the safeguard of prior warning and subsequent report was necessary when a police officer suspected the possession of an offensive weapon. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said much the same thing when the Bill was reintroduced after the 1983 general election.

It is our intention to support the Home Secretary's proposals with as much enthusiasm as we can. That is because we believe that the principles on which they are based are right. The principles on which that legislation is

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based ought to be applied equally to the regulations governing firearms. We ought to define far more precisely than is the present practice acceptable reasons for the ownership and use of firearms. Certificates and licences should be issued only to applicants who can demonstrate a specific, explicit and legitimate use. That rule ought to apply, and must apply, to all shotguns.

The idea that a shotgun or any number of shotguns may be available to every applicant who passes a perfunctory test is clearly absurd. That is the clear view of the Police Federation, which presently carries out that perfunctory test. The check is clearly and unavoidably inadequate. All licences and certificates should be issued for, and thus should legalise the possession of, only one weapon. The dangers of allowing one certificate to legalise the possession of an unlimited number of shotguns are so great and so obvious that to me at least it is astonishing that the system has survived for so long.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): How can every shotgun be individually certificated when, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, many shotguns have no form of numbering on them?

Mr. Hattersley: I hope that I am not stretching the hon. Gentleman's imagination too far when I say that the law must require shotguns to have numbers engraved upon them. That will be necessary if there is to be the sort of control that I, the public and the police want. Every gun must be individually accounted for, and the burden of requiring shotgun makers, some of whom I represent in my constituency, to number their guns is a small inconvenience if it results in fewer people getting their heads shot off. It is a balance of interests in which the numbering of guns pales into insignificance when compared to the advantages of control.

I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman a rhetorical question. He knows well that the possession of a shotgun certificate allows him or any other person to possess any number of shotguns. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me and with the Police Federation that the test for such possession is perfunctory to the point of being meaningless. If a person is enabled, through the possession of a single certificate, to become a multiple shotgun owner, that person can respond to an advertisement in the *Shooting Times and Country Magazine* and buy himself a shot slugster, fast operating, pump action, detachable barrel, magnum chambered shotgun for £155 by sending a deposit of £17·50. The idea that a magnum chambered pump action cut-off shotgun with a 24½ in detachable barrel should be available through the post to anybody who has passed his perfunctory test is self-evidently unacceptable. I shall be sorry if the Home Secretary does not make it clear in his speech that, despite the vacuity of his amendment, he intends to take the action against shotguns that the country expects of him and that the country wants.

Unless there is an individual shotgun certificate, it will be impossible to have any real check on or control over the guns that are in general use. It will be impossible to check on the security in which those guns and the ammunition that they use are kept, and it will make impossible the setting up of a firearms register which the police rightly regard as essential for proper control. The combination of an indefinite and extended number of guns available on one certificate and the availability of those guns through the post by mail order is an impossible situation and cannot continue.

I know that farmers will regard the individual certificate as a burden. However, it is an example of the inconvenience that legitimate owners will have to bear in the interests of public safety. Even for legitimate owners and users there must be regulations governing the carrying of firearms and ammunition in public places.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): According to an article on the front page of the *Manchester Evening News*, Members of Parliament can bring private weaponry into the House for the purpose of club shooting. How does my right hon. Friend view that?

Mr. Hattersley: I regard Members of Parliament as suitable for the same treatment as the general public. As I believe that, in general, gun club members and people who wish to spend their time in that way should be required to keep their guns and their ammunition at their gun club rather than carry them home each evening or leave them lying about, as I fear is sometimes the case, I believe that the same rule has to apply to the House of Commons gun club. Since one of the objects of the restrictions I propose is to stop the unnecessary carrying of guns and ammunition, I believe that, as is often the case, what applies to the general public ought to apply to us as well.

One of the extraordinary features of the Hungerford tragedy was the revelation that licensed guns were kept in a car boot and were each day carried to work. The foreman of the man whose guns they were knew that they were in the boot, and nobody is quite sure whether the car and the guns within it were unlawful or whether the law was dubious on the matter. Carrying guns in such circumstances ought to be an obvious and automatically prosecutable offence, as would the carrying of knives in similar circumstances under the Home Secretary's proposal.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am listening to the right hon. Member with some interest. Is his proposal that nobody who is not a farmer or a member of a gun club shooting at targets of one kind or another should be allowed to possess a shotgun?

Mr. Hattersley: Nobody who cannot demonstrate a legitimate need or use should be able to possess such a weapon. In the coming months the Home Secretary will define "legitimate need" and "legitimate use" of knives, swords and similarly edged weapons, and there is no reason in the world, except the different class interests involved, why he should not equally define the legitimate use of guns. If he can do it for knives, he can do it for guns. The only thing that separates the two principles, which is why the hon. Members on the Government Benches have suddenly come to life, is that guns are owned by one class of people and knives are feared to be owned by a different class in society.

It ought to be an automatically prosecutable offence to carry a gun in a public place when it is unnecessary to do so. The law ought to be explicit. Guns ought to be transported in public only when it is unavoidably necessary. Ammunition should be carried only in the same essential circumstances. I repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr.

Litherland) about the House of Commons gun club, that there is no need for gun club members to carry home every night either their guns or their ammunition.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will say whether he agrees that there should be no automatic right to carry guns through crowded cities or to leave shotguns unattended in the back of Land Rovers in market squares.

Mr. Ashby: Has the right hon. Gentleman ever visited a gun club? Has he seen that, by their very nature, they are normally situated in remote places, where they cause minimum disturbance in their neighbourhood, and that nearly always the gun club building is a shed that can be kicked open? Does he really think that that is the sort of place in which guns should be kept?

Mr. Hattersley: I would place an absolute obligation on gun clubs to provide circumstances in which the guns can be kept securely without fear and without doubt. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that gun clubs are the ramshackle buildings that he describes, that seems quite extraordinary, because I suspect that some members leave their guns overnight in such ramshackle buildings. The suggestion that guns are left in those circumstances seems far more frightening than the situation that I was describing. There should be an obligation on gun clubs to have a secure place where members' guns and ammunition can be kept. The only argument against that is vested interest and special pleading.

As well as there being legitimate occasions when guns of a sort can be used and carried, and therefore there being a necessity to prescribe the occasions when the carrying of guns of all sorts is illegal, some guns should not be possessed or used in any circumstances. We ought to prohibit the private sale and private ownership of automatic and semi-automatic weapons. I know that some collectors and vociferous gun club members will argue that the possession of a Kalashnikov is essential to the pursuit of their hobby or pleasure. However, their freedom to pursue their leisure activity has to be weighed against the freedom of the general public from fear of sudden mayhem and casual slaughter.

That essential freedom requires us to prohibit the sale of guns which in no circumstances should it be legitimate to use for amusement or pleasure. In my view, it also requires us to prohibit the sale of guns through any form of mail order. I know that the way in which sales are promoted through the *Country Sports* magazine is slightly more elegant than the methods employed by the martial arts bulletins, but the same principle ought to apply. Guns ought not to be bought and sold through the post.

The stop-and-search principle that the Home Secretary described so honestly in terms of his knife legislation ought to apply also to guns. If, as we should, we define the circumstances in which it is acceptable to possess a knife, we must also provide a similar definition for firearms. If youths in the inner cities are to be searched for knives, we cannot allow more prosperous adults to hang around country public houses with shotguns in the boots of their cars, or allow ammunition to be carried carelessly and pointlessly from place to place.

The proposals that I have made for the strict control of firearms seem so reasonable to me, and I believe to the general public, that it is astonishing that the Home Secretary is not prepared to support them. They are supported by the Police Federation, I understand by most of the chief constables and I believe overwhelmingly by the general public. I ask the Home Secretary's support for them, because I believe that a strong statement now will lead to the urgent action that the country demands.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): If the right hon. Gentleman is serious, as I am sure he is, about reducing murder and mayhem on the streets, will he explain why the Labour party has voted in the last four years against the prevention and suppression of terrorism legislation?

Mr. Hattersley: I look forward to dealing with that subject when it comes up for debate in about a month's time. I had the privilege of being the first shadow Home Secretary to argue that we should vote against that provision, and I shall vote against it and urge my hon. Friends to vote against it when it again comes before the House.

I say two things in answer to the obliquely relevant question of the hon. Gentleman. First, the only way to combat terrorism is to drive a wedge between the real terrorists and the law-abiding population with whom they cohabit. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 encourages terrorism by alienating the law-abiding population of Ireland. Secondly, I am struggling today, though I did not so struggle on that occasion, to find a measure of agreement between the parties on an issue about which I think the general public want to see as much agreement as possible. The trivial intervention of the hon. Gentleman will only underline the clear truth of the debate, which is that the Government do not want unanimity on this subject. They want to appear tough and to talk tough, but they want to collapse at the first threatened response from the gun lobby and from the country interests. That has been demonstrated by every bit of gibberish that has come from the Government Benches this afternoon.

I want agreement on the nature and the timing of the measures. I repeat — I doubt whether the Home Secretary will deny it—that the earliest opportunity for the new measures to become law is for clauses to be spatchcocked to the Criminal Justice Bill that is going through the House of Lords. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, a week last Wednesday, his officials told me that that Bill could not possibly become law until the middle of next year. That is absurd. A Bill should be presented to the House before Christmas. The right Bill —a tough, just and effective Bill—would have a swift passage. I hope that then, if not today, the agreement of the House will be obtained and will do more than strengthen the regulations. I hope that it will strike a blow against not only the improper use and possession of guns, but against the gun culture that is developing in Britain. That gun culture is not country sports and organised clubs, but the nightmare world of guns that is glamourised by some television programmes and newspapers. It is worth remembering that before Hungerford, when Rambo became a figure of hatred and fear, Rambo was a word that was used as praise and as the description of a hero in half our tabloid newspapers.

What I had hoped, when I believed that there could be unanimity today, and what I still hope will be possible through discussion, is that a message can come from the House of Commons not only that guns are acceptable in

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our society only when they are used under the most stringent controls, but that in other circumstances they are illegal and that those who break the law, whoever they may be, are not heroes but criminals and will receive the most severe penalties.

4.21 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the time has come for a strengthened system of firearms controls: welcomes the announcement by the Home Secretary on 22 September of the main conclusions of the study of ways in which firearms legislation might be improved: supports the need for further urgent but careful and detailed consideration of other possible measures under review: and endorses the Government's intention to announce shortly the outcome of this examination and to introduce new firearms legislation during this session of Parliament".

I suppose that it is something that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) should believe that he is encouraging the Government rather than obstructing and holding us back. He will understand that that represents a change to Home Office Ministers. I hope that it will apply to the other proposals that we shall introduce for the greater protection of the public. But the right hon. Gentleman's account of the Government's attitude was ludicrous, and the reason why he gave that account emerged not in his text but in what he said under challenge. The strong tinge of class warfare came right through his proposal and undermined the pretence that he was trying to make of searching for central ground on which we could all travel. That point will emerge as I describe the Government's attitude.

I go this far with the right hon. Gentleman: this is a timely debate. The Opposition's motion is concerned solely with firearms but, as the right hon. Gentleman said, the Government are engaged in a substantial overhaul of the law which controls the possession, sale and use of many types of weapon, including but not confined to firearms. We have a simple purpose. Those controls are part of crime prevention, and if we can find a reasonable way to strengthen them we shall add to the protection given to the citizen and to the security of our homes, streets and places of work.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, we propose to ban the manufacture and sale of weapons such as hand claws, knuckle dusters and death stars, for which we believe there is no legitimate use. We propose a radical change in the law on the carrying of knives. Both proposals will be included as amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill. I mention them because it is important that the public, and especially the legitimate shooters, should understand that our proposals on firearms will be one part of the general effort which I have described to strengthen public safety.

Strong action is required in relation to the three types of weapons that I have mentioned: martial arts weapons, knives and firearms. But the danger from each of them is different. That is where, to some extent, I quarrel with the right hon. Gentleman's analysis. The ban on the manufacture and sale of martial arts weapons is justified. With knives, the danger is overwhelmingly the concealed carrying of such weapons. There can be no licensing system for knives, so we must act, as we propose, on the carrying of knives. There is a licensing system for firearms, and the right hon. Gentleman spent most of his speech discussing how that licensing system should be strengthened.

The right hon. Gentleman also urged a reversal of proof on the carrying of firearms such as the one that I propose, which he will support, on the carrying of knives. I do not wish to draft for the Opposition, but I suppose that they have roughly this sort of proposal in mind:

"A person commits an offence if, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse (the proof whereof lies on him)"——

the onus of proof has shifted—

"he has with him in a public place a loaded shot gun or loaded air weapon, or any other firearm (whether loaded or not) together with ammunition suitable for use in that firearm."

That is a rough summary of what the right hon. Gentleman proposes, shifting the onus of proof on the carrying of firearms, and it is contained in section 19 of the Firearms Act 1968. If he reads that, as I hope he now will, he will see that the law as it stands reasonably defines the proposition that he spent several minutes criticising me for not having put forward.

Mr. Hattersley: I will give the Home Secretary credit for not realising the mistake that he has made. He misunderstands the position. I want a much clearer definition of when firearms can and cannot be carried and the circumstances in which they can be carried between one place and another. What he now accepts—if he did not accept it before this afternoon, he has heard his hon. Friends baying for its continuance this afternoon — is that guns can be carried unnecessarily between gun club and home. That is what I want to prohibit, and it is not covered by the Act.

Mr. Hurd: When the right hon. Gentleman talked about the need to shift the burden of proof on the carrying of firearms, he was clearly unaware that it had been shifted in the 1968 Act. The main thrust of his proposal is already in the law.

There are two pools of firearms in Britain, one legal and the other illegal. The number of serious offences involving firearms has increased by 61 per cent. since 1975, although the proportion of serious offences involving firearms has remained much the same. As regards illegal firearms, the problem is one not of the law, but of enforcement by the police. As regards firearms which are now legally held, on which the right hon. Gentleman concentrated, we should be clear about our realistic aims. There is no point in pretending that by making changes in the law we could guarantee the safety of the public against the quiet, withdrawn citizen who answers every question, fills in every form and keeps every law until the moment comes when he commits an atrocious crime. We cannot give Hungerford an absolute guarantee against Ryan.

Nevertheless, we must strengthen the law. I have made some proposals and I am considering others. As the House knows, we began to look at the legislation afresh earlier in the summer in the context of suggestions that it was time to have another amnesty. But of course — I do not quarrel with the way in which the right hon. Gentleman put this point — the disaster at Hungerford accelerated and widened the scope of that work. No one who visited Hungerford in those days could fail to be struck by the contrast between the peacefulness of the town and the hurricane of violence which struck it that afternoon. The sympathy which we all felt, and which we felt again after the murders in Wolverhampton and the recent indiscriminate shootings in Bristol, has not ebbed away. It is right that our sympathy for those who suffered should, among other things, take the form of a determination to look more sharply at the law governing the legal possession of firearms. We must do whatever we sensibly can to ensure that legal authority is not given to dangerous people and to ensure that guns which are legally authorised do not pass thereafter into dangerous hands.

A balance must be struck. The House would not be taking the matter seriously if it did not fully recognise the wide variety of legitimate, indeed often admirable and highly disciplined, ways in which firearms are used in this country. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook recognised that. There is the case of the farmer who needs to keep the vermin on his farm under control. There are sportsmen who practise country sports. Above all, there are other sportsmen who belong to clubs, who shoot in national and international competitions and who pride themselves on a tradition of discipline and self-regulation. No one who has visited Bisley—as I did for the first time last year — would fall into the silly trap of denouncing the principle of private ownership and private use of firearms in this country in sweeping terms. We have tried to weigh all that up.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): No doubt the Home Secretary will recall the exchanges that we had across the Dispatch Box 16 months ago when he assured the House that he and his fellow Home Office Ministers saw no need to review firearms legislation. There is no doubt that the shadow of Hungerford is hanging over this debate and, indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to that. However, legitimate shooting interests in my constituency and others in south Wales have put it to me that the proposals that the Government intend to introduce and those suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook would never of themselves prevent a repetition of the events in Hungerford. Will the Home Secretary address his mind and his comments to the particular set of circumstances at Hungerford and explain how his proposals would prevent Michael Ryan or someone like Ryan from doing the same thing again?

Mr. Hurd: Before the hon. Gentleman intervenes he should listen to those passages that immediately precede his intervention. I have just dealt with that point. I said that there can be no absolute guarantee for Hungerford against Ryan. Nevertheless, the work that we started before Hungerford, which has been accelerated and extended since then and in the light of other shootings, is designed to shift the balance substantially in the interests of public safety and the objectives that I have just stated.

We propose to keep the main categories of regulation under the Firearms Act 1968. Fully automatic weapons such as machine guns are already prohibited. They require my special authority for their purchase and possession. Authorities are normally granted only to selected dealers involved in the import and export market. Also, under the existing system, rifles, pistols and shotguns with barrels less than 24 inches in length fall under section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 and require a firearms certificate. That means that a good reason is required for each weapon to be held and details are provided. Shotguns with barrels of 24 inches or more may be purchased or possessed on a shotgun certificate, and the test for the issue of such a certificate is mainly one of good character. That is the existing system.

One of the weapons used by Ryan was a 7·62 mm calibre self-loading Kalashnikov rifle. That weapon has a magazine capacity and rate of fire that makes it especially dangerous. I can see no justification for the possession of such weapons in private hands and I believe that they should become prohibited weapons. I also propose that burst fire weapons, carbines and certain short-barrelled shotguns should also become prohibited.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I completely agree with my right hon. Friend's line of thought and the policy that he is touching upon, but has he yet given any thought to the subject that has been raised with me by many people who own the kind of weapons that he is describing, that of possible compensation? Someone may have owned a perfectly legal item, but that may be rendered illegal because of events. Will my right hon. Friend be prepared to consider that point?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of that point. As my hon. Friend said has been put to us increasingly over recent weeks. There are substantial difficulties of principle and practice in going down that road. However, I would be happy to discuss that matter with my hon. Friend.

The ease with which military and other weapons can be converted from one classification to another has also been a worry. In many cases, such weapons can be restored to their original condition without the need for professional skill. That is why I propose that where a firearm is converted from a higher classification into a lower one, it will retain its original higher classification. In other words, once a Bren gun always a Bren gun, no matter what changes are made to it. That is an important clarification of the law.

I am proposing a number of significant changes in relation to shotguns. The loophole whereby visitors to Great Britain may buy and possess shotguns without a shotgun certificate will be closed, and more satisfactory arrangements will be made for visiting sportsmen. I have also decided that pump action and self-loading shotguns should be brought under the control of section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 so that a good reason will be necessary for their possession. I believe that there must be a statutory obligation on shotgun holders to store their shotguns securely when they are not being used.

We have already announced our intention to raise the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime to life imprisonment, and we shall additionally raise the maximum penalty for being in possession of a shotgun without a certificate in line with the similar offence in respect of firearms. That offence will become triable as an indictable offence with a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment or a fine or both. We have already tabled an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill to that effect.

It is important to take illegally held firearms out of circulation as far as we can and that is why we intend to hold a firearms amnesty during the course of next year. Some people have said that the amnesty should take place immediately. I doubt the wisdom of that. If we are to derive maximum benefit from an amnesty, it needs to be properly worked out. Procedural guidance will need to be

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given to all police forces and a publicity campaign will be necessary so that holders of illegal weapons know what to do. It makes sense that an amnesty should coincide with changes to the law so that suitable arrangements can be made for the disposal of weapons held illegally and under existing legislation and also weapons that the new legislation will no longer permit.

I am considering other suggestions and that is why the debate is timely. We shall look carefully at proposals from both sides of the House. However, I make no apology for not producing legislation or a detailed package in the first days after the recess. The arrangements that Parliament will work out on this subject must be robust enough to last perhaps another 20 years. As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook acknowledged in one part of his speech—although he contradicted it in others—that means that legitimate interests must be consulted. The complications and technical details must be worked out.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I understand that it will take some time for the law to reach the statute book. However, in the meantime, are chief constables allowed to take the law into their own hands by refusing to issue certificates to legitimate people who apply for them as I believe is the position with the Metropolitan Police and others who refuse to work within the current laws? Are the police allowed to do that?

Mr. Hurd: Various chief officers and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis have made statements, but of course they are operating within existing law. The Home Office is not dictating how they should operate the law because that is the business of the police. However, we are giving them guidance during this interim stage that they should act as strictly as is compatible with the law. That is the reasonable way of handling the immediate situation.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will deal with that point in a moment.

We are not interested in purely cosmetic proposals which sound good when first advanced, but which would simply add to the substantial burden that the police carry without improving the protection of the citizen. That must be a consideration. We must also consider the extra points in addition to those that I announced towards the end of September at Torquay.

I can give the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook an example of a further measure which we are considering, but which we have not yet decided upon. We are considering whether it would be right to link the purchase of shotgun ammunition to the production of a shotgun certificate. To some extent, that would deal with the point about ammunition that has been raised by many people. Other suggestions have been made along those lines. They are worth considering and we shall consult the interested parties with a view to producing a package of measures by the end of November if things go smoothly which can then be introduced to the House before Christmas in the form of a firearms Bill. That is roughly what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was pressing me to say. There is no reason why he should hang on my every utterance. He has other and better things to do. When I recently spoke to the Metropolitan branch of the Police Federation—my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was there—I made that point and set out the timing. I am glad to confirm it now.

Progress after that, of course, is not entirely within the Government's hands. I welcome what the right hon. Gentleman said on that point. If precedent is anything to go by, both Houses of Parliament will want to look at the matter with some care. But, given that there will be a separate Bill, and if there is reasonable co-operation, there is no reason why it should not move fairly swiftly on to the statute book. Indeed, it could be on the statute book well before the Criminal Justice Bill, which is an immense Bill that the House will want to consider again—it is now in another place—in which our proposals on knives and martial arts weapons will be contained.

Mr. Hattersley: Hanging on to the Home Secretary's every word, as I do, I recall what he said about guns, but I also recall what he explicitly said to me about knives a fortnight ago. We were then told that the knife element in his stronger weapons proposals will have to wait for the Criminal Justice Bill and will not be on the statute book until the summer. Since he has received from me a degree of co-operation, which I suspect he did not anticipate but which I gave him because I believed it to be right, may we have a Bill before Christmas which refers to firearms and knives? With a proper degree of co-operation, can we not move forward as fast as the public expect us to move on this matter?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman ingeniously shifted his ground. A few moments ago, he thunderously pressed me to produce a separate firearms Bill which could be pushed through reasonably speedily. I told him, with documentary proof, that that was already my public intention. The more that one puts into a Bill, the slower it tends to be. The knife amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill will be forthcoming shortly. They will go into the Bill. I obviously hope that the Bill will go forward speedily. I am encouraged by the right hon. Gentleman's reaction. I hope that he will have a word with some of his lawyers and some of his right hon. and learned Friends, particularly those in another place. I hope that they will carefully weigh what he said about the onus of proof and, indeed, the stop and search power. Subject to the wishes of the Members of both Houses, I obviously want to make speedy progress with both sets of proposals.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): From the point of view of the police service, my right hon. Friend's timetable is convenient. Although the Police Federation has put forward a clear policy—I believe that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to it—the police see a need carefully to examine some of the complex points that my right hon. Friend has mentioned. The police would find it perfectly reasonable that there should be at least a few more weeks in which to consider the matter before we rush into firm legislation.

Mr. Hurd: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. The police are not a homogenous entity. Police officers in different parts of the country hold different views. No doubt, they have expressed them. There is no reason why they should have a single united view on every detail. My hon. Friend is correct.

I see the firearms proposals not as isolated measures or as something that should be rushed through as a hasty response to days of intense grief and anger. Over recent months since the election, in several policy sectors, we have been planning a substantial strengthening of the citizen's defences against violence.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I was waiting for an appropriate moment to intervene. The Home Secretary is asking for suggestions. Why not look at Northern Ireland? As he well knows, in Northern Ireland there are different gun laws, different rules about the holding of guns at home, and different rules about police inspections. Political murders in Northern Ireland are not committed with such guns but with a small number of guns that move from place to place. The House supported the changes that were made about 10 years ago. It is worth looking at Northern Ireland where the problem is greater.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman was certainly not trying to wreck my peroration but was trying to bring in a genuine point. We are looking at the Northern Ireland experience.

I wish to put the subject into the general context of planning the substantial strengthening of the citizen's defences against violence. The new Bill will be a crucial part of that process. I hope that, when the House examines it, its purpose and main provisions will have overwhelming support. Clear thought and firm action have to go together on the matter. Both are needed in the matter, and we shall supply plenty of both.

4.45 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): I am one of the rare members of the shooting fraternity on the Opposition side. As a legitimate target shooter, I realise that the existing firearms legislation when enforced works well. Ryan acted illegally when he carried his weapons around the streets. Perhaps we should ask why he was not stopped long before he performed his dreadful deeds.

It would be impossible to legislate against Kalashnikov-style weapons. The action in such weapons is used in many forms of firearms and in many forms of sport. It is used in the most popular pistol shooting weapon in international competition, in which the United Kingdom does extremely well. I am sure that the Home Secretary knows that the United Kingdom has won many gold medals for the sporting use of firearms. As a responsible shooter, I realise that the House owes it to the public to take into account the fact that shotguns do not come under firearms legislation. I cannot see how bringing in pump action, automatic and semi-automatic shotguns under firearms category one legislation is responsible when, at the moment, thousands of other shotguns do not come under any legislation and there seems to be no intention for them to do so. I am certain that the responsible shotgun lobby would be quite happy for them to be brought under firearms legislation.

4.47 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I welcome the debate. I hope that I shall be forgiven if my remarks are couched with the town of Hungerford uppermost in my mind. Hungerford is in my constituency, and I was there on the afternoon of 19 August. Nobody who was in the town on that day will ever forget the events that took place. Until that day, nobody thought that one man could have the will or the firepower to massacre so many people —a massacre the like of which has not been seen in any other part of the United Kingdom. But it happened, and one must recognise that a watershed was reached as a result of that dreadful tragedy. The debate is only one result of the killings. Sixteen people were shot dead, another 14 were wounded, and then, of course, Ryan shot himself.

I said a moment ago that I thought that the Hungerford tragedy was a watershed in the history of our country, at least in terms of killing with weapons. That is true and it might be said to be an endorsement of the view that our firearms laws were, up to that date, adequate, as we always believed them to be. They are said to be the most restrictive in western Europe. However, after 19 August 1987 we have to recognise that they are wanting and I shall suggest to the House one or two ways in which they could be improved.

I appreciated the visits by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary so soon after the tragedy. They saw the aftermath of the massacre. I welcome the fact that immediately after their visits they promised to conduct the review already in hand at a greater pace than might have been the case if Hungerford had not happened.

I digress to put on record how splendidly the police, fire brigade and ambulance services met the emergency at the time of the crisis and how subsequently the social services and voluntary organisations in Berkshire and Hungerford came to the help of the bereaved and injured.

We are fortunate in the man who is now mayor of Hungerford, because he brought a cool leadership to the town at a time of great difficulty for it and its citizens. That cool leadership has helped to bring back the town to something like normality. But, of course, the private grieving will continue for a long time. I am grateful to the trustees for the way in which they have handled the appeal fund and to all those people throughout the country who contributed so generously. The appeal fund now stands at £1 million. That is a remarkable tribute to the generosity of the British people towards a small town facing a massive tragedy.

The Hungerford tragedy invoked a wide range of reactions. It resulted in calls for a ban on all firearms and, as we heard from the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), shouts of protest from the shooting lobby that their sport, the third most popular in Britain after fishing and golf, has been pilloried because of the actions of one deranged man. I admit to no more than a passing interest in shooting but if I had an interest I have no doubt that I should feel the same and make my own protest. That is why the Home Secretary was correct when he said, soon after the tragedy, that in any review of the firearms laws a balance should be struck between carrying out his responsibility to ensure that society is properly protected and enabling shooters to enjoy their sport.

Immediately following the shootings, I was asked what step I thought should be taken to ensure that such an event could not happen again. I listed four suggestions. The first was that nobody should be allowed to possess a semi-automatic rifle at home—as Ryan had and had used in so many of the killings, replacing one spent magazine with another as he went his terrible way. The second was that the number of firearms held at home should be limited. Ryan had five. The third was that ammunition held at home should be limited. Ryan fired over 100 rounds.

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

Fourthly, I suggested that shooting clubs should become places with a secure armoury where weapons should be kept.

Some hon. Members will be disappointed that the Home Secretary did not say something about shooting clubs. We expect gun shops to be secure places from which weapons cannot be easily stolen. I do not see why we should not expect that, when guns are sold, they are kept in an equally secure place.

I read the speech by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the Police Superintendents Association in September when he said that he intended to prohibit high-powered self-loading rifles. He repeated that promise this afternoon. I welcome everything that he said about high-powered self-loading rifles, burst fire weapons and short-barrelled smooth-bore guns. I also welcome his announcement that other pump action and self-loading shotguns with a greater than average fire capability are to be put on a par with firearms for certification.

I also welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement about another amnesty, but in conversation with a person involved in the last amnesty—an armourer at Weedon—I was surprised, as I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will be, to be told that all the weapons handed in were subsequently sold back to the gun trade. If that was so, what is the use of an amnesty? Surely the idea of an amnesty is that weapons are taken out of circulation. If someone hands in an antique pistol only to find that subsequently it is passed back to the trade and a profit is made out of it, I can see no real gain. I hope that at the next amnesty we will be sure that weapons handed in are not recirculated.

I am left with my suggestions for limiting the number of firearms, the quantity of ammunition that may be held at home and the role of gun clubs, of which there are 8,000 in this country.

I think that I am right in stating that membership of a gun club is one of the first requirements for the granting of a firearms certificate in nearly all cases. If that is so, it suggests that gun club membership confers a status on those seeking weapons that they would not have without such membership. If the gun club has that status and importance in the eyes of the police, why do so few rules apply to their establishment? For instance, they are not required to have secure premises, a range or other shooting facilities. I am told that anybody can start a gun club, just as anybody can join without being asked to show his or her proficiency or being required to undergo any training. I cannot help feeling that new regulations should be introduced.

If we are to have an overhaul of existing gun laws, gun clubs should be brought within the remit of the review. Gun club premises should be seen to be important in terms of whether a person has the right to possess a weapon. If clubs had secure armouries, it would not be an imposition to insist that only one firearm could be held in a safe place at home and that additional weapons should be held at the club. The same could apply to ammunition.

The firearms certificate—which should also apply to shotguns — should have a photograph of the owner attached to establish absolute identity. Ammunition and ammunition-making equipment should never be sold to a person who does not have a certificate bearing a photograph. The same should apply to shotgun owners. Establishing who has guns and who has not turns to some extent on whether we believe that one certificate with a number of guns printed on it is adequate or whether separate certificates for each weapon should be required. I do not have strong views either way, but I believe that a national gun register, rather as our cars are held on a national computer, would enable the police to keep a check on who owns which weapons, and in particular, when guns are sold, to know to whom they are being sold. That would be a step towards giving the police additional powers and controls which I suspect they want. There is much to be said for constabularies creating firearms squads to specialise in gun control, which I believe applies to Sussex.

If there is to be really effective firearms control, we also have to find a way of stopping the huge illegal trade in arms, which is now of frightening proportions. My remarks have concentrated on the Hungerford massacre because the killings were carried out by one man in legal possession of all his weapons. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said, no law could have prevented some part of the tragedy because it is not guns which kill people, but people firing the guns. Nevertheless, if Michael Ryan had possessed only one weapon and a limited amount of ammunition, and if that weapon had not been semi-automatic, I have no doubt that most of his victims would be alive today. That is why some improvements to our firearms laws are now so necessary.

5.1 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Like many hon. Members who have called for greater control over firearms since the Hungerford massacre, my postbag has been full of letters from the gun lobby and from sports enthusiasts protesting vigorously about the proposed changes in firearms regulations. When considering the issue of gun control, the recreational use of firearms should be secondary to the need for greater public safety. Although civil liberties implications arise from greater gun control, these should be considered subsidiary to ensuring that the public are adequately protected.

We have seen in the United States of America how the enshrinement in the constitution of the right to carry guns has led to havoc in some states. In California people have started shooting each other in traffic jams, and in one month there were nine such deaths. I am not suggesting for a moment that we are approaching that situation here, but unless we do something now to curb the use of firearms we will have to face the consequences and hold ourselves responsible for future deaths.

I accept that the Hungerford massacre probably would have happened to some limited degree whatever the circumstances. We cannot prevent someone running amok, but we can restrict the amount of damage that he or she does. It is clear that the type of weaponry and ammunition that Ryan had led to far more deaths than would have been the case had he been restricted.

We have learnt nothing new since the Hungerford and Bristol incidents. Many people were calling for greater control of firearms before those incidents, but they have focused our minds on the problem. We should be considering that problem now and passing the necessary legislation to tackle it, not with knee-jerk reactions, but with carefully thought out proposals that will stand the test of time and prevent deaths. I am therefore pleased that this debate has been called today, and I endorse the call for some urgency in reaching conclusions.

I assure the Home Secretary that we will support the following measures in any legislation that is brought before the House. The first is a ban on the private sale and use of all automatic and semi-automatic weapons. As I have said, what many of us found particularly shocking about Hungerford was the scale of havoc and the number of deaths that one man could cause in one day by going over the brink. He had access to what many of us would consider to be a weapon of war rather than a weapon for recreational use. I am sure that I am not alone in not knowing before that incident that such weapons were lawfully possessed by citizens of this country.

It is clear that had Ryan had access only to a shotgun instead of a Kalashnikov rifle the death toll would have been much smaller, and instead of hundreds of bullets being fired, probably no more than 25 would have been fired before he was stopped. Therefore, the banning of what are clearly war weapons and weapons that have other than recreational use must be a first priority.

Mr. Ron Davies: The hon. Lady is giving the impression that the choice available to Michael Ryan at Hungerford was either a Kalashnikov or a shotgun. However, a range of weaponry between those two will not be affected by the Home Secretary's proposals. It would have been quite conceivable for Michael Ryan to roam the streets of Hungerford using a sporting rifle or any of the bolt action rifles which are freely available and which will not be affected by the Home Secretary's proposals. He could have wreaked his havoc using those weapons that have the same fire power, velocity and magazine capacity, except that they are bolt action instead of semi-automatic. Why, therefore, does the hon. Lady think that the banning of semi-automatic weapons would in any way have prevented what happened at Hungerford?

Mrs. Barnes: I accept that many weapons would have wreaked considerable havoc, and I endorse the suggestion that all weapons should be looked at carefully for potential inclusion in the restriction of firearms.

We should also look closely at tightening the procedures for licensing firearms. In common with the proposers of the motion, I find it ridiculous that firearms owners should be required to have only one certificate for any number of firearms. Each gun should be subject to a certificate, and only the person obtaining that certificate should be allowed to use that gun. In issuing that first certificate, the police must be very sure that the person who was given the licence is fit to be in charge of a firearm and that he has a genuine need to be in possession of it.

The police should also make detailed inquiries into how and where that weapon and ammunition will be stored. In particular, it would seem sensible to have the firearm and ammunition stored separately. The police must also be particularly vigilant when they issue individual firearm licences for further guns. The applicants should provide the police with very clear evidence and reasons why they need those additional guns. Spot checks by police on how existing firearms are used and stored before issuing additional certificates might be a further way of ensuring that firearms are issued only to people fit to possess them.

Thirdly, the Home Secretary should consider a further point about the storage of firearms. It is clear that there are many categories of guns, especially those used for sporting purposes, that do not need to be stored in the home. I suggest that they be stored in the club concerned, under very safe conditions. Any sporting gun owner would then have to have very good reasons for storing his gun at home.

Finally, let me refer to a matter which has already been touched on today, but which I feel needs more attention — how violence in the media, and particularly on television, affects attitudes towards guns. Obviously this does not have the immediate effect of some of the legislation that we are considering, but it could be of critical importance to what is likely to be happening in 20 or 30 years' time. Programmes that children and teenagers love, such as "The A Team", which many of us consider perfectly innocent, show ordinary citizens holding guns and using them regularly. They illustrate very poorly what actually happens when those guns are fired. My two and a half year old son is convinced that people go, "Bang, bang", lie down for 10 minutes and then get up again. Children are growing up thinking that the use of guns is easy and acceptable, and that their use sorts out problems. They do not consider the consequences.

I suggest that a Royal Commission be appointed to consider violence in the media and to examine its effects on the minds of children and on the future of this country. Hon. Members may scoff, but we are considering attitudes, not just the control of weaponry. We are considering the mentality of the people who use that weaponry. We must not disregard the implications of what may be happening. I am not presupposing that we will find strong effects. I merely suggest that we should consider the matter very carefully and come to conclusions that are based on empirical evidence, not on prejudice.

5.11 pm

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I speak as the Member in whose constituency most of the recent Bristol tragedies took place. I know that the matter is currently sub judice, and that I therefore cannot comment on the events involved. However, it is significant that, although four people tragically lost their lives, the events in Bristol — following, as they did, those in Hungerford — seem almost to have been missed. Let me merely join my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) in congratulating the police and fire services on their speedy and well-co-ordinated action on the day of the tragic incidents in Bristol. It was greatly appreciated by my constituents.

Let me say as an aside that I should like the Home Office to consider holding discussions with the media about the handling of such events. My constituents suffered substantial pressure, in some instances emotional, from members of the media attempting to establish facts, family contacts and so forth. I realise that the media have a duty to perform in such circumstances, but they must recognise the pressures faced by ordinary individuals when such tragic events take place.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, I broadly welcome the Government's proposals as outlined by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 22 September. However, I do not believe that—as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seems to have inferred—such proposals can be introduced at the drop of a hat, or that they will solve all the problems. Rash and fast legislation is usually bad

[Mr. Rob Hayward]

legislation—and bad legislation provides opportunities for the criminal element and others who wish to circumvent the law to do so. While I should like the legislation to be on the statute book as soon as possible, I consider it unrealistic for the Opposition Front Bench to propose such timetables.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seems to have inferred that the only people interested in shooting are members of the upper class. That represents a complete misunderstanding of ordinary people. As has already been said, shooting is the third most popular sport in this country. Since the events in Bristol and in Hungerford, I have been staggered to discover how many of my constituents own guns—and I do not represent one of the great shire counties. I have checked some facts. As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not present, I shall make a comparison only between my constituency and that of Dewsbury, which I think may be relevant.

According to figures from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, my constituency is 40 per cent. middle class and Dewsbury 43 per cent. Fifteen per cent of Dewsbury's constituents are professional and managerial people, while the figure in my constituency is 11 per cent. My constituency, therefore, is substantially more ordinary and working class than Dewsbury. But my constituency contains large numbers of gun holders, the vast majority of whom are gravely concerned about the events in Bristol and Hungerford, and want correct and reasonable restrictions to be imposed on those who carry and use guns.

I suggest that, first, there should be stronger requirements for securing guns held in the home. I do not consider it realistic to require that all guns should be held by gun clubs in club houses. That would make them all too easy a target for the IRA and similar terrorist groups, and would be to the long-term disadvantage of the community, because—as has been pointed out—many such clubs are in remote places. It would be far too easy to break into them over a long period, however much security was installed.

The clarification of section 19 of the Firearms Act is important, and it would be worthwhile for it to be re-emphasised during the passage of any future firearms Bill.

I consider that the most suitable way of certifying all guns held would be to place a record of all the guns held by an individual to whom a certificate is granted on that certificate. I do not go along with the suggestion that there should be separate certificates, because, given the scale of gun-holding in this country, the administrative burden imposed on the police would be substantial.

Mr. Sayeed: It is obvious from what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said that he is keen to ensure that guns held privately, including shotguns, are held rather more securely than they are at present, to make it more difficult to remove a gun from a house when a theft takes place. Does my hon. Friend agree that at present it is far too easy for a gun to be stolen, whether or not it is securely held, and for the owner not to report it? Requiring the number to be put on a certificate, as my hon. Friend suggests, would force the owner of a shotgun to report the theft, and there would be more effective control against the stolen weapon entering the illegal market.

Mr. Hayward: I agree. The aim of my proposal is to make a more accurate record of the possession and transmission of guns from one individual to another. The obligation on those who lose guns to report the loss would be that much greater, whether they lose them by accident or through theft.

Let me touch on the question of accidental loss. It is all too easy to lose guns in transportation. Most of the comments made so far have concerned the storage of guns at home, but inevitably they will be transported from an individual's home to the place where they are to be fired.

When transporting guns, most people seem to be somewhat carefree, flinging them on to the back seat of their cars, in the back of their Land-Rovers and in unlocked boots. There should be an obligation on an individual to store and transport guns sensibly and securely.

One of the other matters that has concerned many people during the tragic events of this summer has been the large number of rounds available, and not only in the case of pump action guns. Ordinary individuals appear to carry large numbers of rounds with them. I do not have an easy solution to put forward regarding how many rounds it is appropriate for a person to store at home, but the Home Office should consider this matter carefully when preparing legislation.

As a result of the events in Bristol only a few weeks ago, I have taken an interest in the magazines that are on sale in W H Smith and other general newsagents. I have been amazed by the style of advertisements and photographs that appear to be acceptable in what I would describe as ordinary shooting magazines. There must be some connection between the appeal of these advertisements and the response they provoke from readers. We should consider carefully whether such reputable organisations and companies—we must presume that dealers who advertise in these magazines are reputable—should put in such advertisements.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) mentioned re-purchase. If prohibition is substantially extended, it will inevitably include some weapons which represent a fairly substantial level of expenditure for relatively low income earners who enjoy shooting. If prohibition is extended without any offer of re-purchase, there will inevitably be a tendency for people not to hand in weapons. There is, therefore, a danger that such people will sell illegally and that more weapons will be available to the criminal element in society. I recognise that there are difficulties of principle in this respect, but this point should be carefully considered.

During the summer we have seen a number of tragic incidents in different parts of the country. My own constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury have been harshly affected. I hope that the tragedies that we have witnessed recently will result in a sensible revision of the law, but not an over-hasty revision in an attempt to appease certain groups of people, because that would produce bad legislation.

5.23 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Everyone was shocked by the tragedy at Hungerford and I believe that the House wants to extend its sympathy to the people who suffered. I know that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) will take back to his constituency the concern and sympathy of both sides of the House.

We are not considering whether legislation could stop a Hungerford incident recurring, but we as a society must look carefully at the escalating crime wave and the availability of modern weapons technology. As legislators, we must ask, not only why Ryan was holding an automatic or a semi-automatic gun in his home, but why the Home Office was not asked to explain why our laws allowed that to happen, without prior feedback. We have to consider whether the legislation is working properly. It is difficult to obtain statistics about the entry of weapons into this country from the continent for illegal, criminal purposes. I am not anti-gun; I am a member of the House of Commons gun club, where I practise target shooting. I do not kill animals or people. There have been recent tragic incidents not only in Hungerford and Bristol, but in America and Australia. As legislators, we have to consider the wider aspects of this problem.

Shotguns are the firearms used in most criminal activities, but I do not suppose that it makes much difference whether one is shot at close range by an automatic gun or a shotgun. Even as a member of the House of Commons gun club, I would not dream of keeping a weapon in my home. We are asking the police to supervise the holding of guns. The crime wave is escalating. Two-thirds of all crimes are not solved and the criminals are not brought to book. We must, therefore, address the problem of weapons being stolen in burglaries from the homes of legitimate users of guns. If a choice has to be made between sporting or other interests and the needs of society, the latter must predominate. Certain magazines glorify the use of weapons not for the protection of man but as a way of dominating his fellows. Survival clubs flourish in America, where people learn to use these weapons against their fellows.

It is no use closing the door after the horse has bolted. Our legislation must be sufficiently modern and flexible to counter the escalating crime wave. The Hungerford tragedy was the result of a deranged mind, but that is all the more reason for society to be vigilant. If somebody is killed, however much we legislate we cannot bring him back to life.

We should consider carefully the Northern Ireland experience. We should be much more strict about the number and the type of weapons that can be held. We should also examine more closely the credentials of those who say that they are gun dealers. Furthermore, these weapons should be held in much more secure places and not private homes. If I drive a vehicle I am expected to take out insurance and be responsible for its use. Such an element of responsibility must also fall on the gun holder.

The House must face up to this issue. The Labour party did little about it when it was in power, and I doubt whether the Government would have done much had it not been for Hungerford. The Hungerford incident is a lesson that will remain with us. I hope that, as representatives of the British electorate, we will see what can be done to save any repetition of that incident by fore thought and not hind thought.

5.30 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I hope that the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) will forgive me if I do not exactly follow his line of argument, although I agree with much of what he said.

I am sure that the House shares the distress of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) over the Hungerford incident. My hon. Friend put the matter eloquently, and as we listened it was apparent to us all that he has been deeply touched by the events there. I urge my hon. Friend, whom I have known for a long time, to recognise that Michael Ryan was a one-off case and that he went berserk.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) referred to people going off the rails. Michael Ryan went berserk. If he had not had access to a Kalashnikov, he might have seized a bus or lorry and run into a queue of people and killed as many in that way. One must not overreact to the fact that this this weapon was available. It was available in an exceptional circumstance, and to an exceptional person who, if a Kalashnikov had not been available, would have found some other way of venting his spite on society.

I support the measures which the Home Secretary announced he was thinking of taking when speaking to the Association of Chief Police Officers on 22 September. It is obvious that any Home Secretary has to do something. Public feeling is very deep on this issue; it is not confined to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury. The country was shattered by the offences at Hungerford; my right hon. Friend had to do more than make a gesture to quieten public opinion. The delicate balance that my right hon. Friend achieved in his speech on 22 September was about right; it would have been unthinkable for him to have done nothing. A good and sensible Home Secretary would not have bowed to the immediate pressures from the people of Hungerford, the Association of Chief Police Officers or from public opinion and introduced stringent and intransigent measures. As Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend has a very delicate job. Those who are concerned with shooting, as are several of my hon. Friends, realise that these measures will have a great effect on future civilian weapon possession.

I am sure that the House is united on the Home Secretary's proposal to ban the Kalashnikov rifle completely. Many chief officers of police would not have licensed such a weapon in the first place. A failure of the Firearms Act 1968 was the excessive latitude that it gave to chief officers. The chief officer for the Hungerford area considered it proper and right to give a civilian the right to use a Kalashnikov and other repeating weapons, yet many other chief officers of police, to my certain knowledge, would have been very loath, even under the existing regulations, to have issued such a licence. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on proposing that such weapons should no longer be available and that they are not needed in a civilian society.

Mr. Ron Davies: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Kalashnikov weapon, has been available and held in private hands for about 40 years?

Sir John Farr: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman's research is 100 per cent. correct. He will probably discover that after further consideration his statement is incorrect.

I support my right hon. Friend's banning of all burst fire weapons and short-barrelled smooth-bore guns, thus bringing them within a prohibited category. In a peaceful society there is no justification for an individual's possession of such weapons.

There has been a great outcry with regard to my right hon. Friend's third proposal. It is suggested that pump action and other self-loading shotguns be brought under

[Sir John Farr]

the same control that currently exists for rifles and pistols. That is the very least that my right hon. Friend could have done. The outcry has come from people who possess such weapons. They say that this proposal is desperately unfair and that proper compensation will not be forthcoming for those who have to forfeit their weapons. My right hon. Friend is not banning such weapons; he is saying that exceptionally good grounds will have to exist for their purchase and continued possession. Rightly, he intends to include them in the section 1 certificate. In this proposal he is saying that anybody who has an ordinary shotgun certificate will be unable to obtain special weapons, with the special capacities that they have. Those people have to be approved through the more stringent section 1 procedures and they will then be allowed to keep them. It may be that tens of thousands of people who currently hold such weapons will pass the necessarily stringent test to allow them to continue possessing them under the section 1 procedure. I agree with my right hon. Friend on the point about military and other weapons that can be converted.

The final point that I should like to make relates to my right hon. Friend's proposals with regard to raising the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime to life imprisonment. I am sure that the House agrees that the penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime should carry a life sentence. I understand that that measure will be enacted in the Criminal Justice Bill, but I have, as always, a lingering doubt that if a man is apprehended carrying a weapon, even though he has no intention of using it, will receive a sentence of life imprisonment as well. I am not sure that the House is right in saying that if a man carries a weapon without the intention of using it he should still receive the same life sentence. I am not sure that that is the deterrent that the House would wish it to be.

I fully agree with the approach that is outlined on the Order Paper. What the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) suggested about the listing of all shotguns on an individual certificate would be difficult to implement because, as I tried to point out in an intervention, many shotguns do not have serial numbers. If the right hon. Gentleman asks the Birmingham gunmakers about this point I am sure that they will agree that one cannot diestamp on to an ancient but perfectly sound weapon without completely destroying it.

The proposal of the hon. Member for Sparkbrook for a separate certificate for each weapon would cause a tremendous amount of book-work, even if it was worth it. Is he aware that about six million shotguns are in legal circulation today? He may say that he will see that five million of them are taken out of circulation but he should tell the House. The police computer centre, which would administer a system such as that, would break down and the cost of the proposal would be out of proportion.

I have mentioned compensation. I feel that that matter should not affect the Government too much because the market will cope. It may be that many of the weapons held now on a shotgun certificate will continue to be held on a more stringent section 1 certificate and that the number of weapons for disposal will not choke up the demand.

I have been closely associated with the Palace of Westminster rifle club for many years. It is open at any time for inspection on the range. It is just a few yards away and many hon. Members and members of staff spend a lot of time there. We are proud of our security and the way in which our weapons are held. We are also proud of the armoury and of the personal supervision provided by instructors at all times.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that that entirely endorses my point about gun clubs? If we can have that sort of security in our gun club in the Palace of Westminster, why should we expect anything less than that in other gun clubs throughout the country?

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend is right. Without being too naive, we try to set an example. That example is the very least one should expect in any of the many gun clubs in the country. The Palace range is inspected and licensed by Home Office inspectors and its use is restricted entirely to rifles.

I welcome what my right hon. Friend has said. I hope that he will press on with his approach which, as I said, is the right one. It is delicately balanced and sensible. We must not go overboard because of the events at Hungerford and Bristol, both of which were tragedies. We have to remember that a recent survey done by *The Times* showed that the firearms laws in Britain are generally much more stringent than in our European neighbours. We must bear that in mind. We have a strict system now and, by and large, it works well. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on his amendment today.

5.43 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): This debate arises primarily out of the tremendous horror of the Hungerford massacre. The people of Bradford—I represent one of the Bradford constituencies—have a close affinity with the people of Hungerford because the Hungerford tragedy took place some two years after ours. It involved massive loss of life and injury to citizens. There was enormous sympathy for Hungerford from the people of Bradford, and our local authority sent to Hungerford staff with tremendous skills and knowledge arising out of their experience of the terrible fire at Valley Parade football ground.

The debate takes place in relation to Hungerford but is coloured by the events in Bristol, the shooting of a bailiff and young solicitor or solicitor's clerk in Wolverhampton and the terrible mass killings of a similar nature to Hungerford that have taken place in America and Australia. I recall watching one of a series of films about a hospital in south Chicago where the biggest cause of termination of pregnancy was gunshot wounds. That is the mirror of a society where guns are widely available. That is what it means in terms of social cost. I agree with so many people who have spoken today. There is no justification for automatic or semi-automatic guns to be available.

I have spoken about Bradford and Hungerford, but I recall the other side of the issue. The day of the Bradford disaster had been a day of enormous celebration with the promotion of the football team from the third division to the second. I can recall as a young boy the pleasure I got from being taken by my father to the local home guard rifle club to shoot on a 25-yard range with a ·22 rifle. I had one enormous disadvantage in that I am totally incapable of winking with my left eye, and I had to wear a patch. My excuse is that I gave up range shooting when Moshe Dayan and his patch became so popular, and I took up clay pigeon shooting. I have no axe to grind with people's legitimate right to participate and enjoy sport in that way.

I enjoyed clay pigeon shooting with ordinary working people in my community on a Sunday morning at a simulated game shoot. However, I do not think that the right of people to engage in sport can avoid the fact that we live in a climate and at a time of growing violence, not only gun violence but violence in general. The number of offences involving firearms has increased four and a half times since 1972. It is true that that increase is concerned largely with damage to property because those figures show damage which exceeds £20. However, there is a growing use of pistols, shotguns and more sophisticated weapons in relation to crime. Therefore, the licensing of shotguns and the keeping of a register is a perfectly legitimate and reasonable request to make and it should be done on the basis of individuals.

I have one slight criticism of the amendment tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I believe that the grounds for my criticism arise from a general misunderstanding of the mail order business. I worked for three of the five big mail order companies in this country. Two of those five are among the largest employers in Bradford. I have noticed in debates in the House that when the mail order industry is debated it is assumed that the little advertisements one sees in various journals, often for the most dubious of products, are part of the mail order industry. The industry involves large companies. Two of the companies for which I worked sell shotguns. They sell them on an entirely responsible basis. The customer has to supply a shotgun certificate which is checked with the police before a gun is issued.

I also agree with the system of registration. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on the class point of view. I can see no reason why the farm labourers and garage mechanics with whom I first went shooting should not use the traditional means of paying for a shotgun over a period of weeks or months in the same way as a more wealthy person can buy a pair of matching guns at one of the better London shops.

I end on this note. Violence is not divorced from society. One cannot draw general conclusions from an aberration such as the Hungerford disaster, but nor can one ignore the fact that we live in an increasingly divisive society. The factors that trigger off people with mental weaknesses are precisely the conflicts and tensions which arise primarily from the gross inequalities in our society —the poverty of so many people compared with the increasing and flaunted wealth of a minority. Those tensions have an effect on the use of knives and guns and on crime statistics generally. If we are to tackle violence of all kinds in our society we must have a social programme to deal with inequality, scarcity and poverty.

Personally, I also oppose the growing use of weapons of violence by the forces of the state. Perhaps a more restrictive attitude to the use of weapons in society generally will mean less use of firearms by the police and other forces of the state. The House should not forget the deaths of John Shorthouse and Gail Kitchen, two innocent children killed by police using firearms in the course of their duty. We therefore have a duty to deal with firearms in relation not just to the public but to the state.

5.51 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): My hon. Friends the Members for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) and for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) spoke movingly of the tragedies in their constituencies this year and we all appreciate the part that they played in helping their constituents.

I should say at the outset that I resent the phrase "gun lobby" being bandied about in the media as it implies a wild west, couldn't-care-less attitude to weapons and shooting which is far from the truth. Those to whom I shall refer are members of properly constituted and affiliated rifle clubs, pistol clubs and clay pigeon clubs. They are highly responsible people who look after their ranges, whether they be 25 yd indoor ranges or open ranges, and we should give credit to them for the recreation that they provide. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary had to react to the Hungerford tragedy. The law needs to be simplified, strengthened and amended, but he should not overreact. That is the burden of my remarks today. The traditional shooter for sport and recreation has a right to continue, and we should not make life too difficult in that respect.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that I am disappointed at the amount of consultation so far. I am an office-bearer in the National Small-bore Rifle Association, the National Rifle Association, the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association and the British Shooting Sports Council. I know that the latter, which represents all the sports in negotiations with the Home Office, has been in consultation on administrative changes and important matters of security. Immediately after the Hungerford tragedy, my noble Friend Lord Swansea wrote expressing grave concern and offering his services for immediate consultations, but I am sorry to say that no consultation took place before my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made his important announcement on 22 September. Had there been such consultation, I believe that some of the difficulties could have been ironed out before that announcement.

I warmly accept some of the points made by my right hon. Friend in relation to burst fire weapons, increased penalties and security matters, but any proposals must be practical and effective. So far, no one has mentioned the police manpower required to carry out the recommendations. We know how much administrative work the police carry out to implement the existing system of firearms and shotgun certificates. If the system is to be stepped up, I wonder how this will be achieved. I hope, therefore, that the Government will be flexible in thought and deed between now and the presentation of a Bill to Parliament. Like other hon. Members, I would rather the Government took a little longer than that they rushed something out by the end of the year.

Technical changes will also have to be borne in mind as weapons are constantly evolving and we must be able to adapt quickly to changes as they occur, including changes in international competitive shooting rules. The Minister will receive a very supportive response from the shooting world provided that he recognises the legitimate right to use firearms for sport and recreation. I cannot accept the views of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) or of the SDP. I therefore have no difficulty in opposing the motion and

[Sir Hector Monro]

supporting my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I welcome the announcement of 22 September, although I believe that one or two points require amendment.

A critical issue concerns self-loading and pump action firearms. Kalashnikov-type weapons must clearly be kept out of the hands of ordinary people interested in firearms, but the Government must listen to the arguments in relation to ·222, ·243 and ·275 stalking rifles. Many stalkers feel that these are the most effective, especially when limited to a magazine of four or five rounds. For humane reasons alone, if one wounds a beast, one needs to be able to fire a second round quickly and there is nothing wrong with the use of self-action small-bore rifles for sporting purposes.

With regard to shotguns, I hope that my right hon. Friend appreciates the position of those who rightly use self-loading shotguns for clay pigeon shooting. Only two rounds are used and it may ultimately be necessary to ensure that manufacturers produce shotguns able to fire only two rounds. At present, however, the majority have a capacity of four or five rounds, although they may be adapted to fire only two. If the total of perhaps 200,000 such weapons is to be covered for the purpose of firearms certificates, there will be an enormous burden on the police in terms of inspection and administrative detail.

It is important to appreciate that a firearm certificate now costs £33 whereas 20 years ago it cost 5s. Moreover, variations cost £19. Any change of weapon, which is quite frequent in competition shooting, would mean a fee of £19 plus police inspection. That seems to me to be setting up a bureaucracy of incredible proportions relative to the practical results that we seek to achieve. I hope that the Government will think very carefully about that aspect.

Some people in the countryside use self-loading shotguns on pests and vermin. That is quite legal and they have perhaps five shots at their disposal. In relation to game and wild fowl, however, the Wildlife and Countryside Act limits them to three shots. All these matters must be taken into account when legislation is drafted between now and the new year, as I hope will be the case. In my view, to try to achieve this before Christmas is asking too much.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will also look very carefully at perhaps the most complicated area concerning security. We have the 1969 firearms rules. Rule No. 11, says that when firearms are "not in actual use", they must be "in a secure place." That is the critical issue. What is a secure place?

At the moment there is an enormous difference in police interpretation of that point, Some people have been prosecuted and convicted for not having their rifle or ammunition in a secure place when they are locked in the boot of their car. How is one to take a rifle from home to Bisley, for example, or the nearest indoor range, without taking it in one's car? One must be practical about this matter. If one has a long journey, one is entitled to fill up the car with petrol or have a cup of coffee. The police must accept the good will of the shooting population and realise that what seems to be nitpicking does not help to achieve what we want with regard to security.

Of course, we must have security in the home. It is crucial. The British Shooting Sports Council has been keen to ensure that. However, we must remove the controversial issues for which there has been legislation in the past two or three years, which have caused heart burning in the shooting world and perhaps have not helped towards security.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I share many of my hon. Friend's feelings, although, as he will appreciate, I find myself on both sides of the divide. Does he believe that shooters would accept that the corollary of the requirement for safer keeping is that the police would need to have access to the premises of individual citizens and gun clubs, to ensure that the safe-keeping rule was being respected?

Sir Hector Monro: Indeed. I welcome the police coming to look at my safe keeping—I shall not say what it is—whenever I renew my firearms certificate. I do not see why that should not be extended to shotgun certificates. However, doing so would mean an enormously increased administrative burden on the police. It is all very well dealing with a few hundred thousand firearms certificates, but if there are to be over 1 million shotgun certificates. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend Secretary of State for Wales will realise what we are asking the police to do. If there is to be greater security in the home, inspection becomes almost inevitable.

I hope that we shall look carefully at specialist disciplines in the world of shooting such as muzzle loaders and flintlocks. Obviously, no criminal will set out with a muzzle loader or flintlock for use in crime. Therefore, the regulations must get round that specialist shooting interest.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will mention compensation for those who will have to surrender weapons which at present are legal and which they bought when they were legal. I hope that when the amnesty, which one supports, is held my hon. Friend will bear it in mind that, rightly or wrongly, there are several good historic weapons in people's possession, which I know they should not have. There should be some way in which those weapons could be disposed of through the gun trade so that we do not lose them any more than other works of art and so that they are not just broken up. Therefore, there is a great deal to be said for selling them through the gun trade. Thereafter they would be registered. It has been said that it would not matter if they came into circulation. They would not necessarily come into circulation, but at least they would be registered and the police would know where they were.

I support the view that there should be a photograph on a firearms certificate. When a certificate is presented for the purchase of ammunition or a rifle, the dealer does not know whether the person who presents the certificate is the person to whom it refers.

We want careful control of firearms. I hope that in the legislation that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary promotes he will do all that he can to ensure that sport and recreational shooting continue with as little hindrance as possible. As a nation, we have a tremendous record for marksmanship in the Olympic games, the Commonwealth games and international competition and it would be a pity if through thoughtless and over-hasty legislation that pleasure and recreation were removed from the sportsmen and the thousands who go to the countryside to enjoy shooting. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will think carefully and consult in great detail the BSSC and other interested bodies before he introduces legislation.

6.4 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): As someone who lived in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for many years and who was his political opponent for a few of those years, I should like to associate myself with his remarks about the tragedy at Hungerford and the way in which the local people rallied to support the victims of that crime.

I should also like to associate myself with some of the proposals made by the hon. Gentleman, strange as it may seem, because I, too, draw a parallel between owning a car and owning a gun. We recognise that a car can be a lethal weapon. There are many reasons why it should be registered and its ownership known. Despite what the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said about the cost of such a scheme, I believe that people who want legitimately to use firearms of any sort should be prepared to have that done in the same way. That means that every gun should be registered by a separate licence. It is worth reflecting that if Michael Ryan had had to make a subsequent application for every firearm that he came to own, the examination of his mental health might have prevented the additional licensing of any additional weapon after he first acquired one.

No ammunition should be permitted to be made available or sold to anyone who cannot produce such a licence and give a legitimate reason why ammunition is needed for that weapon system. Therefore, I am pleased at the way in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) put forward our plans and requests to the Home Secretary to amend the proposed legislation in the ways that he suggested.

My constituents of Lewisham, Deptford, an inner-city area, are concerned that there should be a restriction on all dangerous weapons, not just those classed as firearms, because in my constituency, as in many others, injuries and death resulting from the use of knives are even more substantial than from the use of firearms. I am told that in Lewisham borough a man who was not considered fit to have a licence to sell shotguns or firearms of any sort was subsequently allowed to open a shop selling imitation guns and all forms of martial arts weapons. As we have heard today, many of those weapons are lethal; they can be used to kill people. They should be restricted in the way in which we seek to restrict firearms.

I do not want to go over much of the ground that has been covered in the debate, but I want to mention the related area of concern that cannot be ignored—the cult of violence that has become part of our society. I understand that available alongside those martial arts weapons there are, for example, audio cassettes entitled "Hitler Youth Sings Again". I fail to understand how such material can legitimately be on sale. I wonder whether the House is aware that a recent copy of *Gun and Accessories Mart* magazine carried on its front page a picture of an AK47 rifle and described it as "The infamous AK47". That appeared after the tragedy of Hungerford. Advertisements in other magazines refer to a knife known as "The Terminator" and another knife of "awesome strength and penetration".

Today the House has noted many things about the availability of weapons, but I believe that one cannot escape from that cult of violence. Another magazine, *Combat and Survival,* recently carried an article entitled:

> "Infantry tactics in built-up areas".

Another headline was "Fighting with the GPMG", which I understand is an automatic firearm. All those who would argue for the rights of sports people must address themselves to the issue of the cult of violence and advertising in magazines of that nature.

It has been noted in today's debate that weapons themselves do not cause loss of life or injury; it is the people who use them. It has also been remarked that restricting legislation already exists in this country as compared with other nations, yet there is a rapid rise in crime associated with firearms. While I welcome the proposals for the extension of restrictions in the law, I believe, too, that the House must accept that the problems of the misuse of weapons in this country are due, not only to isolated examples of mental sickness in individuals, but the expression of a deeper ill in our society that emanates from the alienation of so many of our citizens as a result of the divisive social and economic policies of the Government.

6.11 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will forgive me if I do not pursue her final comments. I want to offer my support to the amendment moved by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, with which I completely agree. I also congratulate him on the action that he has taken since the tragedy of Hungerford to re-examine the issue of the ownership and control of firearms and shotguns in the United Kingdom. I particularly agree with my right hon. Friend's suggestion that a careful and detailed consideration of these matters should be undertaken.

The shooting community in the United Kingdom is composed largely, if not wholly, of responsible citizens who pride themselves on their good citizenship, their interest in guns and their safe use of guns. As a group they are as much the victims of the tragedy of Hungerford as the unfortunate people of that community. We should bear in mind the need to balance the debate about the use and control of firearms and shotguns.

During the debate we have heard calls for different types of certificates, for the inclusion of weapons by number or description on certificates, and for the storage of firearms and shotguns in safe places. However, what will such calls mean? If we are to encourage people to store firearms or shotguns in gun clubs or armouries, what will be the requirements for the security of those premises? An hon. Member referred to what I believe he called a hut to which people went to fire a weapon in target practice. The premises in question might well be suitable for that sort of activity, but if they are to be used for the storage of weapons and ammunition the purpose of those premises will have changed completely, and we need to examine carefully what obligations or requirements we should impose upon those who set themselves up in business, or in association, or in clubs, and may accept responsibility for the storage of firearms, shotguns or ammunition.

There have been calls for a limit on the amount of ammunition that people may hold, but on some estates —this does not apply in my constituency in the centre of London — I am told that those who go shooting might discharge several thousand rounds in the course of a week's shooting. Under those circumstances, what are the implications for the holding and storage of that amount of ammunition? My right hon. Friend is right to

[Mr. John Wheeler]

say that a careful analysis of these problems is necessary, because, although we are concerned about the aftermath of the Hungerford tragedy, it would be unwise to create a structure of bureaucracy that was so unwieldy that neither the police nor other authorities could make it work, or to create a Mecca for those who wish to steal firearms or ammunition by having them deposited in clubs in which there is inadequate protection.

Since 1920 we have had strict controls over firearms and shotguns in this country. Those restrictions have served the people of the country extremely well. For 67 years we have not had the like of the Hungerford incident, for which we are all most grateful. That is to be compared with the United States, where, in the 20 years following the murder of President Kennedy, about 210,000 Americans have been killed by firearms. Almost the same number have committed suicide with a gun. Another 50,000 have been killed accidentally by gunfire, and about 180 million privately owned guns are held by people in the United States. Our system of gun control has, for 67 years, prevented that from happening.

Now, we should be trying to prohibit the possession of firearms such as burst or pump action shotguns, which have no place on the sporting field—such as the semi-automatic rifle of the kind that was tragically used at Hungerford. There can be no justification for the private possession of such weapons. At the same time, we should not prohibit the legitimate use by responsible citizens of weapons used for sporting and firearm practice. Whatever arrangements the House finally decides upon, sadly, it cannot and will not, either by prohibition or certification, prevent people from going mad and using firearms, whether the arms in question were lawfully or unlawfully acquired.

We cannot prevent the occasional incident of armed crime. Most professionally organised criminals find no difficulty in obtaining unlawful weapons in the so-called black market, imported from the Republic of Ireland or from other parts of Europe. Such people will continue to have access to such weapons, and we should not deceive ourselves into believing that a more punishing regime for the shooting community will somehow prevent another crime, or the tragedy of Hungerford, because it will not.

That is not to say that my right hon. Friend is wrong to pursue his investigation into the controls that he has announced. He is absolutely right to do so. That forms part of a 67-year tradition of gun control that has served this country and its people well, and that is why I have no hesitation in supporting his amendment tonight.

6.17 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): There was something in what the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said, but I have no problem in supporting the motion moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Perhaps the hon. Member for Westminster, North and I should have a discussion later in the Lobby. However, I was broadly sympathetic to his remarks, with the exception of his comment—it has been made by other speakers, too—that there can be no justification for the individual possession of semi-automatic rifles and pump action shotguns. That is not true. There is a justification, and it is a good one. The use of semi-automatic weapons and pump action shotguns is common in bona fide, legitimate sports—not only on the shooting field but in the sort of shooting activity that is organised by private shooting clubs on private, licensed ranges throughout the country.

Hitherto, there have been no problems, and the activities in which shooters have involved themselves have been properly controlled. They are properly licensed and supervised by the Ministry of Defence or the Home Office, and, by and large, there have been no problems. When it is said that there can be no justification for the use of such weapons, a challenge is being made to the Home Office, because it has accepted that indviduals have a right to own, use and enjoy weapons such as these. There is a justification for them in sporting terms, and that has been recognised by the Home Office.

There is a problem of two dimensions in the proposals that the Home Secretary will put before Parliament later this year. The first is that all the restrictions that are being mooted will be restrictions on the legal shooting lobby. As I understand it, fewer than 1 per cent. of the weapons that are used in crime or in the furtherance of crime are illegally held. It is not suggested that the 99 per cent. of weapons that are legally owned and used will be subject to prohibition, further restrictions and banning because of the misuse of the 1 per cent. of weapons that are illegally held by the criminal fraternity. The issue has not been properly grasped.

Secondly, in an intervention I asked the Home Secretary about the events in Hungerford. I understand that he is in something of a dilemma because he has to be seen to be responding to what happened there. Clearly, we all expect the Home Secretary to respond effectively. He has to balance the legitimate rights of the shooting fraternity. I am not a member of that fraternity. I no longer shoot, although I used to. The Home Secretary now faces a barrage of lobbying, not only from those who wish to own firearms but from those who wish to own shotguns. Underpinning that whole lobbying system is the lobby organised by people who engage in field sports.

The dilemma that the Home Secretary must resolve is how to reconcile the need that he sees to impose restrictions upon certain weapons while at the same time not infringing on the rights that he as the Home Secretary wishes to maintain for the shooting sports lobby. That is the problem. I asked him how he felt the abolition of semi-automatic weapons would have prevented what happened at Hungerford. He said that of course there could never be any absolute guarantee. I am not asking for a guarantee because we can never have guarantees. The abolition of semi-automatic weapons would not have prevented the events at Hungerford.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) was not aware when he made his speech that he gave the game away. He spoke about three classes of weapons that are commonly used for field sports, blood sports and stalking. Any one of those weapons could have been used by Michael Ryan to inflict carnage on the town of Hungerford. He did not need a Kalashnikov. The fire power and bullet velocity qualities of the Kalashnikov were of no consequence to the issues at Hungerford. The issue there was about a man who had clearly lost all sense of what he was doing and who had possession of a weapon capable of firing about 30 rounds in about one and a half hours. The hon. Member for Dumfries knows that any of the sporting weapons that he mentioned could have done exactly the same damage as Michael Ryan did with the

Kalashnikov. Therein lies my reservation about what is proposed. While the banning of the Kalashnikov might let the people of Britain sleep easy in their beds, it would do nothing to prevent the recurrence of events like those in Hungerford.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) knows the depth of feeling in the House and outside for his beleaguered community. The hon. Gentleman made four suggestions about how he felt the Government should respond. I listened carefully to his speech because about three or four weeks ago, probably in common with a number of hon. Members, I was approached by the members of a local gun club who expressed their concern. I spent several hours with them at their site at Llanbradach in my constituency. It was interesting to apply the hon. Gentleman's proposals to the situation in my constituency. First, he said that high-powered, high-velocity weapons should be locked in an armoury. The site in my constituency is licensed by the Home Office and is used frequently by the Ministry of Defence, by the SAS who come down from Hereford. The site is on top of a mountain and is in the semi-circle of a coal tip. Access is after a journey of about three and a half miles across open countryside. The armoury, if that is what it is called, is a small stone building used for storing targets. There is no security, and there cannot be.

The hon. Gentleman may say that it is necessary for that club to build a proper armoury. It may well be that in Newbury and in Westminster and in the more affluent parts of Britain gun clubs have the resources to spend £15,000 to £30,000 to build a secure armoury. The scores of people who belong to the shooting club in my constituency are miners, farm workers and unemployed people. By and large, the membership of that club represents the population of my constituency. They would not be able to build an armoury and if they were restricted in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests my constituents, who are currently quite legitimately allowed to use weapons, would be deprived of their enjoyment of those weapons. That deprivation would result from their inability to pay. If we are to impose any restrictions, they should be on the basis not of a person's ability to pay but on some other system of merit, justice or security.

The hon. Member for Newbury also suggested that there should be restrictions on the volume of ammunition. I think that the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said that hundreds of rounds of ammunition would be used. Shooters usually compete on Sunday afternoons. That practice may not be followed elsewhere, but certainly in my part of the world shooting on a range on a Sunday afternoon is an accepted part of the sporting calendar. It is as well to remember that the events that we are describing are recognised by the Olympic Federation as Olympic sports. On a Sunday afternoon people who wish to shoot on the range in my constituency have to drive to the range and carry their ammunition. How else can they equip themselves for a shoot of four to six hours unless they come equipped with a box of ammunition or a dozen magazines? Are they to go down every half hour to the local gun shop in Cardiff, which is not open on a Sunday anyway? How are they to cope with such a restriction? The hon. Gentleman's third point about a ban on holding a number of guns is superficially attractive. Michael Ryan did his damage with one gun.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Michael Ryan was carrying three guns—a Kalashnikov, an M1 carbine and a Beretta. He used the Kalashnikov and the Beretta.

Mr. Davies: I understand that the Beretta was the last weapon that he used and that the damage was inflicted with the Kalashnikov. That is precisely the point I made, that he needed only one rifle. Preventing a licensed person from having half a dozen weapons makes no progress in the sort of control that the hon. Gentleman suggests. If a person is deemed to be fit, in the eyes of the law, to possess a high-powered rifle, how can he be deemed unfit in the eyes of the law to possess a second high-powered rifle? That question must be answered by the hon. Member for Newbury.

In itself the banning of semi-automatic weapons would in no way prevent a recurrence of the sort of events that happened in Hungerford. I have no hesitation in supporting the amendment. I had hoped that the Home Secretary would have looked at greater length at the events at Hungerford and that he would have instituted a public inquiry to examine not only the events, the possession of weapons and the police response, but the very confused and dangerous area of the possession of weapons.

6.28 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): This debate is important. This topic was chosen as the first subject to be debated in Opposition time after the recess because of the widespread concern of Opposition Members and, as we have heard, of some Conservative Members. Certainly there is concern throughout the country, not only about the incidents this summer, but about the increasing use and misuse of firearms in Britain. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, we had hoped that there would be general agreement throughout the House on the constructive proposals in our motion. We are disappointed that the Home Secretary's amendment and his speech this afternoon indicate that as yet he is willing to permit himself to make only minimal changes. We are disappointed and alarmed that he does not seem to grasp the urgency of the need for a complete and thorough review of the whole basis of gun control.

Conservative Members have urged the Home Secretary to delay and water down his limited proposals. I urge him not to backtrack, but to go further, and in particular to push ahead as quickly as possible, not only with legislation, but with the amnesty that he has proposed. He said this afternoon that that would take time to organise and publicise. We accept that, but he should not be complacent and simply say that it will happen some time next year. He needs to firm up on all those proposals if we are to make progress on this important matter.

My hon. Friends have acknowledged that many people who own and use firearms are not a threat to themselves, their friends, their families, their neighbours or to society as a whole. We accept that there are some people for whom the use and ownership of a firearm is probably an essential part of their working lives. We think of farmers in particular. We are not attempting to insinuate that all those who hold and use firearms are likely to misuse them: nor are we suggesting that they would knowingly allow them to fall into the hands of others who could misuse them. We are not attacking every member or every gun club as being irresponsible.

What we say, however, is that the increase in violent crime, the number of accidents and the misuse of firearms

[Mrs. Ann Taylor]

generally has caused concern for several years. The incidents this summer have highlighted that concern and brought the fears of many to the forefront. However, there is no way in which that concern can be seen, as some Conservative hon. Members would suggest, as an alarmist reaction to the events of Hungerford and elsewhere this summer. The calls for stricter controls from Opposition hon. Members go back a long way.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook outlined earlier today the attempts by my hon. Friends on many occasions to raise with the Home Secretary the need for stronger controls. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my hon. Friends the Members for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) all had meetings and correspondence with the Home Secretary to press for tougher action long before those recent incidents. They warned that such outbreaks and incidents could occur if controls were not improved, but all that is in the past.

What we must recognise is that the need is clear and the climate right for significant changes in the law on gun control. The Home Secretary said that we must think of legislating for 20 years ahead, and he gave that as a reason for delay. I believe that that is a reason to be as comprehensive as possible in the measures and changes that we decide should take place. The House now has to decide what the changes will be. Virtually every hon. Member agrees that changes in gun control must take place. The question is the extent of those changes—whether the changes will simply be to deal with some of the loopholes that evidently exist, some of which have been acknowledged by the Home Secretary, whether dealing with those loopholes will be the limit of the changes proposed, or whether we will review the whole basis of gun control.

The Home Secretary said today that he is willing to take what he called significant action. He has accepted the need for strengthening controls, but he has not made it clear where he stands on the points in our motion. He did not say where he stood on the individual licences for shotguns and all the other points. When the Minister winds up the debate this evening, I hope that he will be specific about the points raised in the Opposition's motion. Surely he must agree that it cannot be right for an individual to hold any number of shotguns on the basis of one licence. The police cannot be expected to supervise effectively the possession of shotguns if they do not have a record of the number of shotguns that an individual owns. At present the police do not even know the number of shotguns in circulation. That is why we believe that a separate certificate should be required for each shotgun. The Home Secretary needs to make his position clear on this, and I urge the Minister to be specific about that this evening.

Also mentioned in our motion is the creation of a central register of all approved firearms and shotguns, as this would greatly assist the police in tracing the origins of firearms used illegally. The United States and many other countries have set up central registers of guns. While this cannot wholly prevent the illegal use of weapons, it can act as a deterrent, it is an incentive to hold weapons securely and, as the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) said, it will ensure the proper recording of the theft of weapons from a legitimate owner.

The Home Secretary agrees with our third point. We welcome the right hon. Gentleman's proposal to extend the ban on automatic weapons to semi-automatic weapons. We agree with him that there can be no justification for an individual holding such weapons, but this is the only point mentioned in our motion on which the Home Secretary has commented. I repeat that we do want to know where the Government stand on the issues raised today.

We would also like the Home Secretary's comment on our fourth proposal, which is the ability of an individual to purchase weapons by mail order. It cannot be right that a person can buy a pump action shotgun, or any weapon, through the mail. It represents an unacceptably casual approach to the purchase of potentially deadly weapons and we believe that it should be stopped.

The measures that we have proposed in the motion are by no means the limits that we would like to see on new controls. The points in our motion are simple and practical proposals which are supported by the Police Federation and which we hope to use as the basis for common ground in today's debate. I believe that we will need to go further in new legislation and say that before a licence is issued or anyone is allowed to hold a gun in his home we should shift the onus of proof as to why someone needs a gun. Further, as the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) said, we should look at the rules governing the establishment and running of gun clubs, and look thoroughly at the rules and legislation on ammunition. Incredible though it seems, presently anyone over the age of 18 can legally store 30 lb of gunpowder for his private use. Surely such a provision is asking for troulble.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): For Guy Fawkes

Mrs. Taylor: For Guy Fawkes, indeed. It is significant that, in the incidents that have occurred this summer and have caused such concern, each of the gunmen had access not only to a number of weapons but to vast amounts of ammunition. While the control of ammunition may be difficult, and while I recognise that many gun users make their own ammunition because of the high cost of buying it, we have to ensure that we minimise the easy availabilty of ammunition so as to minimise the risks.

Much of what we propose is designed to minimise risks. We recognise that it can never be possible to prevent all crimes involving firearms. As many of the letters from the gun lobby point out, it will never be possible to legislate for a mad man. Of course it will not. It is not conceding anything to recognise that, but we can and must legislate to reduce the scope for the deliberate and the accidental misuse of guns. We know that we cannot prevent that entirely, but we must minimise risks.

Above all, we must decide where our starting point will be. Do we start from the premise that everyone is entitled to own a gun? Do we follow the United States model, or do we start from the premise that society has a right to security and to the freedom to go about its normal daily business with as much security and as little risk as possible, and that only those who can show good need to hold a firearm, as well as their basic stability—although this is a difficult area, since only this summer several murderers were legally in possession of their weapons—should be allowed to hold one?

The Home Secretary proposes to change the onus of proof in relation to knives——

Mr. Hurd: The possession of knives in a public place.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman is saying that if someone carries a knife in a public place the onus will be on him to prove why he is carrying it. The same should be true of firearms. The Home Secretary may not have heard the comments of some of his hon. Friends, who said that it was reasonable for someone who held firearms to lock them in the boot of his car while he went into a cafe for a drink on his way to a shooting match. I believe that that is an unreasonable place in which to store guns, and I hope that the Home Secretary will agree. The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) said that he might agree with that and that there should be stricter controls on the transportation of lethal weapons.

The Opposition acknowledge that those changes would mean the loss of some rights among some gun holders, but sporting activities could be reorganised if the will was there. It would cause some inconvenience, although that would be as nothing compared with the loss of rights of all of us if the use and misuse of guns became even more widespread. The extent to which guns and violence generally are part of our society is alarming, and the extent to which they are part of the so-called entertainment industry is incredible.

Recently there has been much speculation about the extent to which gunmen have modelled themselves on the dubious heroes of films and videos — Rambo and the like. Whatever may have been the case with the gunmen this summer, it is impossible to believe that it is a sign of a healthy society to have a series of Rambo books produced for children of junior school age in which violence and the gun rule. They include titles such as "Operation Suicide" and are published just for children. A gun culture and mentality in our society diminish the freedom of everyone, so we do not apologise for our proposals to introduce the most stringent controls on guns.

We are at a crossroads. We will either bow to the gun lobby and its reported £100,000 campaign designed to limit controls, or, as the Opposition hope, we will grasp the opportunity comprehensively to rationalise and tighten gun control. Unless we go further than the Home Secretary proposed today, Britain will move nearer to living with violence. The whole House has a responsibility to prevent that.

6.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): As the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, this has been an instructive debate. It enabled my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to present the main elements in his proposals, which will soon be set out in a Bill. As a consequence, hon. Members have had an early opportunity to comment on those proposals and to make their suggestions for changes to law or to practice. In deciding what should be in the Bill, my right hon. Friend will pay close attention to what has been said during the debate.

Before I deal with the substance of the argument, I shall re-emphasise two points made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Nothing that we can do by way of law or practice can be guaranteed to prevent a tragedy from recurring. Moreover, nothing that we can do by way of changes to statutory law will prevent criminals from gaining access to guns. We can hope to reduce the risk of tragedy and make it more difficult for criminals to get guns. But we need to be realistic about our attainable objectives. The shooting community, to which I belong, is a large, respected, and well-established part of our national life. Its interests are lawful and proper and must be taken fully into account. I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said on this point. We need to strike a fair and proper balance between the need and demand for greater gun control and the legitimate concerns of shooting people who, with only rare exceptions, are as responsible and law-abiding as any in our community. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) for saying that we have the balance about right.

To the extent that time permits, I propose to deal with all the points that have been made by hon. Members either by way of specific questions or suggestions or by way of criticism of our proposals. If I fail to respond to any point, I mean no discourtesy to the hon. Member and I shall respond in writing later.

I shall deal first with the four main criticisms. The first proposition advanced by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), which received support from the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), was that every firearm should be subject to a separate certificate. I assume that that proposal applies to shotguns as well as to other firearms such as rifles and pistols.

Mr. Hattersley *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman confirms my understanding. It is important for him to do so, because we must be clear about the manpower consequences of such a proposal. In Great Britain, there are about 198,580 firearms certificates and nearly 930,000 shotgun certificates. Frequently, firearms certificates cover several weapons, and we believe that there are well over 3 million shotguns in the community. An application for section 1 certification takes about two and a quarter hours to process. Simply to process the original application for each gun to which the proposal relates would impose a massive burden on police forces equivalent to thousands of police officers working a complete year. Before we went down that road, we would have to be certain that the net benefit in terms of law enforcement was substantial. I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries said on that point.

The second main point made by the Opposition was that we should subject shotguns to section 1 control. Why not impose a requirement that there should be a good reason to possess a shotgun? First, I want to re-emphasise what we are doing to increase controls on shotguns. We propose to subject semi-automatic weapons to the control of section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968. Secondly, we propose a statutory place of security condition regulating the keeping of shotguns when not in use. We are also considering a system for keeping records of those shotguns that individuals possess. However, our objective is and must be to improve gun control and not merely to increase restrictions for the sake of being seen to do something.

My fear is that if we impose a "good reason" requirement on the possession of shotguns, we shall face massive non-compliance. If that happens, instead of there being a general acceptance of the measures already

[Mr. Hogg]

outlined, a very large number of guns will simply disappear. The effect would be to make gun control less effective than if we were to adhere to the measures that I have just outlined.

Mr. Holt: If this manpower problem is so onerous, why does the job have to be undertaken by the police? We do not use police officers in connection with television or automobile licences until the law is broken. The presumption is, as hon. Members have said, that 99 per cent. of legitimate shooters who apply for licences are decent people. There is no need to bring the police into this matter at all. There are enough retired senior officers from the services unemployed in my constituency to deal with the problem.

Mr. Hogg: One of the problems is that a number of Labour-controlled councils will simply not employ members from the public services in receipt of a pension. I hope very much that the Opposition will denounce that policy.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: I will not give way now.

Although it is perfectly true that we could use civilians for a number of the functions involved in gun control, I do not believe that the main thrust of that policy could be delegated to non-police officers.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister give way now?

Mr. Hogg: No, I want to proceed if the right hon. Gentleman will permit me. He will have to allow me to get on.

The next point made by Opposition Members — largely, although not exclusively, by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook—was a call for a complete ban on all automatic and semi-automatic weapons. To the extent that that proposal is not already covered by existing legislation or by the Home Secretary's proposals, I suggest that that point goes too far. All fully automatic weapons are available only on section 5 certificates and that is never made available to individuals.

The proposals of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary involve extending section 5 control to burst fire guns and full-bore self-loading rifles. We shall consider including in a Bill a residual power to enable the Secretary of State to lift into section 5 control any specially dangerous fast-firing gun. Such a power would be subject to the ordinary control of Parliament.

The proposals made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook go too far. First, they would prohibit the possession of all self-loading pistols. That would destroy the ability of most pistol shooters to participate in traditional and well-established competitions. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, or should know, self-loading pistols are a very popular form of hand gun much used in traditional pistol shooting competitions. We believe that section 1 control is adequate to cover that. Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman's proposals would prohibit the possession of a ·22 calibre Rimfire rifle much in use for vermin control. Again we believe that section 1 control is adequate for that. Thirdly, the right hon. Gentleman's proposals would mean a total ban on semi-automatic shotguns of which there are probably about 200,000 in the country. We believe section 1 control is adequate for those guns.

The next general proposition raised concerns mail order.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does the Minister share my concern that the limited and commendable proposals that he has made could be effectively undermined by the current EEC directive called "Mutual Recognition of Firearms Certificates" which can now be imposed in Britain against our will under the Single European Act, as the directive provides that by 1992 Community nationals could wander around Britain with Kalashnikovs so long as they have a valid licence issued in Sicily, Lisbon or Dublin? Will the Government do everything in their power to ensure that that directive is rejected by the majority of the EEC?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, Sir. The directive to which my hon. Friend refers sounds thoroughly undesirable to me. The Government's position is that we would regard any directive or draft directive as wholly unacceptable if it fetters our ability to impose the kind of gun control that the House considers appropriate.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: No, I am sorry. Much as I dislike disobliging my hon. Friend, I intend to continue.

The next major proposition related to mail order. A number of the proposals that I have already outlined have an impact on mail order firms. However, we are concerned about the law which relates to the dispatch and carriage of guns and we are looking into that. I must say that I was surprised and pleased to hear that the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall)—not a natural ally of mine —supported my reservations on the amendment so far as it relates to mail order.

I wanted to consider some of the specific points that have been made during the debate. Compensation was raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), Kingswood and Dumfries. We have not come to a conclusion on that matter. However, there are real problems of principle and practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury made a distinguished contribution. In the course of his remarks he made five points of substance. First, he referred to clubs. I agree with his comments on that. There is no reason to suppose that the law is not effective, but we propose to examine the law to see whether further checks are necessary. Secondly, he made a very important point about amnesty. He said that when weapons are handed to the police as part of an amnesty, they should not be available to return to a pool of illegally held weapons. I agree with that important point. Thirdly, he said that there should be photographs on certificates. We will look at that valuable suggestion. Fourthly, he referred to specialist firearm squads within forces. That practice is already being adopted. Finally, he made an important point about the recording of guns and was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), the latter in an intervention. We are giving urgent consideration to a method of recording the number and identity of shotguns. However, we must take into account the resource implications.

The hon. Member for Greenwich suggested that all guns should be kept at a club. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood disagreed and so do I. It would not be a sensible rule to apply universally because in some cases it would be inappropriate for a particular gun owner or gun and in any event it would make the arsenal a target.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood referred to the importance of safeguarding guns when they are in transit from the place of security to the point of use. That is a very important point that we must address. However, I take account of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, who was anxious that we should not impose impossible conditions during the period of transfer. We will do our best not to do that.

I welcome the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries that, in future, magazines in semi-automatic guns should be restricted to two cartridges. I am sorry that he considers that there has been a lack of consultation. In fact, we have been consulting fairly widely, and we propose to continue to do so. I take on board his point about the collection of antiques.

I fancy that it would be for the benefit of the House to proceed to the next business. Therefore, I conclude by apologising to those hon. Members to whom I have not responded in detail. I shall be writing to them.

Later this Session—we hope before Christmas—we intend to introduce legislation which will improve firearms control. In framing that legislation, we shall pay careful attention to what has been said in the debate. We must strike a fair and proper balance between the need and demand for greater gun control and the proper and legitimate interests of the shooting community.

I believe that our proposals will substantially improve firearms control but will not impose unreasonable or unjustifiable burdens upon those who shoot. It is in that spirit that I invite the House to accept the amendment that stands in the name of my right hon. Friend.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 314.

Division No. 33] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House believes that the time has come for a strengthened system of firearms controls; welcomes the announcement by the Home Secretary on 22 September of the main conclusions of the study of ways in which firearms legislation might be improved; supports the need for further urgent but careful and detailed consideration of other possible measures under review; and endorses the Government's intention to announce shortly the outcome of this examination and to introduce new firearms legislation during this session of Parliament.

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Statement)

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In exchanges on a point of order earlier a request was made for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a statement to the House about the financial markets and their economic implications for the United Kingdom. The Chancellor of the Exchequer chose not to make such a statement, but in exchanges thereafter the Opposition made an offer to change the next debate to cover that subject and to enable the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take part — [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] That offer by the Opposition would have permitted the Chancellor to make a statement now and to tell the House what he should have told it earlier without having been forced to come here, but it has not been accepted.

I ask the Government, through you, Mr. Speaker, whether they intend to make a statement today. If there is no such intention, may we insist that a statement be made tomorrow at the latest? The Chancellor of the Exchequer has already spoken to the stock exchange, but he is accountable to the House of Commons, not the stock exchange.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): It is open to the Shadow Cabinet to choose the subject for debate today. Following the earlier exchanges, there were discussions through the usual channels. I think that it would be wrong, and not in the interests of the House as a whole, to seek to change the business at such short notice.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a long-standing engagement in the City which I am certain he is right to fulfil. I cannot for one moment accept the Opposition's strictures.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Rumours are floating around the Palace of Westminster that every pressure is being applied to stop a statement being made and to prevent the Chancellor being questioned. It is extremely unfortunate that once again the House is being treated with contempt. The Chancellor is to make a statement later tonight on the subject on which we wish to question him, but he refuses to come to the House. In view of the importance of this subject to our constituents—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Winnick: The matter is of importance to our constituents in terms of their jobs, which the Opposition regard as crucial, even if the Government do not. Will you, Mr. Speaker, ensure that the Chancellor makes a statement at 10 o'clock tonight?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be helpful if I repeat what the House already knows. I am not in a position to insist that the Chancellor of the Exchequer makes a statement.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious that the Opposition are indulging in no more than synthetic outrage. If the Opposition are so concerned about the stock market, which sustained its biggest falls last week, why did the Leader of the Opposition not question my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Leader of the

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

House earlier? The Opposition show synthetic concern because they made a mistake in choosing the topic of debate for today.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. One of the changes that has taken place today in the fall of the stock exchange and the changes throughout the world is that it is reported that the underwriters have asked for the BP flotation later this week to be ——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rees: The underwriters and others have asked the Government not to proceed with this major part of their policy which was a major factor in the general election. this House ought to be told what the Government's response will be. Everyone else has been talking about it, but the Chancellor is not doing his duty by this House on this issue, and the Leader of the House ought to do something about it.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm the rumour that when the Shadow Cabinet met they failed to agree on today's debate because they could not reach a united view on anything to do with the stock exchange?

Mr. Speaker: I never confirm rumours.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have just been asked whether you could persuade the Government to make a statement, which is obviously very urgent. You replied that you were not in a position to force them to make a statement. However, will you confirm that you have control over private notice questions? I understand the convention of the House that you never allow a discussion about whether private notice questions have been submitted or whether the application was turned down. But will you confirm that it is possible for a private notice question application to be made at any time and not merely at Question Time? In that case, it would be possible for an application to be made that would enable you to decide that the Chancellor should come to the House at this stage and answer questions that hon. Members wish to ask rather than going off to the stock exchange. I hope that you will confirm that we can put these questions at this time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) knows that I have no authority to extend Question Time to later in the evening. There are precedents for statements to be made later in the day, but never private notice questions.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I suggest that in the present situation it might be unwise, and probably pointless, for the Chancellor to make a statement until he has had time to reach agreement with his opposite numbers in the G7 countries? We would be most unwise to press him to make a partial statement at this time.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are one of the important people who safeguard the rights of Back Benchers, and the Opposition in particular, in a system of democracy that holds the Executive accountable here in this House. It is clearly a calculated act of political cowardice for the Government to refuse to come here to make a statement. It is therefore incumbent upon us and, I suggest, you to ensure that there is full accountability from a group of people in government who are not giving the information——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Arrogant bastards.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Did I hear a very unparliamentary expression?

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Cryer: In fact, it is an erosion of our democratic principles when the Government fail to come to the House when every other source of public communication in the country and abroad is discussing these very issues. Parliament is being denied the information, and that is an outrage to our parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before tempers rise too much, will the hon. Member who made that unparliamentary expression now withdraw it?

Mr. Sedgemore: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Opposition's sudden concern for the stock market and their apparent forgetfulness of the importance of the national curriculum may strike you as odd, as it does me. On a more substantive point, has not the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) given the game away with his usual felicity of expression when he said that my right hon. Friend had lost a few bob last week? In other words, there is no urgency about this matter. Had there been, could not the Opposition have applied to your office before 12 o'clock today to do something about it?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I think you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that on Friday several attempts were made with regard to another important issue to get the Attorney-General to the Dispatch Box to answer charges that had been made the day before. As a result, and it was almost unprecedented, the Attorney-General had to come here at 2.30 pm to answer questions from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the ANC plot. It was important that those questions were put. I am not so sure that we got very satisfactory answers, but that is another argument.

On this occasion the Chancellor has ignored all the pleas to come to the House to answer questions about the serious crisis in the stock exchange and the casino economy generally. You, Mr. Speaker, know that these matters were raised earlier last week. At the time when I did so the Chancellor was on television preaching to Reagan and telling him to get his house in order, yet he is not prepared to come to the House and to deal with the matter here. It would not be a bad idea if pressures were put upon the right hon. Gentleman, because he is treating Mr. Speaker with contempt as well. He is going off to the stock exchange with a £40 dinner in front of him no doubt, yet the House of Commons is not allowed to question him when there will be unemployment and cuts in social services as a result of all this. Those are the matters about which Labour Members are concerned, and the Chancellor ought to be made to do his duty to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. None of this has anything to do with the Chair. This is an Opposition Supply day and an important debate is to follow in which a large number of hon. Members wish to take part. There will be opportunities to discuss this matter later this week. There will be Trade and Industry questions on Wednesday and the Chancellor himself will be present for Treasury questions on Thursday. There will be opportunities then to question him, but I can do nothing about it now.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that as late as last Thursday the Opposition had the opportunity to determine the subjects for today's debates, yet not until today have they suddenly taken it into their head, and to their great surprise, that there are problems on the world exchange markets. Will you confirm that it is thoroughly mischievous for the Opposition to raise this today when they know perfectly well that it is simply an attempt to switch the business in order to embarrass the Government and Ministers? Given that it has taken until today for the Opposition to notice that there is a problem on the stock exchange, is not this an example of their trying to disrupt the business quite gratuitously?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I confirmed the hon. Gentleman's initial point earlier this afternoon.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a new Member who is very naive in the Chamber, I find it difficult to understand why, when one third is wiped off share values, the Chancellor should go to the City of London rather than coming to the House to make a statement. Can you offer me some guidance on how serious an economic crisis has to be before the right hon. Gentleman comes to speak to the House?

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): It is far more responsible for the Chancellor to try to calm the nerves of the City than to try to calm those of Opposition Members, whose every utterance is damaging the economy.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many hon. Members—perhaps even a majority—are now in favour of televising the proceedings of the House. The purpose of that would be, presumably, to show the world outside how immediately relevant our proceedings are to what people are discussing outside. May we assume, in pressing for a statement in a bipartisan attempt to solve the problem, that all hon. Members—including the many Conservative Members who are so anxious that our proceedings should appear to be relevant—are equally anxious to hear a statement on this matter that everyone is discussing?

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Opposition maintain that there is a crisis now, and are asking for a statement. I understand that the stock exchange closed 111 points down. At 12 o'clock, the closing point at which Opposition Members could have put down a private notice question, it was substantially further down. It was their choice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, hon. Members should not refer to any application that may or may not have been made.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will not the Leader of the House help you, Mr. Speaker, and the whole House by saying that he is prepared to see the Chancellor between now and 10 pm to make arrangements for a statement to be made then, so that we may proceed with the business? Would it not be seriously misleading both the House and the country for anyone to be given the impression that—necessary though it is to secure accountability—the making of a statement by the Chancellor, either here or in the City, will do anything to ease the position on the markets?

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There must be something wrong when we hear the Opposition championing capitalism. For Opposition Members to talk about trying to defend capitalism is hypocrisy of the highest order. What the House needs is for those of us who really care about the world outside the stock market to get on with our work and leave the country alone. The Socialists help no one else; they only try to help themselves.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It will be within your recollection that at half past three this afternoon I raised the precedent of Mr. Speaker King granting a private notice question application against the wishes of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Callaghan—as he now is—on what was, at the time, a rumour of a loan. There is also the precedent, in 1976, of Mr. Speaker Selwyn Lloyd granting private notice questions on delicate financial matters. Has there been a change of policy by the Chair on granting private notice questions on what are, admittedly, delicate financial matters when the markets could be affected?

Mr. Speaker: Of course, every application is considered carefully on its merits. I have now had an opportunity to look up the precedent. It was at a time when the Government were seeking a loan, and I do not consider that the situations are comparable.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may be for the convenience of the House to know that I attended most of the seminar at which the Chancellor was speaking today. It was not for members of the stock exchange, but for a large group of leading industrialists whose companies are quoted on the stock market. It was a long-standing engagement, whose cancellation would have caused considerable dismay in the City and among manufacturers and industrialists throughout the country. Surely there was much more purpose in my right hon. Friend's speaking to those industrialists than in his responding to the braying and baying of Opposition Members.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not the Chancellor of the Exchequer insulting the House by refusing to come here and make a statement on what is clearly a matter of grave significance for the economy? Not only does the right hon. Gentleman physically resemble Nero, but he is clearly adopting the same attitude. Will you confirm, Mr. Speaker, that you have the power to order the fat bounder to be dragged here from the dinner table?

Mr. Speaker: First, I have not that power. Secondly, I dislike that expression, which I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw.

Mr. Banks: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I shall say "the corpulent gentleman".

Mr. Speaker: That is almost as bad.

Mr. Banks: Is it possible, then, for the corpulent and right hon. Gentleman to be brought here in a tumbril? May we, moreover, have an assurance from the Leader of the House that the recently-announced resignation of the Lord Chancellor is in no way connected with this matter? Perhaps he holds shares on which he has lost money.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you explain why Opposition Members seek to invite my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to make a statement about the current effective and efficient running and growth of the British economy? If they are seeking clarification on what to do with their shareholdings and exposed option positions, perhaps they should telephone their stockbrokers.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, despite any opposition that might be placed before you by the Government Chief Whip or any Minister, you have a right under private notice question procedure to grant a debate? In the event that a private notice question was submitted by my hon. Friends tomorrow — I am not saying that it will be—will you confirm that you would be free of pressure to decide in favour of an expression of opinion by my hon. Friends who are in the Chamber this evening?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a hypothetical question at the moment; the hon. Gentleman must wait until tomorrow.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you recall for the benefit of the House whether in January 1975, when the FT index was standing at 146, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) came to make a statement to the House about how he had managed to reduce confidence in the British economy to a point at which the index stood at one tenth of its present level?

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you are aware of the anxiety of the small, rather than the large, investors, who are of as much concern to us as to the Government. Is it not incumbent on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come to the House to try to explain the effects of the Government's policy today on the dramatic fall in the stock exchange, and the effect on those small investors? Will you, Mr. Speaker, use your good offices to ensure that the Chancellor comes to make that explanation, not tomorrow, but today?

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will know through the usual channels, the Opposition have been pressing the Chancellor to come to the House and make a statement since the House reassembled last Wednesday. While my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was referring to the attendance in the Chamber of the Attorney-General on Friday, Conservative Front Benchers said that he had volunteered. Our problem to date is that we depend on the Chancellor's volunteering to make a statement. Will you confirm, Mr. Speaker, that we do not have to depend for ever on the Chancellor making a statement, because it lies within your powers to accept a private notice question that would require his attendance in the House?

Mr. Speaker: I look carefully at every private notice question application and consider it on its merits.

Education

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on consultation on the Government's education proposals. I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. As this debate has started somewhat late, I make a special appeal for brief contributions from both the Back and the Front Benches.

7.40 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House believes that the interests of the nation's children require that any major educational changes should be based upon broad public agreement: notes that the Secretary of State for Education and Science has generally allowed six weeks only for the responses to his consultative documents to be submitted and has made clear that he will ignore most of those responses: condemns Her Majesty's Government for making a mockery of the consultative process: and calls for the suspension of all proposals for legislation so that proper public consultation and debate can take place upon proposals which, if implemented, would fail to improve genuinely parental choice, impose unnecessary additional burdens on schools and teachers and seriously damage the education of the nation's children.

The Conservative party's general election manifesto pledged this Government to widespread change in the nation's education system. However, in some parts of that manifesto the Prime Minister has decided to stand on her head — for example, on the national curriculum. Two years ago, in the White Paper "Better Schools", the Prime Minister emphatically ruled out a national curriculum. We are now told that it is to be the centrepiece of these reforms.

In other cases, there have been the gimmicks of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. The so-called city technology colleges were incorporated in the manifesto. As for the rest of the education system, the pledges originated with the extreme right-wing Hillgate group and an assemblage of little-known Tory Back-Benchers, who called themselves the no-turning back group. In its preposterous pamphlet, "Save Our Schools", this band of 13 set down in detail all the schemes in the manifesto for the creation of central state schools — opted-out schools as they are known—and for so-called open admission, and other hair-brained schemes for the balkanisation of the nation's education service. It was on the basis of these assertions—to call them ideas would be to do an injustice to the English language—that the Government now claim a mandate for embarking in haste on the greatest and least considered upheaval of the education system that this country has ever seen.

Whatever won the election for the Conservative party, it was not its education policy. Labour was further ahead on education by the end of the election campaign than it had been at the beginning. That was thanks, in large part, to the excellent advocacy of my good and hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), but it was thanks, too, to the quite separate efforts of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education and Science. It will be recalled that the Prime Minister set the hares going as to whether opted-out schools could charge fees, select their own pupils and pay teachers higher salaries. Each of the Prime Minister's statements had to be disowned by the Secretary of State as soon as he heard about them, having turned on his car telephone about six hours too late.

In its summer edition of "Crossbow" the Bow Group commented acidly that the education policy

"has failed the unpredictability test"

and confirmed that the policy had indeed been "cobbled together" at the last minute. Since the Bow Group numbers among its patrons the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Employment, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Bow Group is presumably in a position to know.

A poll in *The Sunday Times* just after the election showed that many more parents were opposed to the plans for schools to opt out than were in favour. Evidence in the same paper yesterday showed that that trend is accelerating, with the Conservatives losing the argument on education.

In the course of this debate, the Secretary of State will no doubt plead the doctrine of the mandate in the face of mounting hostility to his plans, but whatever the arguments about the nature of the mandate for his proposals, the Secretary of State has no mandate whatever for the timetable that he and the Prime Minister are now seeking to impose upon a reluctant House and nation. The manifesto was wholly silent on the timetable. So, too, were the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State throughout the election campaign.

Nor, indeed, was the Secretary of State explicit about the timetable in the debate on the Loyal Address just four months ago. Instead, what we had then from the Secretary of State were honeyed words about consultation:

"There will be a debate not just in the House but in the country. We want to listen to people in the education system."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1987; Vol. 118, c. 586.]

The honey turned to treacle when the Secretary of State addressed the Council of Local Education Authorities in July. His words deserve to be repeated. He said:

"I readily acknowledge . . . the need to take account of the expertise and experience of local authorities in the delivery of education. We shall listen carefully to the comments of representatives of local government . . . Let us now work together to consolidate the progress we have made . . . The Government's policies will not be effective unless they secure the co-operation of the education service and the schools".

That was the promise. How different, how cynical, has been the practice. Five major consultation documents were published in July — on collective worship and on admissions, on 7 and 9 July respectively, and one on financial delegation on 20 July. Those three consultation documents set ludicrously short deadlines for the receipt of comments—by the second week of September.

The Secretary of State then showed even more contempt for the House by publishing the two most important documents, on the national curriculum and on opting out, on the very last Friday — 24 July — of the Session, after most hon. Members had left for their constituencies. His deadline was 30 September. The Secretary of State chose this period for listening very well, when most people and most institutions were not available to talk to him. Of the nine weeks that he allowed for response, six were during the school summer holidays when parents, teachers, local education authorities and national bodies had all dispersed.

The Secretary of State bleats on about parental choice. What kind of choice have parents been offered in this consultation exercise when, to formulate their views on matters which will have a profound effect on their children's lives, the Secretary of State gave them and their schools just three weeks to comment on the national

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curriculum and opting out, and just one week — one week of term—to respond to the document on so-called financial delegation, which may force parents and governors to choose between an adequate supply of books, or the redecoration of classrooms, or an adequate supply of teachers? "By their deeds shall ye know them." For this Secretary of State, for this Prime Minister, parental choice is simply a hollow phrase. Parents and their children are simply pawns in a ruthless exercise to destroy our system of free education, provided by local communities.

What kind of choice has been given to parents in inner London by the Secretary of State, who has allowed just five weeks for responses to a scheme that will disrupt education across inner London when, even to close one tiny school, local authorities have to consult for eight weeks? In a survey that we conducted in September of a representative sample of 30 local education authorities, 97 per cent. had been unable, in the time, to consult parent-teacher associations, and 90 per cent. had been unable to consult school governors. In only 62 per cent. of cases was there time to consult the full education committee, and in only one case the full council.

To all this the Secretary of State may respond by referring to the thousands of responses that he has received —to the aggregate of 10,650 responses from individuals and 3,300 responses from institutions and bodies, as he told me last Thursday in a written answer. But the scale of the response should be of no comfort to him. It shows not compliance or agreement with his timetable but simply anger and concern about what he is proposing to do and how he is proposing to go about it—just as the scale of the response in Scotland shows unremitting hostility to the ideas of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

It takes a rare skill to unite the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Secondary Heads Association, all the parent's organisations and local authority associations, as well as every wing of the Church of England, including the Prime Minister's favourite bishop, Dr. Graham Leonard, the Lord Bishop of London. The Secretary of State has achieved that improbable feat.

The Secretary of State is aware of the opposition to his proposals and has had detailed analyses of the responses prepared for him by his Department. But the Secretary of State is so scared of the scale of opposition against him that he has refused my request to publish any of those analyses. I do not need to quote from the Secretary of State's erstwhile enemies; his friends will do. The Conservative Education Association, of which Mr. Phillip Merridale — a former chairman of the Association of County Councils—is a leading member, damned these proposals as "ideological extremism", and said that unless they were significantly modified the Bill

"could lead to a drop in educational standards".

The ILEA opt-out proposal was described as "narrow Toryism." The Association of County Councils, which is dominated by Conservatives, has accused the Secretary of State of paving the way for

"an educational dictatorship of a type this country has consistently resisted."

That is a point that Conservative Members should consider when they take account of the fact that written into the draft Bill are no fewer than 31 separate occasions when the Secretary of State will be taking new powers under this central Administration.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that, with regard to new powers and dictatorships, one of the points that has not been to the fore is paragraph 33 of the consultation paper, on the curriculum in which the Secretary of State says that he will not only specify what qualifications and examinations will be offered in schools but that he will put, on a statutory footing, approval of the syllabuses or courses leading to those qualifications and that that will replace the existing free examination secondary school council? Is that not intolerable, because it will lead to educational dictatorship?

Mr. Straw: I share my hon. Friend's anxiety about that further degree of centralisation.

Dr. David Muffett, who is the Conservative chairman of Hereford and Worcestershire education committee, and who is no Tory wet, damned

"the decision intemporately to accelerate the legislative process."

The Bow Group said

"the idea of state schools opting out convinces no one."

The Secretary of State has even been unable to persuade the education committee of his own county, Surrey, in which his constituency of Mole Valley is situated, to back his plans. The Surrey education committee attacked the plans, and the county education officer, Mr. Malcolm Pinchin, made a plea to his Secretary of State. He said:

"I hope he will sit up and listen."

I must tell Mr. Pinchin that that is a vain hope.

In June and July the Secretary of State told the world that he would listen, but he has now blocked his ears. Who can believe that the very same man who 10 weeks ago spoke of partnership, of working with the local authorities, of wanting the co-operation of the education service and its schools and of listening to what he was told should, at the Conservative conference, arrogantly and contemptuously dismiss all those who had taken him at his word but dared to oppose him by saying:

"I do not intend to delay implementing our policies. I have no intention of changing our manifesto commitments.

I will only consider proposals which will enhance and complement them."

The Secretary of State was not saying that he will listen, not that he wants partnership, not that he wants co-operation, but that he will listen only when people tell him what he wants to hear.

How does that square with the statement of his Parliamentary Secretary in the Lords, Baroness Hooper, who said:

"The Secretary of State has said that he intends to move ahead only with broad agreement." — [*Official Report, House of Lords,* 15 July 1987; Vol. 488, c. 1070.]

If what the Secretary of State said at the Tory party conference was to be the basis of the consultation — evidently from the cheers from behind him it was—why did the Secretary of State not make that clear when he started this exercise, or at any stage in the debate on the Loyal Address, or in his speech to the Conference of Local Education Authorities? He could have spelt out this critical qualification: not that he wanted the genuine views of parents, teachers, governors, or LEAs about the future of this nation's education service, but that he simply wanted to use those people, to plunder them for ideas to provide the detail about the manifesto commitments that he and the Prime Minister had so lamentably failed to provide in the election.

The House and this country deserve an apology from the Secretary of State for the way in which they have so grievously been misled. The very art of consultation implies that others may have greater wisdom; that it is worth them expressing their view. Consultation is a part of our democratic process. It is no wonder that the Conservative Association of County Councils spoke of fears of dictatorship.

In one speech after another the Secretary of State has preened himself by comparing his new Bill with the 1944 Act that it will, in large part, replace. In his conference speech the Secretary of State said:

> "This will be the most important piece of educational legislation since 1944."

Just before referring to that point the Secretary of State referred to Henry IV's Statutes on Education. I am not surprised that Henry IV is the Secretary of State's hero. It was Henry IV who played a dubious part in the downfall of Richard II. It was Henry IV of whom the Bard wrote, if I can find it——

Mr. Terry Hayes (Harlow): It is in part II.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this meant to be helpful?

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Straw: In fact, it was Henry VI part III, and it was Henry VI talking about Henry IV. He said:

> "Henry IV by conquest got his crown, t'was by rebellion against his king."

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State, let it never be forgotten, was once the vicar on earth for the former Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The Secretary of State ran the right hon. Gentleman's election leadership campaign against the present Prime Minister in 1975. In the debate on the Loyal Address the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said:

> "To compare this as a great development with what Rab Butler did would make that great man turn in his grave."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1987; Vol. 118, c. 670.]

And so it would, not only for the content of the legislation, but the manner in which it is being pursued. If the Secretary of State wishes a place in history next to Rab Butler—as Education Minister, if not two times loser for the Tory party leadership—he should begin by following his wise example. Rab Butler did not use the urgency of war to ride roughshod over his critics. He set out painstakingly to listen—and to change his mind. He published the "Green Book" in the summer of 1941; he did not publish a White Paper until July 1943 and did not publish the Bill until 13 December 1943.

We all understand the wish of any Government to get their legislation through within a Parliament, but what is the rush? Butler's Bill went through Parliament, with extensive consultation, within the lifetime of a normal Parliament. What would be lost if the Secretary of State took his time and provided a worthy successor to the 1944 Act? If it would be too much to expect an aspirant for the leadership of today's Tory party to follow in the steps of Rab Butler, why not follow the example of his immediate predecessor, whose Right-wing credentials are far more impeccable than his own? Sir Keith Joseph listened and took time. The contrast between the Secretary of State's railroading of the Bill and Sir Keith Joseph's careful approach to the 1986 Bill bears comparison. Sir Keith Joseph published a Green Paper in 1984, and a White Paper entitled "Better Schools" in 1985, but did not publish the Bill until 1986.

We know that the Secretary of State's concern for state education is skin deep. Like those of every one of his Cabinet colleagues, his children were opted-out of the state system years ago. He has ensured that, whatever upheaval occurs in the state system, the private sector remains untouched by his proposals, even by the national curriculum, which will have no legal force in private schools. These proposals will dramatically and directly affect the 93 per cent. of children who are in local authority schools, and their parents and teachers. These proposals will damage the education of our children. They may blight a generation if they go through unamended. It is time that the Secretary of State listened to teachers, educationists and those on his side, but above all to parents, whose name he often takes in vain, and to the children on whose behalf they speak.

I commend this motion to the House.

7.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, to leave out from "require" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> "that there should be no delay in the introduction of the Government's proposals for education reform, which have been endorsed by the electorate and provide an essential programme of action to deliver wider choice to parents, greater autonomy for schools and colleges to manage their resources in the best interests of the pupils and students, and higher standards of performance throughout the education system; congratulates the Government on the extent of its consultation and its willingness to continue consultation on the details of its proposals; and welcomes the scale of response to the consultation."

Obviously the new Opposition spokesman on education wanted a debate at the earliest opportunity in order to expose at full throttle the Labour party's righteous indignation to our proposals. Indeed, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen were so keen to debate the subject that earlier this afternoon they asked for it to be replaced by a debate on the economy. So much for their concern about education. At the first opportunity to discuss education since the recess they are prepared to drop the subject. On the matter of the urgency of getting our proposals on to the statute book, I can say only that it is a pity they were not on the statute book many years ago when the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was at school because, clearly, he would have benefited from the national curriculum proposals on English literature and English history. He managed to misquote Shakespeare and mix up Henry IV with Henry VI. There is about 80 years between the two.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman slandered Henry IV by saying that he had a direct hand in the murder of Richard II. Even worse, he said that he had a "dubious part"—an innuendo. I must give way so that he can justify his innuendo about Henry IV.

Mr. Straw: The reference to the Secretary of State's hero, Henry IV, appeared in "Henry VI, part III".

Mr. Baker: I understand and follow that. Nevertheless, it was a stumbling, fumbling quotation that did little to

[Mr. Baker]

enhance the hon. Gentleman's argument. I quoted the statute of Henry IV because it laid on the statute book a right for any man or woman in the realm to send their children to whatever manner of school they chose. It is an interesting example of early parental choice. It is an example of Lancastrian values.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If hon. Members will forgive me, I believe that several maiden speakers wish to contribute to the debate and I do not want to take too long.

The legislation that we shall bring before the House next month will constitute the most sweeping range of education reforms since the war. The hon. Member for Blackburn acknowledged that. I make no apology for that. It is the measure of the need for change. We are responding to the concern and worry of parents about standards. They know that, in spite of the high standards achieved by some of our schools, too often children are not achieving as well as they could or as well as they should.

In all revolutionary change there is a powerful strand of evolution. The hon. Member for Blackburn gave the impression that there had been no debate about educational standards over the past decade. However, our proposals for the national curriculum, which I first set out to the Select Committee on Education in April, build on the national discussions started by Lord Callaghan, as he now is, at Ruskin over 10 years ago, the work of Her Majesty's inspectorate and others in developing wider agreement on the objectives of the school curriculum, and our White Paper "Better Schools" published in 1985. I hear that the hon. Member for Blackburn claims credit for the national curriculum because he chaired a Labour party working group on the subject in the 1970s. He half saw a good idea and buried it for 15 years. But lapsed virtue is better than no virtue.

If the hon. Gentleman's ideas were so good, why did he spend the rest of the 1970s as a special adviser, not at the Department of Education and Science, but at the Department of Health and Social Security and at the Department of the Environment? Clearly, a prophet is not honoured in his own party. I have not had the benefit of seeing the report. Will the hon. Gentleman lay a copy in the Library, together with the various responses that it drew? We would all find it interesting. I am sure that it should be submitted to the Chesterfield group of the Labour party as well.

Our proposals for financial delegation to schools and colleges build on the best practice of a number of local authorities. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that. Local financial management is nothing new. It is a widely supported principle already being enthusiastically taken up by local education authorities and schools in many different parts of the country. At least 21 LEAs have developed experimental schemes. This is one of those areas in which the introduction of change is already running ahead of the legislation.

More open enrolment, based on the concept of the standard number introduced in 1980, puts right a basic injustice of parents denied their choice of school where places exist and are unused. In practice, many local authorities already seek to ensure that available places in demand by parents are fully taken up.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I would like to press on.

Our proposals for grant maintained schools will restore diversity to our state system—a diversity so shamefully and wantonly destroyed by the Labour party when it got rid of the direct grant schools.

In our manifesto we told the people clearly what we intended and why. There was no hidden agenda. Since then we have issued 10 consultation documents setting out the details of our proposals in advance of legislation. I take it that these consultation documents are the real burden of the hon. Member for Blackburn's complaint. The higher education White Paper proposing changes in the structure and national planning of higher education was published as long ago as last April and since then we have published three supporting documents.

The hon. Member for Blackburn claims that the period of consultation since the election has not allowed those affected by the proposals to express their views. That belies the facts. There has been enormous interest in our consultation papers. Well over 100,000 copies of the various documents have been sent out in response to demand. That is on top of the 10,000 copies that we initially circulated to LEAs, churches, national bodies, parents' organisations and other bodies with an interest in our proposals. We have already received well over 14,000 responses. That is a very considerable response: evidence both of interest which our proposals have aroused and the care with which they have been considered. The timetable has been tight, but the responses show that those consulted have not found it unmanageable. Indeed, the responses precisely demonstrate that the object of this phase of consultation—to enable the Government to consider the views of the education service in drafting their legislation —has been fulfilled.

Mr. Straw: As the Secretary of State has had prepared for himself and his colleagues analyses of the responses, will he say, broadly speaking, what proportion of those 14,000 responses are in favour of his proposals and what proportion are against? If he cannot answer that now, will he place those analyses in the Library?

Mr. Baker: I have already replied to the hon. Gentleman, and the House will know that I have already arranged for the responses that we have had in consultation from all public bodies, institutions, governing bodies and local education authorities to be placed in the Library. We sent over two van loads last week, and more will be sent this week. We have had many responses from individual members of the public, particularly on the national curriculum. I do not intend to make those available, for the simple reason that we do not know whether a particular respondent would wish them to be made available. I think that the hon. Member for Blackburn would agree with that.

I have received analyses on many of the papers, but the analysis is a Civil Service and Government matter. As I have said, we have made all the responses available to the House. Others are free to analyse the papers and I believe that Labour party headquarters is well stocked with surplus staff ready to take on the task.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way to the spokesman for the Liberal party, but this should be the last time I give way.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State said that he was interested in the consultations because they would be helpful in drafting the legislation. If he intends to publish the Bill in mid-November, why does the consultation document on charging ask for returns by 30 November, a full two weeks later?

Mr. Baker: I made it clear in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman — I believe that it was public correspondence — that we do not intend to include proposals on charging in the first draft of the Bill because the consultation process has been extended. Local authorities have asked us to clarify the law on charging, and it is a very complicated matter. The first draft of the Bill will therefore contain no proposals on charging. *[Interruption.]* The Bill will be introduced in the Commons.

As I have made clear—and I wish to do so again today—the consultation does not end with the expiry of the deadlines on each document. In drafting the Bill we shall take account of comments received up to the point at which the text has to be finalised for introduction to the House. My discussions are continuing with the local authority associations, the churches and other organisations. Last week I was handed the CBI's response to the national curriculum consultation document. My door remains open. Many of the provisions in the Bill will follow the precedent of previous education legislation in setting a framework within which the details of implementation will be established by secondary legislation on which there will naturally be further and extensive consultation.

I shall explain to the House what that means. The national curriculum will be introduced only after the widest possible discussion and with the widest possible measure of agreement. That is why the reports of subject working groups will be published. I have set up two subject working groups and asked them to report by next summer. That is why the Bill will provide for a national curriculum council to consult education interests on my behalf before formulating specific advice on attainment targets, programmes of study and testing arrangements, and why I shall consult those interests again on the basis of draft statutory orders before seeking the approval of Parliament. We intend an open process, and that is what it will be.

That continuing process of consultation will inform all aspects of our proposals. For example, many have expressed concern about assessment and testing, although not, to be fair, the hon. Member for Blackburn, who has made plain his support for testing. In September he said:

> "There's no doubt that the parents want some objective yardstick against which to measure their children's achievement in education."

We agree, and we have asked a group of experts to come up with a coherent scheme of national testing and assessment to feed into the work of the subject working parties and the National Curriculum Council. Its report will be published and will form the basis of open discussion.

For example, the consultation has raised worries among some respondents that the national curriculum will be over-prescriptive, squeezing out time for important aspects of the school curriculum. We have asked the subject working groups specifically to develop attainment targets which embrace important cross-curricular themes and to develop programmes of study to support those attainment targets. The aim is to ensure that the national curriculum reinforces the best of existing practice in schools. The consultation process will ensure that these and other issues can be fully addressed.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way.

For example, many who welcome our proposals for financial delegation express concern about some detailed aspects, and we recognise that. The legislation will leave with local authorities the responsibility for producing schemes of local financial management for my approval. We have commissioned consultants to develop work on the most effective and cost-effective ways of moving forward, based on the best practice that already exists. Their report will be published, I hope, later this year. It will help us to work with local authorities and others to work through and find solutions to the problems.

The hon. Member for Blackburn then argues that the problem is not that we have not consulted, but that we are not listening. Let me make the position quite clear. I have stressed to the local authority associations and others that I would value their experience and knowledge in achieving our objectives. As I have already said, there are many detailed aspects on which I expect to work with the education service, many of them identified in the consultation exercise. But the solutions will have to be found within the policies and principles to which we as a Government are committed. That is why, for example, in a letter to the local authority associations I have asked them to put forward proposals

> "in the interests of establishing an agreed course within the bounds of the route marked out by the Government".

A consultation process is not the means constitutionally by which we reach final decisions, although it can help to inform the proposals and the public debate. Parliament is the final arbiter. In the full light of what we have learnt from the consultations, we shall submit our proposals to Parliament to decide whether they should be implemented.

No one will be surprised that the Labour party has chosen to debate procedures rather than the substance of our proposals today, as during the election campaign it showed that it was devoid of ideas on how to improve standards for children in this country. I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackburn, as he is trying to fashion a new education policy for the Labour party, but very little has changed. Just a few weeks ago, however, I heard one hesitant Labour voice asking some interesting questions. The following were some of them.

What should we be doing about the fact that fewer girls than boys take science and technology? Should local authorities be considering magnet schools? How do we involve parents more in their children's education? What are our proposals for monitoring the progress of each child against the peer group and against national standards? Are we rigorous enough in monitoring our schools to ensure that they are performing to standard? Those questions are on the right lines. They actually recognise the national debate of the past 10 years. But when the leader of the ILEA put them to his comrades in the Labour party he was roundly condemned. Not only do Labour Members not have any answers—they do not even like to have the questions asked.

Mr. Spearing: As the Secretary of State is asking questions, perhaps he will allow me to intervene.

Mr. Baker: I am not asking questions. Those questions were asked by a leading Labour spokesman.

As the *New Statesman* put it:

> "Neil Fletcher, and people like him, should have asked the hard questions years ago; they have been waiting to be asked for at least a decade since the James Callaghan 'Great Debate' on education ran into the sands. The Left did not face up to failures and to the manifest alarm of the mass of parents."

The reason for that silence is not difficult to find, and the hon. Member for Blackburn knows it. His party is the mouthpiece of the producers and not the consumers.

Mr. Spearing: No.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member for Blackburn recognises that. As he timidly put it:

> "people in some of the white-collared public sector unions not affiliated to the Labour Party may have too much influence in setting the agenda and the language used."

I do not know whether that was passed by the Chesterfield group, but the sentiment is impeccable. The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The reality is that the Labour party, imprisoned by the producers, has not dared to set any agenda at all. There is real mockery. It is we who have identified the questions and it is the Government who have proposed the answers — answers that will give greater choice to parents, freedom from doctrinaire interference, improved quality and better standards for all our children.

8.17 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I have listened with care to the Secretary of State and it seems to me that his argument falls into three basic parts.

First, the right hon. Gentleman said that there had been general discussion for a number of years about matters relating to education and to the core curriculum. That is perfectly true, but the right hon. Gentleman cannot use that as an argument because he knows that many of the participants in that discussion, although they agree that there should be more commonality in the curriculum, disagree profoundly with the Government's proposals. I number among those people not just the professionals and those involved in education, but many members of the Conservative party. The Secretary of State cannot say that, because there has been general discussion, about some aspects of education, the detailed proposals which he is putting forward, which are anathema to many, do not require the fullest public consultation.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman sought to argue that he was somehow merely enshrining best practice. Any rational, objective judgment leads one to the conclusion that that is not so. A large number of authorities, many of them Conservative-run, fall within the right hon. Gentleman's definition of best practice but disagree with his proposals in the most pungent terms. The right hon. Gentleman represents the Bill as the great education reform Bill, but he knows perfectly well that many of his proposals go very much further than best practice. That is the truth. He would be doing the House more of a service if he were to admit to that here, as he claimed it to be the case when the audience was the Conservative party conference rather than the House of Commons. The right hon. Gentleman's final defence was that, somehow or other, he had a mandate, a consensus, for the proposals. I shall refer to that.

However, first I should like to mention the slight jibing — not wholly unwarranted — for the Labour party's Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). He said that we were talking about procedures. For some who are not directly involved in education, consultation might be a procedural matter. It is pretty extraordinary that the Secretary of State sees it as a procedural matter, some arcane subject that should not concern the House of Commons. The opposite is the truth, and the Secretary of State knows it very well, for this is not a mere procedural matter. It is not an arcane detail —it goes to the heart of the Government's attitude on bringing in the proposals, which many regard as among the most damaging and divisive that the country has seen for many a long year. It goes to the heart of the Government's attitude towards education. It is not about procedures; it is about the honouring of promises. It is about testing the Government's seriousness to maintain education as a partnership, not dictated from the centre. It is about measuring the Government's true intent in dealing with choice and establishing whether this is the truth or a cover for more centralised control. It is about establishing what will be the climate of change that dominates a period of profound change in the education system as a result of the Government's proposals. What will that climate be? That is what it is about.

Many regard those changes as fundamental, damaging and divisive. I number myself among those people, although the stated aims of the Government and the Secretary of State are ones with which I would wholly concur. The right hon. Gentleman says that his aim is choice. We shall see. He says that his aim is improving standards. We shall see. No one in the House or elsewhere would wish to gainsay those aims. I subscribe to them. The question is not whether the aims are right but whether the mechanisms and the means of putting them into practice are right.

As the hon. Member for Blackburn said, one does not have to look to statements by Opposition parties to discover the view on the matter. I have taunted the Secretary of State with this before. Before the House went into recess, I asked him to produce a single reputable body involved in education, either a consumer or a producer, which backed his proposals. The Secretary of State always claims that we are talking about the producers. That does not apply to the National Confederation of Parent Teachers Associations, which agrees that the proposals are damaging, divisive, and dangerous and will be destructive to our education system. He does not even have to look outside his own party for such judgments. I shall mention just one of the many Conservative education authorities that have commented on the proposals.

West Sussex is under massive Conservative control. It will be instructive for the House to note what the education committee felt in its resolution of 8 September. The committee stated:

> "The Committee feel that not only are these proposals unlikely to achieve the Secretary of State's objective of improving educational standards, but the costs of their implementation would be very substantial and the financial provision could be directed more effectively in other ways to the benefit of the education service."

That is not the Opposition speaking. It is not the producers speaking, which the Secretary of State has found it easy to dispense with and attack. That is a Conservative education authority's reasoned comment on the Secretary of State's proposals. He cannot simply push such comments to one side as if they do not matter.

The Secretary of State claims that there is a consensus in the country and that the matter was discussed during the general election, so we can take it as read. But there is not even a consensus in his own party. That is the truth. If Conservative Back Benchers were more blunt, honest and frank, many voices would be raised against the proposals —a few courageous voices might even be heard tonight.

Against that background, I quote the words of Oliver Cromwell:

> "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."

There are few who know anything about education who agree with the proposals in detail——

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We are having a few history lessons tonight. I always find it extraordinary when Members of Parliament quote the words of Oliver Cromwell. He is the one figure in history who abolished us.

Mr. Ashdown: Yes, but after the monarch of the day had sought to do exactly the same thing. I shall not go into too much detail, but it is instructive for the House to remember that many of its rights and privileges date from that time.

I should like to ask the Secretary of State this question. In view of the comments even from his own party, the professionals, the experts, the head teachers whom he has called in aid in his support in the past, and from the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, will he not admit that he might be wrong? If he will, why has he conducted such a charade of a consultation process?

We are entitled to remind ourselves that in his speech on the Gracious Speech on 1 July he promised that there would be

> "a debate not just in the House but in the country."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1987; Vol. 118, c. 586.]

What sort of debate? Hon. Members, parents, teachers and those involved in education recall that promise and remind themselves that it has not been honoured. We have had a single-handed attempt to rewrite education over the brief months of the summer holidays when most are away.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): With respect, the hon. Gentleman, like the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), has slurred teachers by suggesting that they were not prepared to use any part of their holidays to look at the documents that we are discussing. All teachers have done so. I have talked to many who have done so and who have been involved in discussions all over the country. What is the hon. Gentleman talking about?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that most teachers have found it possible to react to the consultation papers, but he knows as well as I do, and the Secretary of State knows better than anyone, the anger and concern about people having to respond to those consultation papers in a rush. For example, many members of boards of governors are changed at the end of August, as the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will know well. What decent period of consultation can there be under those circumstances? In many cases, consultation papers have not even been available.

The process has been a farce, a charade. At best it has been a meaningless exercise and at worst it has been a deliberate attempt to provide a cover for the Government's intentions, indeed to provide a mechanism by which they can impose their own ideological prejudices irrespective of the views of others.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North might take account of other comments made by West Sussex, which will be instructive to him and others. It said:

> "There is great concern at the very short time allowed for comment which has not permitted any local consultation with governors, teachers, parents and other members of the local community. This is ironic in view of the Secretary of State's claim to value in particular the opinion of governors and parents."

That is the view of a Conservative association. The authority said that the lack of time was ironic in view of the Government's pretence of valuing the views of parents and others. Indeed, it is an irony. It is an irony that the Government pretended that they would hand power to parents and then made it clear that they were not prepared to listen to them. It is an irony that they pretended that they were interested in choice, but are not prepared to allow a realistic partnership and realistic consultation. It is an irony that the Government said that they wish to take politics out of education, yet by overturning a decent process of consultation they have imposed their own ideology in a way that those who follow will use as a premise.

I can imagine the roar of anger from Conservative Benches if a Labour or alliance Secretary of State had sought to impose those conditions without consultation and put so much power in the hands of the Secretary of State. The Government's failure to provide realistic opportunities for consultation with parents frankly exposes the lie behind their proposals. They are designed to put more power not in the hands of parents but in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. They are designed not to create reform through partnership, but to impose ideology, dictation and tighter control from the centre. They are designed not to preserve a unified education system, but to create a broken, fractured one. A divided education system for a divided nation — that is the charge to which the Secretary of State is now open. That is not a procedural matter; it goes to the heart, and it shows the lie that is at the heart of the Government's proposals about giving importance to the views of parents. By treating parents and the views of others with such arrogance during this period of consultation the Government have shown that they are interested only in imposing their ideology and wrecking our education system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): This is a brief debate and I hope that hon. Members will seek to make brief speeches.

8.31 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Following your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not take up many of the points made by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), except to say that, throughout all these consultations, the parents have been mentioned time and time again. The decision to opt out of schools, the decision to give more power to teachers in the schools, and so on, show that. I believe that the more power one gives to parents and to teachers in the schools, the better it is for the schools and children.

I realise that time is limited, but I want to refer to the matter of consultation, which is the basis of the debate tonight. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) mentioned polls. The poll that mattered was held on 11 June. Since that time, the Labour party has been looking

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

at its bellybutton, trying to change its policy, and hoping to get way with it before it pulls its shirt down again. Sometimes that is done openly, as in Chesterfield — I shall not describe the colour of that shirt, or even where it was made. I suggest that the party is now trying to catch up with consultation. *The Times Educational Supplement* said in its diary this week—I have never thought of that journal as being pro-Conservative, whatever Mr. Murdoch's other papers may be—that the Labour party is now the

> "party of educational standards, share ownership and the family."

That leaves something out. It is not the party of those things but it would like to be, because it believes that unless it becomes so it will remain for ever more on the Opposition Benches. We sympathise with right hon. and hon. Members in the Opposition. It is not very pleasant to be in their position. Now they say that they stand for share ownership and the family and consultation.

Where was the consultation when circular 10/65 went out? I was at the chalk face then. A draft went out to the local authorities, and I should like to know how it was changed in the light of their replies when the final circular went out. Similarly, when, in 1974, the Labour Government came to power again—one of those remiss events of history for which we can think of historical reasons — an Act was passed in 1976 that ended the selective schools in this country, and I do not remember a consultative paper at that time. That Act probably did more harm to working-class children in inner-city areas than anything else that has ever gone through the House.

If the Labour party wants to change its policies, I offer to help rewrite them. I have more time on my hands now, and I can help it make its policies more popular in the country — so much so that it will be cheered on both sides of the House.

Likewise, when the direct grant schools went, there was a three-hour debate in the House, and that was all. I do not remember any other consultation about that. Obviously, the electorate noticed at that time that there was not much consultation. They agreed to punish the Opposition, and remembered what they had done, at the next general election. But there is no doubt that the electorate disagreed with Labour's policy and lack of consultation at that time. I remember how the Labour party claimed to have a mandate for circular 10/65 and for ending the selective and direct grant schools. Speaking of mandates, I have here an interesting document, "The Next Moves Forward". It is not exactly written in Shakespearian terminology, but it is in good 20th century prose. It clearly states:

> "First, we will establish a National Core Curriculum."

So people knew what they were doing when they voted on 11 June. The document went on to say that it would give schools more control over their own budgets—that part is even underlined in a different colour. The colour is blue, which is a good colour, and it was well liked on 11 June, when it was a popular colour. It promised, thirdly to "increase parental choice." So, time and time again, we said exactly what we were doing and did it.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that the consultations go on. Tonight's debate is part of the consultation process. My right hon. Friend has said that, until the proposals are set in concrete, consultation will go on all the time. That is what many teachers and many people in the Conservative party would like. I hope that, consultation will bring change to some parts of the proposals. I am concerned by the fact that 80 per cent. of the curriculum is laid down — I think that that is too much, especially when it leaves out a second foreign language, the classics, home economics, business studies, art, music, drama and religious studies. That needs to be examined; some bright children should be studying two or three languages by the age of 15 or 16. What is proposed would be too tight a constraint upon them. On the other hand, there are other pupils who would prefer more vocational studies, such as they are being given in most countries these days, capitalist and Communist alike. I trust that such studies would be included. More time should be given to children who are vocationally orientated so that they know what they are doing and can get the jobs they want.

The hon. Member for Yeovil talked about best practices. This is all about the better part of best. We were looking at best practices, and the better part is put in. I particularly hope that the consultation process——

Mr. Ashdown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I listened to him for quite a long time, and I disagreed with him entirely. I am approaching my peroration, and I do not want to be slowed down on my run in or I may hit a hurdle.

We have set an example: we have said what we are doing, we are holding consultations so that the amendments that people want can be put forward. When the Bill is laid before the House, it should be one that all of us, whatever drawbacks we may now feel it to have, can support entirely. I trust that the Bill will be cheered throughout the length and breadth of the country and that it will do for education what should have been done a long time ago—the tightening of standards and the raising of teacher morale throughout the country.

8.38 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) is always a good turn. When he got on to circular 10/65 I dreaded that he was going to quote from William the Conqueror, and probably not do so too well. Listening to the Secretary of State's speech, one never ceases to wonder at his bland effrontery. His amendment

> "congratulates the Government on the extent of its consultation and its willingness to continue consultation on the details of its proposals: and welcomes the scale of response to the consultation."

In heaven's name, we had about as much consultation during the summer holiday as we heard from the Chancellor of the Exchequer tonight about the state of the country—practically nothing, in spite of the Secretary of State's so-called van loads. He knows as well as we do that, on the Friday before the general election, the Prime Minister panicked. She was talking off the top of her head and she spoke such nonsense about education that every other Tory speaker on that day tried to undo the damage that she had done that morning. One of the people who tried hard was the Secretary of State, but he was defeated.

Not only did the Prime Minister talk off the top of her head but we now have a Bill that embodies that nonsense and that we all know is practically unworkable.

Conservative Members show a pitiful inertia even when the Back Benches are full. When the Prime Minister says something that frightens them they all crawl to her. It is appalling that throughout Britain on this issue of education there is deep feeling and worry and that that concern is not at all reflected by Conservative Members. The Secretary of State and the Ministers around him constantly get confused and try to prove that something which is unworkable is workable. That is because practically none of them ever went through the state system of education, although some Conservative Members may say that somebody once did. The state education system is now in the hands of a group of people who are ignoramuses about it and do not know how it works or what to do with it. Those who are knowledgeable —and some of them were on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts with me—are terrified to say anything critical in case they get a kick in the teeth.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The hon. Gentleman should be a little careful about what he says. Not only did I and my children go through the state system of education, but my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education also went through it. It is a little dangerous for the hon. Gentleman to make comprehensive and sweeping statements.

Mr. Flannery: My statement was not at all dangerous. I said that some hon. Member would say that a Conservative Member had gone through the state system. There is no evidence in the Bill or in the speeches of Conservative Members that any of them did. If they did go through the state system, they have long since forgotten the experience because they are cutting education, and the Bill shows how much they hate the present education system. The Secretary of State called it the great education reform Bill and quoted Butler. In reality it is a deform Bill and does the opposite of the Butler Bill. It takes us back whereas he was taking us forward, after proper consultation.

This Bill requires immense debate, yet people were allowed only six weeks in which to say something about it, six weeks in which Parliament was in recess and the schools were on holiday almost from the same date. The education committees could not get together to discuss it because many of their members were on holiday, and the consultation process was an absolute farce. Therefore, no real consultation has taken place. What sort of mentality is it that tests children at 7, 11, 14 and 16? It is the mentality that teachers had when we were youngsters and Friday morning was test morning. We are to return to that state of affairs. In heaven's name, what is to be tested at the age of seven if we have a curriculum that is much wider? It is the three Rs that will be tested. We are returning to the 11-plus, and the broad general education that has existed for years for our children will be taken backwards instead of forwards.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said that the Government's aims are good. That is not true because they know that they are taking us back. Their aims are not good and that is why there is no consultation. They aim to deform a good education system by damning it with faint praise at the best and damning it with the mentality of the Hillgate group and the black paper that has spawned all this. The Government talk about grant maintained schools, but most parents do not even know what they are and do not know about the opting out system. The Prime Minister says that nearly all parents will opt out and the Secretary of State says that practically nobody will opt out. I wish that they would get together and make up their minds about it. If, as the Prime Minister says, all parents opt out, we will have a Department of Education and Science that looks like the Pentagon because it will have to try to control the masses whom the Prime Minister says will opt out.

The Government do not know what they are doing and they will create chaos in the education system because they are frightened of maddening the Prime Minister. She has said what is to be in the Bill and that is what is happening. Who have the Government consulted about the admission of pupils to maintained schools? What will happen when one school is full and another is nowhere near full? Will there be a vicious market-type struggle over who will keep a school open or who will close it? When this is put into action, it will hit the ordinary people and the children like a blow between the eyes. No one knows what open enrolment will mean. Have the details ever been talked through? Ninety per cent. of parents already send their children to the first-choice school. What will happen if a popular school is oversubscribed and other schools are undersubscribed?

Will head teachers be sent on some kind of accountancy course? I was a headmaster and I know that many schools now have to account for what they spend. There are experts in the local education authority who can see to that. Why do the Government so hate local democracy about which the Tory party once boasted? They want to destroy the local councils and they are beginning with the local education authorities. It is done with the spurious statement that they will give more power to parents. They are giving more power to central Government and taking it away from everybody, including the parents. They will charge for extras.

The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts has experience of the capitation allowance. We went to the salubrious areas and found that capitations there were already three times as big as the capitation allowance. Some Conservative Members know about that. The wealthy gave money to the schools and the schools had plenty of books. In the east end of my city of Sheffield there is poverty and everything is run down. We have had cut after cut from the Government. How much money can my constituents give education to pay for singing lessons and music lessons? My constituents do not have the money, but people in the well-to-do areas will be able to pay.

I now turn to the grant maintained schools and the opting out procedure. I beg the Secretary of State to go back and consult properly so that all of us can get into the consultation process and the Government can learn what it is all about. The Government are undertaking a step in education that is so backward that it will cause chaos throughout our good system. I saw the German system when I was a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, and I have also seen the French system. They are nowhere near as good as ours.

It is about time that we had a little patriotism from the Conservatives about the education system that they are trying to destroy. There are no computers in all the primary schools in West Germany—we have computers in practically every school—and there are hardly any

[Mr. Flannery]

computers in their secondary schools. If the Secretary of State has his way he will destroy the entire education system with what he calls his great reform Bill. Even at this late stage, the Minister and Conservative Members should face up to the Prime Minister, tell her about the grave dangers for our children's education, and tell her that we need more real consultation because during those six weeks when the schools were closed the House was also closed.

8.50 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I shall not pursue all the hares that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) started, but, if the education system is as good as he said, why did the then right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, Lord Callaghan, introduce the great debate on education? My children were educated in the state sector, and I was educated in the state sector, just as my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) and her children were. For the hon. Gentleman to imply that the children of Conservative Members are not educated in the state sector is absolutely and totally wrong, and he knows it.

This debate is a pre-emptive strike by the Opposition at the forthcoming Education Bill. Opposition Members recognise that that proposed legislation will do for education what the sale of council houses has done for tenants. It will increase the amount of freedom and choice that is available for the individual. It is an indication of the paucity of the argument of Opposition Members that their attacks have been concentrated on the time for consultation rather than on the substance of that consultation. Of course one would like to have seen even more time made available for consultation. That having been said, however, the Government have a clear responsibility to introduce as quickly as possible measures designed to improve the quality and standard of state education. There can be little doubt that the proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science will do exactly that.

In answer to parliamentary questions from me dated 20 and 24 July, the Secretary of State made it clear at that time that he was publishing a consultation document on the Government's plans to delegate to schools more control over budgets and also a consultation document on grant-maintained schools. The consultation document on the national curriculum was published even earlier than those two dates—on 9 July. Copies of those documents were widely distributed throughout the country. They were distributed to chief education officers of local education authorities and all national organisations that were known to be interested in education. I am advised that about 58,000 copies of the consultation document referring to the national curriculum were distributed and that about 7,500 replies were received. The Department of Education and Science received a massive response to those documents and that underlines the fact that, while the timetable may have been tight, it certainly was not impossible. The consultation documents are neither the beginning nor the end of the debate. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentlemen must contain themselves. There is too much sedentary noise.

Mr. Pawsey: It is worth while recalling that there has been substantial discussion on all the consultation documents. The Secretary of State spoke to the north of England education conference as long ago as last January, when he signposted the way forward for education in the latter part of the 20th century. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) reminded us, education featured prominently in the Conservative manifesto. Our proposals were then widely debated. Those proposals must have been partly responsible for the massive Conservative victory that we had only four months ago. We won our third consecutive victory on the proposals contained in the manifesto, and those proposals referred in detail to education.

While the formal deadline for the response to consultation documents was 30 September, I have not the slightest doubt that comments will be received and, more to the point, will be evaluated during most of the period during which the Bill will be considered. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) tried to argue that point from a sedentary position during the speech of my right hon. Friend. Clearly Opposition Members and the public will be able to make an input while the Bill is being discussed. Therefore, there will continue to be a substantial opportunity for comments to be made and registered during the next few months. Hon. Members, therefore, may feel that a fair and reasonable amount of time has been made available for interested parties to respond to those consultation documents.

Interestingly, I read in the magazine *Report*, published by AMMA, that, on the issue of financial delegation to schools and grant maintained schools, the question, "Will it work?" was answered by a qualified yes. In my opinion, that yes will be endorsed by the House and by parents and teachers. The proposals for the national curriculum for financial delegation to schools, for grant-maintained schools and for open enrolment will do much to ensure an improved standard of education for our children. I remind hon. Members that the great debate on education was opened by the then right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth in 1976, some 12 years ago. It was recognised 12 years ago that the education system required major overhaul. The proposals of the Secretary of State will ensure that the education system is overhauled and improved.

During the past 12 years the minds of educationists have been directed to methods of improving state education. It is nonsense to suggest that the consultation documents were the first indication that change was necessary. It has been indicated for years that change was necessary.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Member will forgive me if I do not, because time is pressing and there is at least one maiden speaker in the debate.

While the scope of the imaginative measures that have been introduced by my right hon. Friend may have taken Opposition Members by surprise, they will do a great deal to improve the quality and standard of education in our schools. I urge the House to reject the motion and to vote for the amendment.

8.56 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): It is appropriate that the motion being debated is on the question of consultation. In the debate no doubt issues involved in the consultation documents will be raised. I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and Science asking for an extension of the consultation period, following discussions I had with my local education committee and others. The Minister replied in a letter dated 15 September, which is a significant date relative to the consultation documents. I raised the interests of my constituents in the education proposals and I was fascinated that the last sentence of the letter stated:

> "We welcome your constituents' keenness to participate in this debate and look forward to receiving their comments in due course."

The closing dates for the consultation documents were 11 September, 16 September, 16 September, 30 September, 9 October, 16 October and 30 November, yet more than half of the closing dates were earlier than the date of my reply from the Minister. If the Minister and the Secretary of State thought it appropriate that consultation should continue, they should have made an announcement and said that consultation could continue for another month or two.

The people in my constituency to whom I have talked about the matter were worried about two things. The first was the proposals themselves and the six to eight weeks allowed for consultation. The second was the number of documents that were produced at the same time. My county is the northernmost county of England and is a long way from the Department of Education and Science. It takes some time for documents to reach us. Indeed, sometimes I think that they come by stage coach. But we received the documents and thought that we would have an opportunity to consult about them. I talked to as many people as I could. The matter was of key importance to the people in my area, whose major criticisms related to the limited consultation period and the fact that five documents were published at the same time.

The changes that were suggested in the documents were of great interest to my constituents, especially to parents and school governors. We were especially worried about the fact that our education committee, which was not scheduled to meet until August, had little opportunity to discuss the issues. More especially—this is where local democracy was challenged—the county council did not have the opportunity to discuss the issues because the time scale did not allow it. Indeed, the report from the education committee will go to the full council only this month. The democratically elected members of my county council—from all political parties—will not have had the chance to contribute to this debate.

Another criticism related to the range of changes proposed in the consultative documents. Many people in the education service thought that to introduce them in the time scale proposed, immediately following the implementation of parts of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, and bearing in mind the parts of that Act which have not yet been introduced, was likely to produce chaos and to be a programme for disaster. It says little for the Secretary of State's pious comments about wishing to offer wider involvement in education policies to everyone who is interested in education.

During the recess, I, with many other right hon. and hon. Members, made a point of consulting on the proposals. The first clear message that I received from people in the education service, especially head teachers, was that they wanted a period of stability and calm to allow schools to cope with their existing problems of staffing levels, resources, auxiliary help, accommodation, and morale—especially among teachers—as well as the development of the GCSE. The latter is causing great upheaval because of the shortage of teachers, ancillary staff, equipment and finance. The evidence from my constituency is that there will be even more serious problems in the near future. A report published in May by the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations confirmed that that is a problem in many other education authorities.

As well as being a Member of Parliament, I am chairman of a board of school governors in my constituency. It is extremely important to me because I started my public life as the secretary of a parent-teacher association. I am now chairman of the board of governors of the same school and have been involved with it for more than 20 years. The governors are conscientious, enthusiastic and responsible citizens. They have received no documents and have had no opportunity to consult. They will wish to consider the full implications of what is suggested in the legislation. I suspect that the same applies to boards of governors all over the country. They will all wish to participate in this planning exercise.

No one has yet mentioned the need for consultations with the teachers' unions. I understand—the Minister of State will correct me if I am wrong — that the professionals in the education service have had no direct discussions with the Secretary of State. That is contemptible. The first thing that a wise industrialist or commercial operator who wanted to make fundamental changes in the service that he provided or the business that he ran would do would be to talk to the work force and line management. The Secretary of State believes that that is not necessarily appropriate.

Perhaps a quote from the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, Fred Smithies, might cover everything in connection with the consultation. He said:

> "The haste with which these proposals have been cobbled together and the unacceptably brief period of time that has been allowed for consultation is indicative of the Government's determinaton to push ahead with its education philosophy without properly addressing the educational consequences of such a move."

It appears to some, and certainly to me, that the Secretary of State has an eye on bigger things. He needs to show his dynamic leadership by producing ill-considered proposals. I should remind the Secretary of State that leadership means nothing if he does not have a majority of support from those who do not hold his views.

9.5 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is right to aim for a Bill in this Session. We have had a rather depressing period in education — during which there has been a great deal of trench warfare. Education is now trying to move forward. Essentially the Bill would help that process. Of course, I must accept that there has been less time for consultation than I might have liked in an ideal world. It will be particularly important when the Bill comes before the House that the Committee stage is treated — as I know it will be — with great

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

seriousness. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be in charge of the Committee — and I mean no disrespect to my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I hope that we shall see the kind of Committee stage which shows that the Government are prepared to be flexible and which will be a worthwhile process of consultation.

I acknowledge that in one respect I have already said that there is one item in the Government package that could, if necessary, be held over. In the debate on the Loyal Address, I said that I thought that proposals for the opt-out provision had not yet had the elucidation or received the acceptance that I would have liked. If that is still the case in a few weeks' time, there is no reason why that provision should not be held over. Otherwise, we should press on. Essentially we should press on because education as a whole is in a mood to get away from the trench warfare and enter a constructive phase.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is absolutely right to take a very positive and active role in his present job. It is worth remembering that section 1 of the Education Act 1944 refers to the duty of the Secretary of State to

> "secure the effective execution by the local authorities, under his control and direction, of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area."

Reference has been made to R. A. Butler, who was one of the greatest Education Ministers. Looking back to the debates about the Education Act 1944, it is interesting to see that Butler said:

> "it is high time the Minister and his office became more keen on taking the educational initiative themselves."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1944; Vol. 398, c. 810.]

He also said that he proposed that the central authority should

> "lead boldly"

and

> "not follow timidly."

That is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is doing.

The curriculum in the new Bill will be the most important aspect of the new Bill. It is essential that we get the curriculum absolutely right. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will be particularly sensitive to the points that have been put to him during the consultation process about the curriculum. One of those points relates to testing. That has aroused a good deal of uncertainty and apprehension.

I have been committed to testing for a long time. In 1976, I wrote a booklet called "The Act and the Partnership". I put forward the argument that we should have testing. I said that we should test the numeracy and literacy of all children at certain stages of their schooling, for example, at the ages of eight, 11 and 14. The ages chosen by my right hon. Friend are slightly different but I believe that the principle is the same. It is important to have a clear idea of what we are testing for. What is the testing process about? In my booklet, I stated:

> "The purpose of this"—

namely, testing—

> "would not be to provide a selection procedure for allocating children to one school or another. Nor, I hope, would it be used to establish or reinforce a pecking order among schools, or among their children. The aim is emphatically not to provide 'marks' for publication.
>
> The object is rather more akin to the traditional school medical inspection. More precisely, it is to provide information about the progress of the individual child, so as to see whether he or she needs greater attention in one way or another; information, for use within the system only, about the school and the class within the school—again, so as to see if extra help is necessary; and, thirdly, national statistics (which might include information on what is happening in different parts of the country)."

Today, it is no longer possible not to publish figures for schools as a whole. Even if one were to try to keep them secret — I do not think that one should do so — they would surely come out. In keeping with the emphasis on parents' rights to know what is going on in schools, it is right that such figures should be available. Nevertheless, the philosophy that I tried to put forward was right; we should see testing more as a diagnostic tool than as a kind of instrument for competition. I am not against competition — I am all for it in sports and many other areas—but our present task is simply to find out what is going on. After all, if the Secretary of State is to exercise his great responsibilities for education, he certainly needs to know what is happening in our schools.

Another point, which I hope will come out of the consultation process, is the need for greater curricular flexibility. I am sure that all hon. Members have heard pleas from groups of teachers, especially those with particular interests in mind. Home economics teachers have been fairly active in writing to us. I have also had letters from drama teachers and classics teachers. As it happens, my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) will open a debate on the matter next Monday, so I shall not press the point.

It would be sad if the state education system is forced to remove classics from the curriculum. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should be prepared to allocate more time to non-core and non-mainstream curricula elements. I devoutly hope that my right hon. Friend will be flexible.

When my right hon. Friend talks about the objectives of the matter, he should clearly say that one of the most crucial objectives in our education system is the transmission of the great things in our culture and civilisation from one generation to the next. That aim was not set out clearly enough in the consultative document, but at the end of the day it is most important. It is absolutely vital that such transmission should be available not only to the elite—those who are lucky enough to go to great public schools — but to every child in the country. I do not know whether the idea is to put some kind of stated objectives into the Bill; it is slightly against the tradition of English parliamentary drafting. Nevertheless, I hope that the Secretary of State will make it clear that, above all, he is concerned about quality. If he avoids falling into the trap of rather dreary utilitarianism and the worship of alleged relevance, he will have the chance to produce the kind of Bill that will deserve to rank with the Butler Act.

There is not much time for discussion, but there is a need to get on with the matter rather than to delay the process for one more year. That is why I support my right hon. Friend's decision to bring the Bill before this Session of Parliament.

9.15 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I know of nobody outside the Government who welcomes the short time allowed for consultation. All the letters that I have received, and most of the consultation replies that I have seen in the Library today, reveal anger and disagreement with the Government about the length of consultation.

The Government say that the time allowed is acceptable because they sorted out the issue in their manifesto, but I cannot be the only person here or in the country who was deeply confused, to put it mildly, at the statements by the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. Their statements were confusing and conflicting and certainly did not clarify the proposals.

The tragedy is that all this symbolises the Government's lack of respect and lack of care for the very groups they claim to champion — the parents, governors, students and children. The Government's attitude to them is, "We know best. Do as we say or you will suffer."

The Secretary of State's attitude this evening was like someone threatening with a shotgun and saying, "The process will be much easier if you help me pull the trigger." Is that the nature of the relationship which the right hon. Gentleman wishes to establish with those who care about education? Is that his attitude to parents, students, teachers and others in the community who are worried about the future? Such an attitude leaves the other side little say and even less influence.

Relationships are at the heart of any good education system. The Secretary of State seems uncomfortable with that relationship. A welcoming and warming relationship with parents and schools is crucial to the pre-school child. It is important to children throughout their school lives. It is crucial to those young people who are considering whether to stay in full-time education after the age of 16. It is also crucial to those who want to return to education, particularly if their earlier experiences were not fulfilling.

Process is as important in education as content. People need to be confident that they will learn how to read, write and think. The way in which they learn how to learn will determine what they are able to learn. Unless the process and the content go together, the content will never be put across. That is the tragedy. The Secretary of State seems to have no understanding of that.

A process that involves those who want the best education service possible for all our children is central to enabling us all to work together to provide opportunities. The Government forgot that in preparing their Bill. They forgot the importance of process — taking people with them and involving them every step of the way.

If the Government had taken everyone with them, they might have addressed the real issues. Instead, their proposals are seething with the dogmatic prejudices and fundamentalism of the new Right of the Tory party. There is a desperate need for changes and improvements.

The consensus is to look for more opportunities in education and in the role of our people, yet the Government present us with something that will cut opportunities and reduce the role of many people. There is a desperate need to encourage many more of our young children to stay in full-time education after 16. There is a desperate need to ensure that all children benefit from a rich and wide curriculum that matches their age, ability and aptitude as well as the needs of our society as we move into the 1990s. There is also a desperate need to improve opportunities for all our children by enabling them to take advantage of free school education if that is appropriate. There is still a need to ensure that we have a well-trained, committed and enthusiastic teaching force that has the opportunity to be retrained to work effectively in all subjects.

The tragedy is that the Education Bill that we are promised addresses none of those issues. Far from being radical, the Secretary of State has been reactionary. In essence, he will reduce parental choice, have a much more centralised system of control, narrow the curriculum and reduce substantially the opportunity for the majority of our children and young people to benefit from a wide, open and free education service.

The Secretary of State has missed a golden opportunity. There is consensus on the need for changes and progress in our education system, but instead of seeking out that consensus and building upon it the right hon. Gentleman is creating conflict and opposition. That may be a legitimate political tactic, but when measured against the opportunities of our children and young people it is nothing short of criminal.

9.22 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Mention has been made of the writings of Right-wing philosophers, the publication "No Turning Back" and even Shakespeare. But I wonder why so few Labour Members did not study the *New Statesman* more carefully, which recently contained an article entitled:

> "Failing the masses. Passing the buck."

It said:

> "The Government have seized the initiative of change while Labour is stuck in defence of its own past. Labour's ideological driving force is the pursuit of equality yet its policies have never really given priority to education despite its being one of the major sources of social immobility and inequality in Britain. Labour has allowed the Tories to steal the political initiative".

The fact is that too many of our average and below-average children are betrayed by the education system. We have one of the best education systems for high fliers, and our higher education is among the best in the world, but while 30 per cent. of pupils leave school with little or no qualifications, and 60 per cent. drop science or a foreign language at 14, there is absolutely no way in which the Government can refuse to act.

As for consultation and discussing "the process" in schools, I feel a great sense of unease. Last year we went from month to month with consultation on the replacement to Burnham and teachers' pay and conditions. That consultation led to disagreement and stalemate. The only thing on which there was agreement was that everybody disagreed with what the Government were doing. Consultation tends to reinforce the prejudices of the education establishment and the teaching profession —*[Interruption.]* It is interesting that Labour Members should pour scorn on the idea of improving the lot of the children who suffer under the present regime and that they should regard it as a laughable matter. I know that many Labour Members are more concerned with the trade union mentality of protecting the rights of those involved in producing education than they are with delivering the goods.

The national curriculum has been under discussion for many years. For the Government now to delay legislation would be an unforgiveable waste of the time of those who most need their education, perhaps now as never before. There is a glorious philosophy that children must never be tested for attainment, because one child might do well and

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

another badly; one child might feel a failure. That is why parents do not know where they are, children are not given the help that they need and standards are not set. I remind Opposition Members that that is what the Swann committee identified as a major reason for so many children from ethnic minorities doing badly in schools. Expectations are not set for them, so they do not rise to them. It is a crucial variable.

The head of the Secondary Examination Council the other day asked why so many people now run in marathons. The answer, he said, was that an expectation was set. We want to raise people's standards and bring out the best in them.

Local financial management is just another way of giving the heads more power. For how many years have many of us talked about the vital role of the head? Professor Michael Rutter, in his book "Fifteen Thousand Hours", compared 12 different schools in Southwark. What did he find was the crucial variable that accounted for some schools being so much more successful than others? It was the ethos of the school, and, particularly, the character and personality of the head — his ability to manage the school, set homework and ensure that lessons started on time. That is the nuts and bolts of education reform, and the way forward for our children.

In my constituency there have been some experiments in local financial control. They have been warmly welcomed, having been tried over several years. One school has enormously improved its word-processing facilities, computers and other equipment by making do with less supply cover and arranging for teachers to cover for themselves. Giving schools opportunities to make such decisions is the way forward.

Parental choice is crucial. Children do better if they have the confidence of their parents—if they are going to the school that their parents wanted them to attend. Opting out offers an alternative system to those who have not the resources to pay themselves.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when he makes his final decisions, to look for a rather higher percentage than a 50 per cent. vote from parents. I should be happier with a two-thirds majority. If we are to ensure that head teachers such as the successor of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) as headmaster of Highbury Grove school can continue to provide the sort of education that parents want, in which teachers want to participate and in which pupils do well, we must find a way to release schools from the education authorities that are undermining the very ethos that is being sought.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to move forward swiftly with the legislation. The negative, hostile, backward-looking debate about consultation on these measures is yet another example of how conservative the education establishment is becoming. We owe it to all our children to ensure that they have the best possible opportunity to acquire the qualifications and skills that they need for the jobs and the citizenship of the future. My right hon. Friend's proposals offer an opportunity that we must follow up urgently. We want action—not words.

9.28 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I sometimes wonder whether some Conservative Members know how the consultation process works in education. A period for consultation has been allowed from the beginning of August to the end of September, but many governing bodies do not meet until the end of September. The same applies to many teachers' trade unions and parent-teacher groups.

When the schools reopen after the holiday, there follows a period of settling down and getting started again. As all those organisations do not generally meet until the end of September, hardly any of them have been given any time to respond in the detail that the proposals need. As there will be major and radical changes to our education system, parents have the right to consider the proposals in depth and to respond in detail.

I have in my hand a letter that was sent to the Secretary of State for Education and Science by the National Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, the Parent-Teacher Associations of Wales and the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education. It protests about this Government's inadequate consultation on the proposals. Between them, they represent many thousands of parents, and they speak for many thousands of parents — the consumers.

I am also concerned about how the tests will affect children with special education needs. Have hon. Members heard about the self-fulfilling prophesy and its effect on children with special education needs?

There is also the problem that more children may want to go to a school than there are places for them. Who is to decide which children go to that school and which children do not? Will there have to be selection? Will it be for the governing body to decide?

Many important and fundamental questions have not been answered, yet the Government have moved an amendment that congratulates themselves on the consultation period. I do not know how they can congratulate themselves on a consultation period that is no more than a sham and that provides the parents of those who are directly affected with no adequate say on proposals that will affect the future education of their children.

9.31 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Two criticisms have been made in the debate, one of which goes to the heart of our education system. We must remember that this Government have been in charge of the country's education system for the last eight years. It is about time that Conservative Members recognised that what is wrong with the country's education system is this Government's education policy. The second criticism is that we were told that we picked the wrong issue — that we concentrated on procedure rather than on substantive proposals. But surely we picked the right issue. Conservative Member after Conservative Member has told us that the proposals have been introduced in the name of greater parental involvement and freedom, and that if one believes in freedom one consults. However, this Government have to be criticised for their lack of consultation.

During the last few months the Government have been more concerned about stifling debate and proving that debate and comment are irrelevant than about offering genuine opportunities for parents, teachers, local authorities and the churches to comment and to influence the discussion. In no way could this be clearer than in the practicalities of the consultation process — at most two months on important documents. In the case of the majority of the documents, the consultation process was held during the long summer holidays. No wonder that the Government have been criticised by parent-teacher associations and local education authorities, both Conservative and Labour.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No, I do not intend to give way.

The Secretary of State referred to his proposals as great educational reforms, but an uncharacteristic modesty in his case prevented him from engaging in meaningful debate and discussion with the public.

Mr. Coombs: Will the hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Fatchett: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] No, I do not intend to give way.

In addition to restricting the consultation process and making it difficult, the Government have made it clear that they are not prepared to listen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) commented on the Secretary of State's speech at the Conservative party conference. It may be forgiveable and understandable that in the atmosphere of that conference the Secretary of State felt that he had to use those words. Indeed, no Secretary of State, with the Prime Minister sitting at his right hand, would have done otherwise; no Secretary of State in this Government has the courage to do otherwise. Perhaps we can understand and forgive those comments, but, sadly, the Secretary of State was at it again only last week. After meeting local government leaders — Conservative and Labour — the Secretary of State was reported as saying that the Bill would not be altered whatever the critics said. So much for an open door, so much for an open mind and so much for consultation.

With typical dogmatic arrogance the Government have dismissed as unrepresentative organisations that have had the audacity to criticise. That fate befell the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations. That moderate, non-party political organisation, which speaks for parents, was dismissed out of hand because it did not say what the Secretary of State wanted to hear. That is typical of the Government and the consultation process.

The Government may respond to our criticisms by saying that their behaviour on these proposals is no different from that in other respects, but that is scarcely a plea in mitigation. For instance, if a bank robber says that on previous occasions he has got away with it, he cannot say that he was innocent on the occasion when he was caught in the bank carrying out the robbery, but that is this Government's excuse. Maybe the Government should plead that that they are innocent or that they adopt the same practice in other contexts, but continuous bad practice is no excuse for what the Government have done to our children or for what they propose to do to our education system. Nor is it relevant for the Government to say that their proposals are firm or that, as the right hon. Member Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, everybody knew what they were about.

The right hon. Gentleman told us that the proposals were so simple that they were underlined and that they had blue edges. But that overlooks the difficult process of conception that occurred during the general election. The Secretary of State was saying one thing, but the Prime Minister was saying something else. We saw the unlikely sight of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), as chairman of the Conservative party, acting as a conciliator and peace-maker between the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, which was a most unlikely role for the gentleman. To say that the proposals were firm is not true and has never been so; some of the detail is open to serious comment and discussion.

When we look at the proposals for ILEA we encounter a different problem. Parents in London are to be allowed a short time to comment—five weeks—so in that respect they have fared no worse than parents in other parts of the country, but there is one substantial difference. Parents in London may have an education authority thrust upon them without any consultation with individual parents. We are told that parents should have a right to vote on opt-out procedures and a right to vote in other circumstances; that is the language of parental freedom. Why does that language not apply with regard to practice in London and the boroughs that make up the Inner London education authority? Why is it right to leave a decision to councillors in certain circumstances but not others? Why will the Secretary of State not consult parents in London? We know the answer: if he consulted parents by ballot he would lose and the proposals would be torpedoed.

We may have been a little remiss in not asking for a longer consultation on the London proposals. We should have recognised the record of the Secretary of State. When he chaired a committee looking at inner London education a few years ago he said that the only proposal he could not consider was the very proposal that, as Secretary of State, he is now suggesting. Consistency and principle do not run very deep for this Secretary of State. Perhaps we should have asked for more time so that London parents could have had an opportunity to allow their voices to be heard.

We are told that the process of consultation is not necessary because the Government's proposals are firm. How firm are they? For example, how firm are they in relation to testing? Who will win the argument? Will it be the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister? Is it to be diagnostic testing, to which the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) referred, or is it to be competitive testing which is favoured by the Prime Minister and Right-wing Back Benchers? Will it be success or failure for our children at the age of seven? If it is failure, that means, within the system favoured by the Government, failure at the age of 11, 14 and 16. The child is doomed to failure at the age of seven.

The Government are not clear on the matter of grant-maintained opt-out schools. How many are there to be? Are they to be encouraged? At first the Secretary of State said that there would be only a few. In an interview in *The Independent* the Prime Minister said that there would be thousands and that they would be encouraged by an independent trust. The Secretary of State then changed his mind and said that "some" schools would opt out. Is not the word "some" the very sort of word one would associate with this Secretary of State? It is limited enough to ensure that informed educational opinion is not too antagonistic and it is elastic enough to ensure that the Secretary of State remains in office. He is doing the Prime Minister's bidding yet again. Parents have a right to know the Government's intentions.

[Mr. Fatchett]

The same is true of the core curriculum. As has been said, it is an idea that runs deep in the Labour party. If modesty allowed, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would tell the House that he was probably the author of the deep and meaningful proposals for a core curriculum. Modesty prevents him from doing that. The Secretary of State has had an opportunity to move by consensus to a national curriculum, but what has he done? He has united people not in support of a core curriculum but in opposition to it. At no stage has he recognised the educational difficulties that that presents. That poses problems for teachers, parents and, above all else, for Ministers. I saw the comment in *The Times Educational Supplement* on 16 October, just two short weeks ago. It said:

> "Poor Mrs. Rumbold. What a bad time she is having. Two weeks ago she sought to convince the Schools Curriculum Development Conference of the failure of the education system by serving up anecdotes about spelling mistakes and typographical errors. Last week it was the primary heads' conference at Coventry . . . which enjoyed the benefit of her judicious comments. Her gloss on the national curriculum consultation paper certainly helped to raise the temperature of a group of professionals among whom the Government might have expected to number many friends. A disastrous combination of patronising condescension and palpable ignorance antagonised most of her audience."

That is not a Socialist publication. I do not blame the Minister; I blame the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister for sending the Minister without a clear brief and clear definition of what the proposals are about.

Political freedom in this country has always depended on Governments, regardless of the size of their majority, being prepared to consult and to listen. That is the essential fabric of our democratic virtues and practice. If ever there was an area in which decision-making should be based on consultation and consensus, it is education, because here we are shaping not just the nation's future but the next generation and our children's future. With a Government committed to dogma and the ideology of a competitive market, the hopes for children and the wishes of their parents and teachers have been scandalously ignored.

As I travelled through the west midlands to attend an education meeting the other day, I saw an advertisement describing a particular brand of beer as "untouched by progress". If Saatchi and Saatchi had thought of that slogan, they might still be the Conservative party's public relations agency. It also struck me as being the most apt and correct description of the Secretary of State's education proposals. Untouched by progress, they will at best leave our children in the same state. At worst, they will leave them with dramatically reduced education opportunities. That is why I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the motion.

9.46 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I suppose that we could have expected this debate to prove an interesting if somewhat arid precursor to the wider debate that will take place throughout this parliamentary Session. For the benefit of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), I repeat the points that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made at the beginning of the debate in relation to the enormous interest shown in the consultation documents. A large number of copies have been issued to a great number of interested people, not just individuals but organisations, including local education authorities, churches, parent organisations and many others. The claim that insufficient time was allowed for consultation has been disproved by the weight of the responses received by the Department. I remind the Opposition that if they really intend to read all those responses they will have to set aside several days and nights, if not weeks, to consider the two van loads of responses currently reposing in the Library.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No. I have only a short time in which to respond to the debate.

All this has acknowledged that in the present phase we have merely started our consultations. My right hon. Friend confirmed today that he has been very ready to meet organisations wishing to make representations.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Endlessly.

Mrs. Rumbold: Endlessly, as my right hon. Friend rightly says.

The hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) asked whether teachers' organisations would have the opportunity to consult. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will be meeting those organisations and discussing matters with them. We believe that such discussions are valuable and they will continue during the passage of the Bill. There are, of course, other channels of representation during any parliamentary process which, even in my gloomiest moments, I believe that the Opposition may yet consider and seek to make some constructive contribution.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central asked why the consultation period for the ILEA proposal was not longer. It is, in a sense, a local and not a national issue, and in any event it has provoked some 5,000 detailed responses, which are currently being studied by our Department.

I remind Opposition Members that the councils that may opt out are democratically elected people, bodies which, no doubt, will take account of the representations and local opinions that are put to them. I understand that that procedure is already being undertaken in the boroughs of Westminster and Wandsworth, which have shown an interest in the possibility of making their boroughs local education authorities.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Rumbold: I am not giving way.

I remind Opposition Members that ultimately the decision will rest with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make the order. Parliament will debate that order and decide whether to approve it in a true democratic way. Therefore, Opposition Members should look carefully at what they are saying about our proposals for ILEA and agree with us that there has been adequate consultation.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sorry. I shall not give way. I want to continue to address the debate and answer some of the interesting points that have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Predictably, there have been positive and negative responses. My hon. Friends have made some extremely good and sensible contributions, with positive points and backed up with good argument.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) rightly affirmed that the people who matter in the debate on our proposals are the parents, the children and the teachers. He made the most valuable point that Opposition Members have derided consultations by their own actions in the past. I shall give one instance of what happened. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North said, the Labour party's intention to abolish direct grant status was announced in its October 1974 manifesto. In March 1975 the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced:

> "The Government have decided that the time has come to implement the pledge in the Labour Party Election Manifesto to stop the present system of direct grant schools."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1975; Vol. 888, c. 271.]

That was a Labour Secretary of State.

No consultation paper was issued between the election and the announcement. The change was made by order—the Direct Grant Grammar Schools (Cessation of Grant) Regulations 1975. A circular was issued explaining the effect of the regulations on the direct grant schools and the options open to them. The abolition of the direct grant status implemented a recommendation of the Public Schools Commission's second report of 1970. It was asked by the Labour Government in 1967——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall not give way.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Frit. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mrs. Rumbold.

Mrs. Rumbold: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The commission was asked in 1967 to look at the future of direct grant schools. I am certainly not frit. I am simply answering the debate as I am entitled to. I shall continue to answer it in the way that I wish.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was correct to emphasise that there is a clear mandate—not directed at my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—to carry out the promises made in our manifesto on education reforms. He also said that no meetings could be convened that were not necessary. That is also my experience. If councils want to convene a meeting of the education committee or the council as a whole, most can do so. If any Opposition Members would like to look at the record of some of the councils that are currently hung councils, they would see that many have extraordinary council meetings and additional education meetings as and when they feel like it. So the argument that these meetings could not have been called is a little thin.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) asked a direct question and I want to answer it. He asked whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be a member of the Committee. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree with me when I confirm that he will indeed be leading the Committee considering the Bill, which is his Bill. I must also say that my right hon. Friend's role is to lead boldly rather than to follow timidly. I have noted carefully what my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said about testing, and I hope that I can reassure him that he will be comforted when he sees our own inclinations on that subject. Similarly, we have looked and shall further look carefully at any consultative responses that we receive—as we have clearly said all the way through that we shall do on the national curriculum.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) was right to point out that there have been many examples in the past of expectations in our schools that are far too low. She examined each of the proposals that my right hon. Friend has put before the country and rightly pointed out that many people support them wholeheartedly.

A number of negative points have been made by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches. That was to be expected. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) accused us by saying that parents on governing bodies thought it ironical that they did not have enough time; but they were clearly ignoring the assurances that my right hon. Friend has been giving them. We are saying clearly that there will be a continuation of these consultations, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman should listen to some of the responses——

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman should listen to the responses that I have given rather than argue with me at this stage.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) accused the Government of neglecting to take the consultation process to people within the education system. That is not so: we are conversing at length with people in the education service. If there is any question of them thinking otherwise, I suggest that that is because they do not wish to know that we are busy listening to what they have to say. I am glad that the hon. Lady emphasised the point that we should work with the professionals in the education service, because we fully accept it. I hope, therefore, that when she comes to the Committee considering the Education Bill she will join the Government in taking up every improvement that we have offered to the education service and supporting them, as she seems to be so keen on many of the proposals that my right hon. Friend has made.

To the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), I say that many of the governing bodies have responded, and he would find it interesting to note that they are still responding and we are still listening to them. The whole argument from the Opposition seems to have been centred on some slender evidence that the Government have not consulted and are not listening. I should be interested to hold the debate once again if we had some proof that Opposition Members had looked at the responses and were satisfied at the way in which our consultations had gone. If they wish to discover whether the proposals have come out in favour of or against the responses, they should read them. As I said at the outset, this debate is a precursor of things to come. Sadly, it has focused on procedure rather than on substance and that points to the conclusion that the Opposition know that they must oppose in a pavlovian way the reforms of education.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

[Mr. Don Dixon]

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 325.

Division No. 34] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*

Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice

Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian

Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony

Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House believes that the interests of the nation's children require that there should be no delay in the introduction of the Government's proposals for education reform, which have been endorsed by the electorate and provide an essential programme of action to deliver wider choice to parents, greater autonomy for schools and colleges to manage their resources in the best interests of the pupils and students, and higher standards of performance throughout the education system; congratulates the Government on the extent of its consultation and its willingness to continue consultation on the details of its proposals; and welcomes the scale of response to the consultation.

Chancellor of the Exchequer (Statement)

10.15 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is clear from the events of this evening that we have a Chancellor of the Exchequer—*[Interruption]*—who is prepared to speak to the press, to speak to the stock exchange, to speak in the City, to ask for representations to be made to the financial institutions about the sale of BP, and who has invited representation from abroad as well as from home, but who is not prepared to come to the House to answer questions about the serious problems that are worrying hon. Members constituents.

We have been told of the serious consequences of the stock exchange collapse for jobs and industry. Why is the Chancellor not prepared to come to the House and answer questions about the problems facing industry and about interest rates in this country? Why, when we know that the Chancellor has been in the building this evening, is he not prepared to come into the Chamber to speak?

Why is the standard bearer of free market forces, who has been defending free market forces for the eight years of this Government, unprepared to come here and defend free market forces when they have been exposed for what they are?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we will not have a re-run of the previous points of order.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-west): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I hope that we will not have a re-run of the points of order that we had earlier this evening. They are not points of order that I can answer. I think that the whole House had better wait to see what happens tomorrow.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is it not disgraceful and demeaning that, given the problems—*[Interruption]*—the only thing that the Opposition can do is to try to make mean, peevish, small-minded political capital out of it. Is that not one of the reasons why they did so badly at the last general election and why they are failing?

Mr. Speaker: I think that we should get on with the fisheries debate.

Mr. Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to listen to a further re-run of points of order that have nothing to do with me.

Mr. Banks: This is a different point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a genuinely different point of order?

Mr. Banks: Yes, Sir. We have reached the point at which this has been reduced to the level of low farce. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is treating the House with contempt. He was in the House at 8.27 pm, moving exceedingly fast. Therefore, one can only assume that he was probably on his way to another dinner appointment. It is outrageous that he cannot be at the Dispatch Box to make a statement, if indeed it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and not Frank Larsen.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know nothing about the Chancellor having been in the building. He certainly was not in the Chamber.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here earlier this evening.

Mr. Faulds: Yes, I was.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman did not take the opportunity then. If he had been here earlier, he would have known that I cannot do anything about the matter. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Faulds: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall hear the hon. Gentleman. He is the last hon. Member whom I shall hear.

Mr. Faulds: I was here a little earlier. I am just a little degree surprised that you did not notice me, Mr. Speaker. I was obviously too quiet for once. I shall remedy that now. Some hours have passed since the last exchanges on this matter. I do think—I hate to lecture you, Sir—that you have a very grave responsibility as the Speaker in terms of what happens in the conduct of government. We all know—it is no good your nodding your head—that frequently there are private exchanges behind your Chair. All that is needed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to listen to this nonsense.

Mr. Faulds: It is not nonsense. Where is the Chancellor? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Sit down. The hon. Gentleman must not allege that I take part in private discussions behind the Chair. I have been in the Chair most of today. The hon. Gentleman should make his point of order.

Mr. Faulds: The point of order is very simple. A grave crisis threatens our country. We have a Chancellor who is supposedly responsible for the economic policies of this country. He has not the guts or the gumption to come down here. I think that a little private word from you, Sir, might rectify the matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had a fair run this afternoon.

Sea Fisheries

10.24 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move,

That the Fishing Vessels (Acquisition and Improvement) (Grants) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1135) dated 1 July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3 July, be approved.

Perhaps it would be for the convenience of the House if the following motions were considered at the same time:

That the Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1136) dated 1 July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3 July, be approved.

That the Fish Farming (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1134) dated 1 July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3 July, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the wish of the House that the three statutory instruments be taken together?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—a genuine point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot deal with matters over which I have absolutely no responsibility. I cannot get the Chancellor to come here this evening. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is now merely taking time out of the debate in which many hon. Members who have fishing interests wish to take part.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We once again arrive at a situation in which the Chair is placed in an extremely invidious position by, sometimes, the action, or, more frequently, the inaction or cowardice of the Government.

For some days past, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, various efforts have been made by the Opposition to ensure that the Government, in the person of the Chancellor, come before the elected House of Commons to make a statement to the nation on the Government's position with regard to the implications for the real economy of the collapse of the stock exchange. True to form, the Chancellor has evaded all responsibilities. If we arrive at a position on a Monday night in which you are continually bombarded by points of order from both sides of the House—*Hansard* will show that earlier today and this evening contributions were made from both sides of the House—it is directly a consequence of the failure of the Government in a democracy to make themselves at least answerable, if not properly accountable, to the House of Commons.

The force of what has been said today from both sides of the House means that in the course of tomorrow the Chancellor of the Exchequer has the responsibility of coming before the House to explain the Government's view on two issues. The first concerns the response in terms of interest rates and other matters over which the Government have influence and responsibility. In such matters the Government should at least account for themselves to the House. Secondly, the Govenment should explain their view on the flotation of BP shares and the privatisation issue. This is of interest not only to would-be purchasers of those shares but to the economy in general, the whole future of investment, and to the structure and possibility of our success.

In these matters it is essential—not only in respect of your position, Mr. Speaker, as the neutral observer and keeper of order, but for the whole country — for the Government to be responsive, if not responsible.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has made his point and I am certain that it will have been noted by the Leader of the House who is on the Front Bench. I call Mr. Gummer.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot take any more points of order on this topic.

Mr. Maxton: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker. During previous points of order I understand that you asked whether it would be for the convenience of the House to take the three fisheries instruments together in one debate lasting one and a half hours. I had great difficulty in hearing your remarks. The House did not have an opportunity to decide, so I think that it should be given another opportunity to say whether it wishes to do that.

If the normal conventions concerning statements are not to be obeyed, why should we agree to the convention of taking three statutory instruments together?

Mr. Speaker: I understood that it was for the convenience of the House to take the three instruments together. I put the Question and received consent. I again call Mr. Gummer.

Mr. Gummer: The three measures are necessary to bring Community regulations into effect in the United Kingdom and to enable us to benefit from Community funding. It is therefore sensible for the House to take the three together.

In terms of expenditure, the fishing vessels grants scheme is the most important. The scheme will enable the Fisheries Ministers to grant-aid the construction and modernisation of fishing vessels with the objective of bringing our fishing fleet up to date. Our stocks are limited and we cannot always fish to capacity. For that reason we have to be careful that modernisation of the fleet does not significantly increase fishing capacity.

The new scheme involves a higher rate of grant than its predecessor for vessels less than 33 m in length. The grant will be 30 per cent., the maximum allowed by the scheme, rather than the 25 per cent. in the earlier scheme. The United Kingdom pressed strongly for this higher rate at the Fisheries Council meeting last December to compensate for the reduction from 25 per cent. to 20 per cent. in the available grant from Community funds.

I am glad to say that we won that fight and it is a great help to the English, Scottish and Welsh fleets. I am happy to say that we were also successful in maintaining at 50 per cent. the overall maximum grant in most areas.

The scheme also provides that financial assistance should be given only to vessels which are constructed or modernised in member states. I am sure that the provision will be welcomed by our boat builders, who face stiff opposition from subsidised yards in non-EC countries.

It would be possible to go through the detailed provisions and answer in advance the questions that hon. Members will no doubt wish to ask, but it may be for the convenience of the House if I restrain myself and answer at the end, with the House's permission, the matters raised in the debate.

[Mr. Gummer]

I should, however, illustrate the scale of financial aid that has been available over the three years from 1984 to 1986. United Kingdom fishermen benefited from about £23·5 million in grants and almost £11·5 million in loans, plus £22·5 million of Community funding. The new scheme will allow the process to continue and will allow fishermen to plan ahead with confidence.

The objective of the second instrument is to encourage vessel owners to investigate new fishing opportunities. I am anxious that our industry should be given every encouragement to explore the potential of new fishing grounds, especially in the south Atlantic. I am, therefore, pleased to be able to report that several companies have either applied for assistance or have indicated their intention to do so. The grants are restricted to vessels of 18 m and over. The Community will pay 20 per cent. of the approved cost of exploratory voyages and we shall contribute 10 per cent.

The Council regulations also provide member states with the option of continuing to pay grants for the decommissioning or laying-up of fishing vessels, but we shall not be carrying on with those measures in the UK.

The final instrument provides fish farmers in Great Britain with a national grant rate of up to 10 per cent. to enable them to qualify for Community aid under Council regulation 4028/86.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Minister aware that grants are available under the FEOGA scheme for fish farms in the west of Scotland and that Kyle and Carrick, Cunninghame and other coastal areas can get 40 per cent. grants—which is a helpful level—but Cumnock and Doon Valley can get grants of only 25 per cent., even though that is an area of high unemployment?

Will the Minister review the level of FEOGA grants——

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): My hon. Friend is being optimistic.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend may wonder how fish farming can be carried out in Cumnock and Doon Valley, which is landlocked. I assure him and the Minister, who, I suspect, has fished a loch or two in his time, that it is possible, and a major scheme in my constituency could go ahead if the higher rate of grant were available. Will the Minister give me an undertaking — I have known the right hon. Gentleman for many years and would accept his personal undertaking — that he will examine whether grant levels could be reviewed in the light of the anomaly that has arisen? A landlocked council has been able to carry out such activities; that may not have been envisaged when the scheme was introduced.

Mr. Gummer: I should like to have known the hon. Gentleman long enough for him not to make the mistake of suggesting that I have cast a fly in any loch anywhere. I have no intention of giving the undertaking for which he asked, because the Community suggested that certain areas needed particular help. I understood that the Opposition were keen on such policies. Therefore, efforts have been made to give that extra help to certain parts of Scotland and not to other parts. My experience of extra help is that those who do not get it are all too ready to complain that it is not spread to them.

There is no doubt in my holding out any hope to the hon. Gentleman that we could change the areas that are covered. They have been agreed and it would be difficult to reopen the consideration. A great deal of negotiating was done to ensure that part of Scotland was helped, and I am sure that he would want at least some of Scotland to get extra help. I cannot suggest that we should be likely to bring in the whole of Scotland or even that part with which the hon. Gentleman has such close affinity.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware—and, if not, will he consult his hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who will confirm it—that the Cumnock and Sanquhar travel-to-work area has the highest unemployment in the country? It is in that area that the project is envisaged. The reason that Cumnock and Sanquhar was not included was a genuine oversight—a misunderstanding—and I do not blame the Minister. I merely ask him, in his present benevolent mood, to agree to re-examine the matter.

The Minister and I both understand the intricacies and difficulties of the European community, and we know that it is very difficult to reopen such issues. But the Minister must realise that if issues are important enough, we expect Ministers to take them up within the Community. All I ask tonight is that the Minister does not dismiss the matter out of hand at 10.34 pm, but agrees to take it away, have a look at it and let me know whether it is possible to review the position.

Mr. Gummer: I am anxious not to mislead either the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) or his constituents. I therefore do not wish to give any undertaking this evening that might lead the hon. Gentleman's constituents to believe that there was any realistic possibility of the lines being redrawn.

It would also be churlish of me not to say to the hon. Gentleman that, as he has raised the matter, I shall examine it, as he would expect me to. However, I hope that he will not place too much upon that promise. The results of our negotiations were not results of decisions idly reached. They were hard-fought and long-run, and, although I should be happy to be found wrong, I doubt that it would be possible to redraw those lines.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to give way, but may I make one short comment first?

One of the purposes of debating instruments such as these is, ideally, for the Minister to make a short speech at the beginning, allow hon. Members to put their points, and then—with the House's permission—answer those points later, rather than a series of interruptions taking place. I realise that such instruments give rise to a good many individual, local problems, rather than more widespread issues.

Mr. Alec Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I recall that, in 1976, European Commission policy identified the whole of Scotland as a sensitive area, particularly dependent on the fishing industry. It actually identified north Britain, but I think that that meant Scotland. The Minister's negotiations in Europe seen to have taken us from the whole of Scotland being identified as a sensitive area to just some of Scotland being so identified.

Mr. Gummer: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has followed the negotiations with the care with which he suggests that he did. If he had done so, he would realise that no part of England, Wales or Scotland was included in the original proposals. It was only through a strenuous fight on behalf of Scotland by the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, our hon. Friends in Scotland and myself that we achieved our end. Far from being a diminution, it represents a considerable increase in the area covered.

In those discussions I was bound to say to many of my colleagues that, when we had won what we sought, we would end up with those who were not included feeling that they had been left out. Not only fishermen in other parts of Scotland, but many English fishermen, some of them from areas of higher unemployment than the parts to which we refer, feel that they, too, are disadvantaged.

There is a problem whenever special help is to be given to special areas. I am perfectly prepared to support the giving of such help, but I warn the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) to tread carefully. Many parts of the United Kingdom could put up very good cases, and some of them are not in the middle of a land mass.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): This matter is capable of solution. I fail to understand how grants for seagoing vessels could possibly be made available to anyone who lives in a landlocked area.

Mr. Foulkes: Perhaps the Minister will confirm that differential rates of grant apply to sea-going vessels but that that part which relates to fish farming sets a maximum of 10 per cent., with no differential area being designated anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Sometimes it is better to allow hon. Members to dig the hole that they have set out to dig rather than to underline their digging of it.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) suggested that his landlocked constituency should be considered, even though it is not one of the great sea fishing centres of our nation. The hon. Gentleman has admitted that part of his constituency does not lie on the coast, and it can hardly be said to qualify for fishing vessel grants. I restrained myself from making that point, in case there are representatives of the hon. Gentleman's local newspaper in the Press Gallery. I have decided to think about it, but I doubt whether that will lead me to do something about the landlocked part of the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

These measures have specific effects in particular parts of the country, those that lie on the coast. During the debates hon. Members will naturally wish to raise particular points and I shall be very happy to answer them.

This package of three schemes will enable our sea fish and fish farming industries to continue the important process of modernisation and development. They are mainly concerned with traditional fishing, but for the first time there is an extension into the fish farming area called, in European Community lingo, aquaculture. We ought to be pleased about that, because an increasing part of the market for fish is now provided by fish farmers, and the United Kingdom has increasing expertise in that area.

It is important that the United Kingdom should benefit from the significant levels of financial aid that are available from Community funds. Agreement to these measures will enable us to do so. The schemes form an important part of our fisheries policy, and I commend them to the House for approval.

10.43 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): These orders deal with financial support for the fishing industry in Great Britain. That was the subject of Sir Gordon Downey's recent report, to which I shall refer in a few minutes.

I welcome this opportunity to debate and comment on the proposals. Although we welcome the orders, we do not do so unreservedly, and I shall outline some of my reservations, criticisms and disappointments in what I promise will be a brief speech. As always, I shall try to be an honestly awkward critic.

All right hon. and hon. Members want to protect and promote the interests of this indigenous industry. The same is true of the increasingly important fish farming industry, and the Minister was right to emphasise the importance of the third order that relates to fish farming. The statutory instrument that deals with financial assistance for exploratory voyages and joint ventures is the least vital of the three, although, in its modest way, it may have some significance for the owners of larger vessels. How many vessel owners have sought such assistance in the recent past? I look forward to some enlightenment from the Minister on that point.

This is a useful if modest measure. It may encourage owners of larger vessels to undertake voyages to catch species of fish that are as yet not commercially viable. As a measure it may be more widely used by owners in other EEC fishing nations in the Mediterranean basin and off the west coast of Africa.

The statutory instrument that is of major importance to our fishermen is the one that deals with grants for the modernisation and renewal of vessels. This is a particularly important instrument for fishermen who own and crew ageing vessels, or who own boats that urgently require modernisation. It is right and proper that priority should be given to the replacement or modernisation of such vessels. Typically, a new vessel is far more productive than one of similar overall length that was built 20 or 30 years ago. Recently, in Stornoway, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), who I am sure will try to catch your eye tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke to the skipper of a small fishing boat that was built for his father in 1947. I have no doubt that that skipper would be delighted to replace his elderly vessel with a new one if he could afford it, but we must remember that new vessels are astoundingly expensive.

I welcome statutory instrument No. 1135, but I urge the Government to reduce the time that a fisherman applicant must endure before he receives approval to go ahead with his order. That is important for the fisherman and for the small shipyards that build these vessels.

It is argued that these measures assist with the reconciliation between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities. Having said that — we are dealing with financial support for the industry — I must point out that I am deeply disappointed with the Government's decision to discontinue the decommissioning scheme. Some 225 vessels were decommissioned over a period of three years at a net cost to the United Kingdom of just over £15 million. In his report, "Financial Support for the Fishing Industry in Great Britain", which was published in July, Sir Gordon Downey said:

> "Over half of the expenditure was incurred on 15 large freezer trawlers. Two of these trawlers were brought back into

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

the industry temporarily for the minimum period to qualify for decommissioning grants averaging over £½ million. Ten of the boats were subsequently sold for sums ranging up to £900,000. None was scrapped. On 30 April 1987, after the NAO had completed their investigations, the Minister of State for Fisheries announced in a Parliamentary written reply that"—

he—

"would not continue with the scheme for decommissioning.".

That is a matter for major regret. An abuse of the decommissioning scheme occurred when those trawler owners received that amount of money, but that legal abuse should not have led to its abrogation.

We must maintain a modest decommissioning scheme that cannot be abused by the larger trawler companies. There is no other sensible way to restructure—in plain English, to reduce—the size of the fleet. A restructuring of the fleet cannot be achieved by our licensing scheme because those licences are gaining in financial value month by month. I believe that the Government must think again about their decision to decommission the decommissioning scheme.

Incidentally, why were trawler company fishermen never given a decommissioning grant? The nation has paid for the decommissioning of large trawlers but not their crews. Skippers, mates, deckhands, engineers, cooks et al were simply slotted into the dole queues with precious little, if any, redundancy pay. For 19 years my brother Leslie worked as a deckhand and, latterly, as a mate and skipper for one of those firms and, when it decided he was surplus to requirements, it gave him the princely sum of £551.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: He was lucky. Most people got nothing.

Dr. Godman: As my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said, he was luckier than some but he certainly was not lucky to work for 19 years in what must be the most dangerous industrial occupation in the United Kingdom and receive that sort of squalid sum when his services were dispensed with. The trawler companies were given financial assistance by the state to build and decommission their vessels. Their employees got next to nothing or nothing for their years of hard work and loyalty.

I shall refer to fish farming and statutory instrument No. 1134. Naturally, I am delighted that the state gives assistance to that growing industry. There are exciting developments taking place throughout the whole of the United Kingdom's fish farming industry. In Scotland fish farming is one of the fastest growing industries. In that context, Scotland ought one day to overtake Norway as the principal fish farming industrial nation in the north Atlantic. I was in Norway recently visiting fish farms and, although it has a good lead over us, I believe that we have one supreme marketing advantage: Scottish salmon. Recent estimates by the Scottish Development Agency and others suggest that farmed salmon production could treble over the next few years. At this moment the industry in Scotland employs over 1,000 people in full-time and part-time work in what are remote communities. It is essential that the development of the industry is carefully controlled. Greater scope must be given for local involvement and the statutory instrument must pave the way for that. Other industries such as tourism and fishing must not be harmed by an expansion of marine fish farming. Fishermen, for their part, have no desire to impede the development of fish farming, but it must be sensibly controlled. A sympathetic account has to be taken of fishing activities be they static or mobile.

I know that lighting and marking regulations are spelled out when the Crown Estate Commissioners issue leases for fish farms, and I know that that advice is buttressed by advice obtained from the Department of Transport and the lighthouse boards. Nevertheless, we need to demand that the monitoring of lights and marker buoys be rigorous and efficient. I should like to ask the Minister, for answer if not this evening, certainly in the near future, which state agency is responsible for that inspection work and whether it has the resources to perform the work effectively? Have maps been produced recently by the Ministry of Agriculture, fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland which denote carefully the marine fish farms?

I have to express a word of criticism regarding those somewhat shadowy figures, the eight or nine Crown Estate Commissioners. They have astoundingly wide powers over fish farming. They alone control access to much of the foreshore and to all of the seabed out to territorial limits. For example, fish farmers who wish to anchor sea cages off the shore must obtain permission from the commissioners. There is widespread concern, especially in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, over the commissioners' apparent reluctance sensibly and realistically to consult local authorities and communities on the development of land and seabed under Crown Estate ownership. The present system is not good enough for these powerful men, the commissoners, are too shadowy. I do not believe that they are best equipped to act as planning authorities or arbitrators when there are problems and conflicts over coastal amenities or the maritime environment. Perhaps the time is drawing near when we seek the amendment of the Crown Estate Act 1961.

These statutory instruments must be examined in respect of their expected and unexpected consequences, and that is the argument that I have advanced. I welcome the instruments, but I have serious reservations.

10.55 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): It is with sadness that I report that this day we have had to bury in my constituency a "boy ashore". I refer to Mr. James Read, a fisherman who was killed in the hurricane last week. I am sure that the House will join me in sending to his faily its condolences at this difficult time. A man ashore died and the entire fleet had to remain ashore while a force 12-plus gale was blowing. I am sure that all East Sussex Members recognised the circumstances when they heard that the Newhaven lifeboat had set sail to rescue the crew of a French trawler during the gale.

I hope that the House will approve the two fishing vessels schemes. The European Community conservation regime has helped fishermen all along the south coast and brought more men into the fishing fleet. We have a growing and prosperous fleet and we have a good and sound programme of conservation. Young men are coming forward and they are welcome in an increasingly prosperous industry.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food referred to the Falklands, but sad that it has taken so long to get to grips with this great opportunity. It is regrettable that the Foreign Office took so long to understand that which was available to us not so far away from the Falkland doorstep.

The measures before us require an investment of more than £32,000, but who will make the accompanying judgments, and what will be the effect of the other conditions that are involved? I should like to know more about the time that will be taken to agree that grants should be available.

It continues to be thought that those in Scotland and Northern Ireland are at a greater disadvantage than others elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Those in Scotland and Northern Ireland will receive grants of 40 per cent., while those elsewhere will receive grants of 25 per cent. We in the south-east have pockets of high unemployment, such as that in Hastings and Rye, of 12 to 14 per cent. Why should we be considered to be less disadvantaged than others elsewhere in the United Kingdom? There is stupidity in the continuing desire to perpetuate an assistance policy that bears no relation to the reality of unemployment and employment opportunities in various areas.

I am pleased that grants are available. I declare an interest, in that I have a boat, which I hope will not need rebuilding for some time. Mr. Phillip in Rye will be delighted to hear his name mentioned in the House, but he is the last person serving the Hastings and Rye area who can build the ships that we need to go to sea. Such people must not be disadvantaged simply because of where they live and a decision made far off in Brussels.

The available science and technology to establish where fish are is not up to scratch and would not be accepted elsewhere. There is no sensible sample and analysis system to determine what is going on. Dover sole and plaice come from Hastings and Rye, not Dover, and it is desperately disappointing that the Government have allowed shingle dredging off the south coast where we believe plaice and sole spawn. We do not have the analysis necessary to establish whether they spawn there, and it is silly to make rapid judgments without the necessary scientific data, but we must judge whether it is better to have the shingle or the fish.

The Government's fishery advisers maintain that it is no easy matter to determine the problems, but I should like to know what the Government are prepared to do to preserve an industry which is now so vigorous.

11.1 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We, too, pay tribute to the constituent of the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) who died in the gales and extend our sympathy to his family. It is ironic that an on-shore fisherman was killed, as those of us who represent fishing constituencies know about the hazards that those who go to sea face regularly.

The schemes under debate have been given a general, although tempered, welcome. The Government are no longer to continue with the decommissioning grants, some 225 of which were awarded. I wonder whether that is fewer than was expected. When restrictive licensing of pressure stocks was introduced, many people who sought a licence bought old vessels of low catching capacity for the equivalent of the decommissioning grant and used the licence on a much more modern vessel of much greater catching capacity. Interaction between decommissioning grant and the restrictive system of licensing may well have served to increase the fleet's catching capacity. Did the Government expect greater take-up of the grant? Perhaps the Minister can explain the decision to discontinue it.

As to the rate of grant, it is undoubted that, where some areas are to be preferred to others, grievances will be expressed in areas which do not qualify for higher grant. I am exceedingly grateful that my constituency is designated as part of the west of Scotland for this purpose. We shall go along with that if it means that we shall obtain an additional rate of grant.

The fact that the whole of the east coast of Britain has been excluded should not blind us to the fact that the prosperity and health of the fishing industry differs in various parts of the east coast. Undoubtedly, there has been improvement, and the Minister said at Question Time last week that he had been to Peterhead, so he will know that the industry there has, in recent months, been relatively prosperous. The same could not be said of a place such as Amble, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Obviously, there are pockets where an additional rate of grant would have been most welcome. We hope that the provision is not set in stone for all time, and that, if possible, other means of assistance to these hard pressed areas might be forthcoming.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Does my hon. Friend agree that a further problem of the grant system at present is that it has prevented the smallest yards—those that can only assemble one boat at a time—from laying up a second boat after one is finished before a new order comes in if they are to get a grant for it. That has meant that, on more than one occasion, when they have not had replacement orders to take on after their current work, they have been forced to lay off their work force and lose their skilled people.

I can think of an example in Mevagissey in which the boatbuilder, despite having a high reputation, has a gap in his order book and may well therefore lose the skilled men who allow him to continue the business.

Mr. Wallace: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's point. These grant condtions are often complex and the rules are strictly enforced. I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will not be lost on the Minister.

A further point about the differentiation of grants is that there is a lower rate of grant for larger vessels in sensitive areas than elsewhere. We are, of course, receiving a larger rate of grant from the European Community. However, it has been said that, whereas the grant that comes from our own Sea Fish Industry Authority tends to be paid promptly, the grant from the European Community is often long delayed. Thus, some of the advantage of a higher rate of grant is diminished by the fact that interest payments must be paid over a longer period of time. I would appreciate it if the Minister would take that into account and see whether the process could be speeded up.

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it was sensible, in so far as we could, to help the smaller boats especially, because they were the ones directly affected by the economic circumstances of the areas concerned. There is a real problem for large boats that come from areas that may be disadvantaged themselves, but the boat may be a profitable one competing with areas that are equally disadvantaged. So we felt that we should help the smaller boats as far as we could — boats from smaller communities in which the economic reasons for this differentiation were obvious. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that was the right balance to strike. It was a difficult decision to make, but it seemed important for an area such as the hon. Gentleman's own.

Mr. Wallace: I was certainly not trying to dispute that point. I accept that there was a difficult judgment to make and a balance to strike. The fact that there has not been a great outcry from the industry suggests that the balance cannot be far from right—although it has not satisfied everyone. With regard to delayed payments, and the interest payments that accrue, the advantage of the higher rate of European grant is not as great as would appear to judge from the cold figures. Whilst we have these higher rates of grant, we shall increasingly find, now and in the coming months, a level of frustration among applicants, as the number of applications will clearly outstrip the amount of money that is available for new boat construction. When the new measures were first announced, the spokesman for the Ministry said that he did not anticipate any shortage of cash; however, as the House will remember, the Prime Minister replied to a question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) as follows:

"there is an unprecedented demand for grants, and we have had to have a system of priorities."—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 920.]

I now turn to the priorities that have been put in place. I doubt whether anyone would object to the fact that, in cases where someone's boat has been wrecked or lost, that should be the top priority. Priority has also been given to boats over the age of 15 years, especially when there has been a withdrawal from the fleet. The third priority relates to skippers under the age of 40 who have been putting up a substantial and specified part of the capital for the new boat.

For many younger skippers and partnerships an increasing number of financial re-arrangements have been made so that the skipper has the required percentage. From talking to officials in the Sea Fish Industry Authority I understand that this priority is coming under scrutiny. It would be regrettable if this disappeared without any provision being made to encourage and facilitate younger men who along with their partners want to buy their own vessel. It would be regrettable if a financial barrier were placed in the way of younger men who want to come into fishing, and I should be grateful to the Minister if he could tell us whether this priority will stay in place. If it has to go or be revised, perhaps he can tell us if there will be some means of encouraging younger men who want to skipper their own vessels.

It is fair to say that the system used for the payment of grants and the grant level are not necessarily the best means of trying to restructure the fleet. A vessel over the age of 15 years that has been withdrawn will undoubtedly be replaced by a vessel of a much greater catching capacity. It is clear that the licensing system should take account of the need to keep the size of the fleet under control. It would be a matter for regret if the effective catching capacity were to be controlled by a limit on the amount of cash made available.

Perhaps the Minister will tell us how much will be made available next year. It is £17·5 million this year. If he could tell us that that amount will be increased next year, it might give some ray of hope to those who are waiting. The grants for new build should help to modernise the fleet and should help new young people coming into the industry.

I shall now speak about fish farming. The measure before us is welcome. As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, this industry has taken off in a big way in Scotland and has more potential to fulfil, particularly as we look to other possible species in farming, such as halibut and turbot. The importance of marketing will also increase and we need to make sure that our fish farmers will not be undercut by the dumping in our market of farmed products from countries such as Norway.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said about the Crown Estate Commissioners. Over many centuries the Highlands and Islands of Scotland suffered from the problem of absentee landlords. The feeling there is that we have the latest instalment in that long-running saga. There is a feeling in many areas of insensitivity and lack of consultation with local authorities. In my constituency there is considerable antagonism about the level of rents. It is felt that the lower rental rates which were in force for some to time to take account of the fact that the industry was developing have not been extended to parts of Scotland, such as the Western Isles and my constituency, where the development of the industry is still much more recent than in other parts of Scotland.

Above all, the rents must take account of the fact that in the remoter island areas the transport costs, not only for exporting the finished products but for bringing in the necessary materials and foodstuffs, place an exceptional additional burden on those engaged in fish farming. The Crown Estate Commissioners have not taken that into account nearly enough in setting the level of rent. Obviously that is outwith the scope of this debate and the Minister can do nothing about it by way of these measures. We welcome what has been given, but it would be a tragedy if much of what has been given by the Government under this measure were taken away by the Crown Estate Commissioners in ever increasing levels of rent.

11.15 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I say at the outset that I believe that all hon. Members welcome these schemes and that what I am about to say in no way diminishes my support for them. The Fishing Vessels (Acquisition and Improvement) (Grants) Scheme 1987 once again perpetuates an injustice against many fishermen, certainly in England and certainly the fishermen I represent. I could not help smiling wryly when the debate began with an outburst of indignation from some Scottish Opposition Members who, for the first time, although on fish farming, realised that their constituents were going to suffer in precisely the same way as my constituents who are fishermen, and fishermen in most parts of England, have suffered over the years. One only has to look at this scheme to see the measure of that injustice. For vessels under 24 m the maximum possible rate of grant in the west of Scotland and Northern Ireland will be 65 per cent. For all other regions it will be 50 per cent.—a differential or bonus of 15 per cent. to Scottish fishermen. For vessels over 24 m and up to 33 m, for the west of Scotland and Northern Ireland the maximum rate of grant will be 55 per cent. For other regions it will be 50 per cent., a smaller differential, but nevertheless a differential.

Mr. Salmond: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. The point that I made in the intervention earlier was that 10 years ago one might have believed that the European Commission was willing to designate the whole of Scotland as a priority area, but at present my constituency and other constituencies on the east coast of Scotland are not so designated. I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman is making. Is he saying that the European Commission is somehow biased towards Scotland and against his constituency in England?

Mr. Harris: If the hon. Gentleman will wait just a minute, I will come to that point. The genesis of this injustice lies in The Hague agreement of 1976. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), when he was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, was the Minister at the Hague meeting that drew up this agreement to give extra aid to preferential areas which were perceived by the Commission to have a vital dependence on fishing. What was never said from that day to this was how on earth those areas were chosen or on what criteria.

With great respect to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, it is not good enough for him to say that this was all to do with the Commission. If the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) looked at *Hansard* of 2 November 1976, column 1214, he would see that my predecessor, Mr. John Nott, as he was then, challenged the right hon. Member for Devonport, who was making a statement about the conclusion of the meeting of the Fisheries Council in The Hague, and asked him what the consequence of this was for regions that did not have that preferential treatment, and on what basis were those regions with the preferential treatment chosen. The right hon. Member for Devonport shuffled it all off on to the Commission. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will have to look at column 1215 for that.

The basis of the rationale, or the criteria, for the preferential treatment for, in those days, the whole of Scotland—it excluded most of England—has never been explained. As the Minister said, the Hague agreement referred to northern parts of Britain, not actually to Scotland. But what was the basis for it? Can the Minister explain why the fishermen who are the constituents of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) should get 15 per cent. more grant than fishermen from the other end of the country? I defy my right hon. Friend to give a logical reason for it. Is it on the basis of unemployment? If it is, I can tell him that west Cornwall has far higher unemployment. Is it based on dependence on fisheries? Both communities depend very much on fishing, and many parts of my constituency are far more dependent on fishing than is most of Scotland. There is no rational basis for this, except one: the crude political decision of the time. If my right hon. Friend knows of a better reason, I hope that he will enlighten me.

The system is unjust, and not only in relation to this matter. It goes right the way through fishing policy. It affected limits; in my part of the country we have six-mile limits, whereas in Scotland there are 12-mile limits. It also affects the allocation of grants. I firmly believe that many Scottish fishermen stand a much better chance of getting a grant in the first place than do fishermen from other areas. In addition, of course, they get higher grants. I say good luck to them, but I believe that the system is crazy and I propose a simple answer which I think will satisfy the whole House. Let us remove the differentials and the bonus and let all our fishermen have exactly the same grant. I will maintain that that is the correct position until someone tells the House and, more importantly, the fishermen of Cornwall, why they get a lower grant than do the fishermen in parts of Scotland.

11.21 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The issue here is not only the differential but the fact that so much of the money has gone to Scotland in any case. If the measure does anything, I hope that it will work better for the English industry than did the previous measure. About three quarters of the money must have gone to Scotland. Although no one begrudges the modernisation of the industry in Scotland there are aging vessels in England and there is a greater need now for modernising the English industry. That is especially so in Grimsby, where many of our vessels are 25-year-old or 35-year-old seine netter wooden vessels, which need modernisation and replacement. The base of the industry in Grimsby must be broadened. We need vessels to replace the British United Trawlers CAT class vessels which were decommissioned two years ago, which had the all-year-round, all-round Britain catching capacity that is necessary to keep the port going throughout the winter. For that, we need improved finances.

The crucial aspect of this measure is how much money is made available to provide the grants. It appears that the sums provided will be inadequate to cope with the need for modernisation and replacement. Because of that inadequacy, an order of priorities has been established. Clearly, we need priorities, but many deserving cases do not fit within those priorities.

In Grimsby, skipper John Hancock has a valid case for a new vessel, but the grant has been tied to the decommissioning of his old vessel. Because he will not do

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

that, he cannot get a grant. There must be such rationing if the sums provided are as inadequate as they are. They should be increased substantially. John Hancock is entitled to a new vessel and should have priority. It would be to his benefit and to the benefit of Grimsby generally.

Grants alone are not enough to help with the process of modernisation. They must be supplemented by loans. At the current rate of interest, it is difficult to raise the money to buy fishing vessels, which are extremely expensive these days. Our competitors in Belgium, Holland and France are provided with subsidised loans to build or replace fishing vessels. That should happen here if we are to help people to modernise the industry in the way that it needs.

Even big firms have not been able to justify the commercial decision, at current rates of interest, to provide new vessels for the industry with the result that there has been a substantial shrinkage in Grimsby and that has meant that vessels have not been replaced. Those are the main points. The measures are unexceptionable, and necessary. The problem, and the test of the Government's good will, is the provision of the funds on the necessary scale to allow the industry to modernise—certainly in Grimsby—in the way that it must.

11.25 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Notwithstanding the existence of the River Avon Navigation Act, by which Salisbury was connected to the Solent, I want to concentrate on the fish farming scheme. The scheme gives enormous discretion to Ministers, who must decide whether something is desirable. It extends to agriculture and structural works in coastal areas and covers the breeding, rearing or cultivation of fish, and that includes shellfish and molluscs. That is very significant.

There are about 500 fish farms in this country. More than 20 are in my constituency, and the biggest river-based fish farm in Europe is in my constituency. There are many problems associated with fish farming. Many are concerned with water abstraction and discharge control. In some cases water authorities restrict the abstraction that they allow to about 40 per cent. of the flow of a river. In my constituency one fish farm takes 70 per cent. of the flow of the river and might increase that figure. Most fish farms are much smaller than that. They would take anything from 25 tonnes of fish a year, whereas the very big fish farms take about 1,000 tonnes a year, and that is big business. I am pleased that the Government are moving towards water abstraction licensing as well as discharge control.

Nearly all the river based sites for fish farming, particularly in the south of England are now used up. Does it make sense to produce grants for fish farms when there is considerable doubt about disease and environmental impact? My right hon. Friend the Minister may have no intention of giving grants to fish farms on rivers in the south of England, but may intend to concentrate on coastal sites. In that case, will he concentrate on salmon and possibly turbot, or will he concentrate on prawns, lobsters, freshwater crayfish and so on? We must pay more attention to fish farming, because it is such a big business.

One aspect that particularly worries me is disease control. It is all very well being delighted at the fact that this is the fastest growing growth area in the agriculture industry, if not in the whole economy in Scotland, but disease control is a big problem. There has been a great deal of discussion and misapprehension about the use of antibiotics. When people talk about antibiotics in general in relation to fish farming, they are probably really talking about anti-microbial compounds, not just antibiotics. There has been a great deal of emotional discussion of those issues.

One of the things that concerns me most about disease control is that by unwittingly licensing many of the traditional low-cost compounds used in fish farming for disease control the Government or the European Community are mistakenly removing the professional discretion of vets. We must be very careful about that. Vets have a great input and their voices should be heard more than they are heard at present.

Another aspect of the burgeoning industry of fish farming that worries me is fish movement control—the movement of fry in particular. I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Minister before I knew that we were to debate this subject today. He will recall that I wrote to him about the regional water authorities that used to have to licence the movement of fish in advance. I understand that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food now does that licensing. In fact, it is retrospective. After one has done it, one has to write and say that one has done so, rather than get permission in the first place. That does not seem to be a frightfully sensible way of carrying out fish movement and disease control. I hope that my right hon. Friend will have a clear view on the national water authorities' role in fish farming and fish disease control.

There is no doubt that fish farming is generally misunderstood. There are about 500 fish farms and about 5 million anglers. Most of the time they are at loggerheads in southern England about the same stretches of water. Much blame is heaped on fish farmers, which may not be justified. I am delighted that there is a joint effort between my right hon. Friend's Ministry, the Freshwater Biological Association, the National Environment Research Council and, indeed, the Wessex water authority to study River Avon course fishing stocks and the reasons for their decline. The report will be published early next year.

This year the Select Committee on the Environment produced an enormous weight of evidence against fish farming, particularly with regard to environmental impact and pollution, with scarcely a peep out of the fish farming lobby to justify what it was doing in economic terms or, indeed, to answer the many questions that were quite rightly posed and to which there are answers.

We are faced with fish farming, which is big business and big money. It also has a big environmental impact. People are worried about it. Before dishing out too many grants to river-based fish farms, I hope that my right hon. Friend will do his best to make sure that we use this unique opportunity to get it right.

11.31 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the statutory instruments in so far as they represent additional and much-needed investment in fishing and fish farming, but like other hon. Members I also find them deficient in that they do not go nearly far enough. Various major problems are unanswered. I appreciate that time for the debate is short, so I shall shortly focus on one statutory instrument, No. 1134 on fish farming. Before I do so, however, I should say that statutory instrument No. 1135 refers to assistance to fishing vessels. I welcome the weighting of support for smaller vessels and also the European Commission's weighting for west coast vessels specifically. Before vessel owners can take advantage of the weighting, they need to get a grant in the first place. Skippers in my constituency have found it difficult to get assistance from the EC through FEOGA grants. One skipper has been turned down twice, despite the fact that, outwardly, everything about his application seemed to merit an award from the European Commission. Part of the problem is that it is difficult to get from the European Commission some explanation of why an application is turned down—in fact, it gives no explanation whatsoever. Therefore, it is difficult for a skipper to know what to do in reprocessing his application for a more favourable verdict. I ask the Minister to look into the matter and to try to persuade the European Commission to be more open in the reasons behind its verdicts.

It has been said that fish farming is a booming industry, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. It has created over 1,000 primary jobs. Added to that, other jobs have been created downstream in processing industries and fish farm services. In 1986, the value of salmon farm production was equivalent to the entire west coast commercial fish landings, which gives some idea of the importance of this new industry to the west coast.

This year the cash value of salmon production is expected to be about £60 million and next year £100 million—equivalent to almost half the total value of the Scottish commercial fish landings. The developments in shellfish farming and the progress in connection with species such as halibut, make for an exciting new growth area. A major new economic force is emerging in the Highlands and Islands.

The figures of 1,000 jobs and £100 million cash value are significant anywhere in Scotland, but they are particularly significant in remote peripheral areas such as the Highlands and Islands, traditionally a fragile community with an underdeveloped economy. Any Government assistance to maintain progress is welcome. I welcome the order, but its good intentions are undermined by the activities of the Crown Estate Commissioners who propose to raise rents to £36 per tonne for fish farms in my constituency and to £40 per tonne for fish farms on the mainland.

The average 1988 production of 25,000 tonnes means that receipts to the crown Estate Commissioners will be between £900,000 and £1 million from the Highlands and Islands alone.

Under pressure, the Crown Estate Commissioners have agreed to plough back some receipts into the fish industry, but so far they have agreed to put back only about £100,000. Meanwhile it is spending about £4·3 million on the maintainence, improvement and repairs of Windsor park and other properties in London. That is not good enough. These feelings were made clear in my constituency recently by those patronisingly referred to by the commissioners as tenants.

The fish farmers in my constituency, and in the Highlands and Islands generally, are not tenants and do not think of themselves sa such. They are not servants but adventurous and hardworking entrepreneurs. They already pay the full range of taxes that businesses are expected to pay and yet they are also taxed by the Crown Estate Commissioners. The difference between the receipts which the commissioners take from them and the investment that they put back in constitutes the profits which are being ploughed back into London properties.

I cannot see the justification for that. It is beyond the understanding of fish farmers in the Highlands and Islands. Can the Ministry justify fish farmers paying rents in excess of investment? Until that injustice is remedied, the statutory instruments will not do much good.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has already said that the problem calls into question the status of the Crown Estate as landlord of the fish farms in the Highlands and Islands. The role of the Crown Estate should be examined. The Government may not be willing to be so radical, but they should at least agree that the £1 million that the Crown Estate intends to extract from fish farms in the Highlands and Islands ought to be ploughed back into fish farming in that area. There is no justification for it to go anywhere else. Investment is needed in research, training and infrastructure works such as piers and roads. Unless that money is ploughed back, the statutory instruments will not do much good.

11.41 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am pleased to welcome the instruments. My constituency has fishing interests in trawlers and a number of fish farms. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State visited Milford Haven shortly after the general election and saw the increased number of trawlers plying from that port in the Celtic sea and further out.

The trawler owners' association — the indigenous owners in Milford Haven — has recently increased the number of working trawlers to seven, and there is a possibility of two more. That is especially important in a town which has 30 per cent. unemployment.

Recent developments by Seacon, which has just taken control of the Milford Haven Dock Company, will lead to the refurbishment of the ice-making factory at the docks, and that will also help the fishing industry.

I should like my right hon. Friend to look again at a matter that the Ministry has considered in the past 18 months. There is worry about the flags of convenience that are used by Spanish ships in Milford Haven. The common fisheries policy in January 1985 virtually excluded Spanish ships from their traditional grounds, but after Spain's accession to the EC in January 1986 a number of licences were granted. However, although some ships register in the United Kingdom and have United Kingdom captains, the number of crew who are British or nationals of other EC states is nowhere near the 75 per cent. that the law requires. The limits are still being flouted.

Fish farming in my constituency is centred on the river Cleddau, and I recently visited a number of farms. There are still pollution problems and I should like to know whether statutory instrument No. 1134 will cover assistance to deal with that problem.

11.43 pm

Mr. Gummer: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) for reminding the House of the considerable danger that is part of the fishing industry. I associate the Government with his remarks about the late Mr. Read.

[Mr. Gummer]

The problem raised on both sides of the House is the difficulty of being fair between the various parts of the industry. I remind hon. Members that many parts of the country where there is high unemployment may, at the same time, have very profitable fishing industries. The connection is not always easy to draw. A hinterland may have high unemployment, but a profitable fishing industry; or there may be problems in both respects. None of us find it easy to decide where extra help should go.

I hope that the debate has convinced the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that he was wholly wrong to attack me for being anti-Scots, for it has suggested to my English friends that I have done too well by the Scots. But it is probably a good idea to be attacked by both sides. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take what I have said in the spirit in which it was meant. We find it extremely difficult to draw the distinctions, and I believe that we must accept that the Commission has tried to give special help to parts of the country with special difficulties. However, I hope that no one will go away with the idea that this is anything but a very blunt instrument, and I have taken very seriously what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke of his sadness about the decommissioning grants. I merely say to him that, with the amount of money available and the arrangements that had been made, it seemed better to put the money into the restructuring of the fleet through the replacement of older boats, particularly those whose age now gives cause for real alarm on safety grounds. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also agree that we cannot ask people to receive grants for new boats when we also allow them to keep old boats.

I must tell the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that we have to use the grants in such a way as not to increase the capacity to catch when there is no increase in the opportunity to do so. The gentleman to whom he referred must accept that the purpose of the grants is to modernise the fleet, but not to expand it beyond the opportunities that are there for it. Otherwise, those who are already in the business will have every right to complain about the use of Government and European Community money. I do not think that that complaint was reasonable.

We examine the problems of fish farming extremely carefully. The European Community makes the decisions, but we have to see that the requests that reach Brussels are within the terms of the arrangements. We insist that there is a discharge consent from water authorities in England and Wales, river purification boards in Scotland and the Department of the Environment at the Northern Ireland Office, where necessary. We start from the assumption that we must ensure that the fish farms that ask for help are doing their business in a way that is environmentally acceptable.

I accept that there are different problems in different parts of the country. What obtains for rivers in the crowded south-east may not obtain for rivers in the rest of the country. The problems of marine fish farming are clearly different from those of river fish farming. We are considering the matter very carefully, and, as I promised my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) in recent correspondence, I am taking particular note of the issues that he has raised with me, in common with neighbouring Members. I hope that we shall be able to satisfy him on those points, or else make changes that will in themselves satisfy him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye mentioned the fallibility of science, and in particular the problems of dredging. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food examined those matters very carefully. It was not done quickly, and it would be unfair to call it a rapid judgment. My hon. Friend shakes his head, but it took a long time: indeed, the industry complained that I took too long over it. I did so on purpose, because I wished to obtain the right answer. In order to protect the fishing interests our decision excludes dredgers from those areas to which they might most want to go. That shows the high priority we give to the fishing interests. It would be unfair to suggest that the Government have not taken into account the evidence that was given to us. However, we have to take into account the best evidence that is available. One may say that science is fallible, but surely one does not therefore say that we ought to accept any view rather than the scientific view.

The same problem has arisen over the total allowable catch and estimating future fish stocks. We are not always right, but it is better to take the best evidence that is available than to disregard it and to say that it is so often wrong that we shall not take it seriously.

I understand my hon. Friend's point about Dover sole being largely caught in Hastings and Rye, but I hope that he will accept that fish do not belong to any place or to anyone. They move very rapidly, and we have to try to ensure that they are shared out fairly.

As for the points put to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), we are taking action on flags of convenience. I hope that very soon he will see the alterations in our arrangements that will ensure that those ships which claim to be British ships are in fact British ships and that therefore those ships that take fish under British quotas are properly taking them. I understand the very considerable anger that is felt when it is found that fish that have been fairly shared out among members of the European Community are taken by other than British nationals.

I shall look into the points that have been made by the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) about the Crown Estate. As I am not directly responsible for it, he will not expect me to answer him directly now, but I shall take his points into account. I shall continue to discuss with the Commission the FEOGA grants and the arrangements to which he rightly drew attention—as did other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. The present system gives rise to considerable difficulties. We have been seeking to encourage a new system that we believe would be better, but so far without success.

As for the point raised by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, I believe that it is better to try to share the £50 million than——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Fishing Vessels (Acquisition and Improvement) (Grants) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1135), dated 1st July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd July, be approved.

SEA FISHERIES

Resolved,

That the Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1136), dated 1st July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd July, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

FISHERIES

Resolved,

That the Fish Farming (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1134), dated 1st July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd July, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Truro and St. Austell

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

11.52 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I welcome the opportunity to raise the problems caused by the removal of assisted area status from the travel-to-work areas of Truro and St. Austell.

I thank the Minister for staying so late to respond to this Adjournment debate. It is, however, an important matter, not only for my own constituents in Truro and St. Austell, but for many throughout Cornwall, particularly in the far west of the county, for, above all, Cornwall's problems need to be seen and tackled together. Because we in Truro and St. Austell are set in the middle of the county our position is unique, as I shall explain, but Launceston also suffers—and as a result of our suffering the whole of Cornwall is penalised.

The Minister may have some knowledge of our problems, having responded in the past to debates on the subject of regional development. However, familiarity will not, I trust, have bred contempt, and I have already let the Minister know that I seek some response to specific difficulties and suggestions, in addition to the general debate about the current definitions of travel-to-work areas in Cornwall.

Above all, the feeling throughout my constituency and Cornwall is that for the sake of bureaucratic simplicity local realities have been ignored—or perhaps there is simply no real understanding of the situation.

If the whole county had assisted area status it would stop this pointless softshoe shuffle by Cornish companies shifting across boundaries in search of the cash to survive or grow. Instead, it would give a single package to present to the outside world, which could be marketed and developed as a whole and which would work as a whole.

Nor is assisted area status to be taken in isolation. It is bound up with development in the county, and while to many of us it is a key issue, the Minister could at least mitigate its effects by acknowledging them and acting to avert the worst anomalies and difficulties. That is why I should like to take the opportunity of this debate to ask the Minister five related questions. I hope that the people of Cornwall will receive the constructive response that they deserve.

My first request is that the grants associated with assisted area status should be an extra sweetener to help to attract business from outside the county. My county is England's poorest, and that is why so much of it attracts special assistance. But why make it a mint with a hole? Truro and St. Austell are the only travel-to-work areas in England that are completely surrounded by assisted areas. That hole has cut off further development potential, not just for my constituency but for Cornwall as a whole. Surely the Government can see that that decision lacked logic. How can we tell people from Helston and Camborne that their only means of communication with the rest of England is through an area where roads, water works and sewerage systems do not have the same financial assistance as their own? So we are left behind, always more expensive to tackle, so all too often put off to do another day.

It is a flaw that the Government have studiously avoided elsewhere. What about the Birmingham travel-to-work area? It is one vast area; one could say the size of an

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

entire county. This travel-to-work area has assisted area status, but if one breaks down the unemployment figures there one finds areas with 8·5 per cent. unemployment in Elmdon or 5·0 per cent. in Knowle. But there are not holes in Birmingham's assisted area status map. Just as I would not be able to see the logic in leaving out parts of Birmingham, I cannot see the logic of doing so in Cornwall.

I have heard it said that it was precisely because Birmingham won this concession that areas like my own missed out. With assisted area status restricted to a defined percentage of the country, when the leafy suburbs of Birmingham were helped, civil servants were dispatched with scissors and tape to cut out other areas all over the country to make the percentages add up. If that is true, my part of Cornwall was one of the sacrifices.

Local industry is united in its belief that Truro and St. Austell offer the rest of the county an opportunity to draw in industry from outside. English China Clays, which is the chief employer in St. Austell, acknowledges the need for St. Austell to be given the opportunity to diversify, but it knows that this cannot be done without assisted area status. Truro and St. Austell could provide the kind of facilities and attraction to make Cornwall marketable, but only with the right support.

My predecessor, David Penhaligon, and the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) were among those who lobbied to put an industrial site called United Downs into the assisted area of Redruth. It was designed as the showpiece estate for Cornwall to attract business and jobs to service a wide area of west Cornwall. Instead, the stupidity of bureaucracy ruled again, and United Downs is part of the Truro travel-to-work area, despite being closer to Redruth. That project was originally backed financially by this Government, but strangled even as it was being built in 1984, all thanks to a pen mark on a map rather than the logic of local knowledge.

Furniss Biscuits is a company with a long history that is based in Truro, but it is now being forced to move unnecessarily into Redruth if it is to receive the grants essential for its growth. It is a firm that provides bread-winning jobs for families in my constituency, not the part-time low-paid work that hides the real poverty of many in Cornwall from the official statistics. Do the Government seriously believe that by forcing a local manufacturer to pay the costs of moving simply to keep in business it will help the local economy?

My second request gives the Minister an opportunity to give some specific constructive assistance. Our local authorities are not sitting around waiting for money to be restored; instead, they have produced a draft application to the national programme for community interest, which will be judged by the European Commission later this year. What they need from the Government is support for their draft and a commitment to push the application through. It is a chance to bring some much needed money to help with the infrastructure of Cornwall, and an opportunity to get that money from Europe. It will give continuity and consistency to Cornwall's development.

I seek a particular commitment from the Minister that will allow funding to areas and projects serving those with assisted area status, such as the link between the A30 and Falmouth. This would be a step towards acknowledging the fact that travel-to-work areas are not the be all and end all of the needs of a community, and would be a real gesture of support for our needs.

I should like to make a special plea that the national programme of community interest does not go the way of the article 15 application, for the development of our tourism, and disappear into the dark depths of the Treasury, losing all sight of deadlines from one year to the next, on the flimsy excuse of concern about local government expenditure. My county is well known for keeping within its means. It is now applying to Europe, but still the Government manage to block any move forward.

The Government can show signs of encouragement by helping our county with this application. However, until we have an improvement in roads through Truro and St. Austell the whole of south Cornwall will suffer. Without decent transport, communications, amenities and industrial estates throughout Cornwall, too much of Cornwall will stagnate in isolation. Those projects will develop only if controls on investment are relaxed. We are not a high spending area; our local authorities have historically been cautious in their spending. Greater freedom would not incur wild extravagance, but more houses and less homelessness, more jobs, and less joblessness. We cannot at present even get help to build a decent city hall in our City of Truro.

Today we saw the first planes flying in from Portsmouth to the new STOL port in the City of London. All Cornwall is keen to realise its potential at RAF St. Mawgan for increased freight transportation and the expansion of operations there by Bryman Airways. It is something that would be welcomed by everyone. Local industries are keen to have customs facilities there, but it is not covered by assisted area status and will, therefore, receive little support. I should like to ask the Minister whether there is any possibility of financial support for such development. I am sure that that would be a sign of support and encouragement to industries interested in moving into the county.

My third request is for increased funding for English Estates. I am told that English Estates finds it easier to let its units in Cornwall than in any other county in England—not surprising, perhaps, since it is virtually alone in providing such facilities. At this moment in the whole of the county of Cornwall there is only one site of 10,000 sq ft available. Is that any way to encourage industry to move to Cornwall when we have nothing to offer but the land and the sky? If the Minister can tell me of any manufacturers who can move to Cornwall and build their own sites, I will write to them tomorrow inviting them to our county. However, I do not believe that he can do so.

The Department of Trade and Industry this year gave English Estates £3 million for the entire south-west region to be spent only in assisted areas. Of that, £2·35 million went to Cornwall, the rest to Plymouth. Next year, of the £2·4 million to be given for the south-west region, only £400,000 will be spent in Cornwall. The result is that any momentum that has been built up in Cornwall will now be lost by a massive reduction in building of industrial sites in the area, despite the fact that there is proven demand. Again, Truro and St. Austell have been struck off the development map. We do not have any industrial units to offer, and English Estates is ruled out of investing with us. I believe that makes no sense for our county and it certainly does not make sense for Truro and St. Austell.

My fourth request is for an assurance that the Plymouth regional development office will not be relocated at Bristol. I, like the Minister, appreciate that rumours such as that are often unfounded, but I have no hesitation in giving the Government the opportunity to dispel those rumours and reassure local businesses and councillors.

My fifth and final request is for a statement on the recent rumours regarding the whole shake-up of regional development in this country. I hope that the Minister will use this request to quell any fears of industries thinking of investing in areas of regional development and assure them that they will continue to receive assistance.

While preparing for this debate I read through the various attempts by hon. Members and hon. Friends to draw the Government's attention to the acute need for a change in the definition of areas eligible for assistance. I have to say I was rather surprised by the similarity of ministerial responses to speeches on this issue, each lacking any helpful response. As a result, I contacted the Minister's office last Friday with an outline of my speech in the hope that tonight we would receive some specific replies. I did that because the people of Cornwall are tired of the usual ministerial responses. They are tired of trying to build up industry in the area only to be beaten back by the Government's regional policy. The Cornish people, Cornish industry and local government deserve a decent reply.

12.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) for the courtesies that he has observed in signalling some of the questions that he wished to raise this evening. I shall do my best to deal with them in the terms in which he raised them. I am grateful to the hon. Member for the manner in which he has presented his case. Given the candour of his delivery, I am sure that he would expect me to respond in a similar manner. I shall try to respond with equal courtesy and candour.

The hon. Gentleman has assembled a collection of facts and figures in support of his case for Government action to help those parts of his constituency which do not benefit from assisted area status. In so doing he would have the House believe that the areas concerned are suffering from a level of disadvantage on a par with that found in some of our most deprived areas. When we examine the hard data we find that that is not so. While neither I nor he would wish to minimise the problem of unemployment, neither St. Austell nor Truro has anything like the rate of unemployment to be found in other parts of the country. Indeed, Truro, in particular, gives a clear impression of prosperity, benefiting from its role as the principal commercial centre of that part of Cornwall, and from the many thousands of visitors each year, generating economic activity on a scale which would be the envy of many other parts of Britain.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks belie the fact that in many ways the Government are doing a great deal to assist areas such as his. I shall come back to this in a moment. First, a few words about the question of assisted area status, which is at the heart of the hon. Member's remarks. He will know, of course, that several other issues follow from that of status.

The assisted areas map was re-drawn in November 1984, and I acknowledge that, as a result, the travel-to-work areas of Truro and St. Austell lost their assisted area status. Quite simply, the two travel-to-work areas did not meet the criteria which were established for assisted area designation. Our objective in revising the assisted areas was to ensure that the areas of greatest need received assistance. With this in mind we looked at a variety of objective indicators. Apart from the immediate unemployment level we considered industrial and occupational structure, for example, with a view to determining the areas where dependence on declining traditional industries was the greatest problem. Levels of long-term unemployment were, of course, a key consideration, and distance from main markets was taken into account. Having considered these factors we could not, in the circumstances, justify including Truro and St. Austell, and as the hon. Gentleman has made clear, this meant that these areas were no longer eligible for other forms of assistance from for example, the European regional development fund.

I must make it plain that my Department has no plans at present to review the coverage of the assisted areas map. I sympathise with those areas which lost assisted area status in 1984, but piecemeal changes in respect of individual travel-to-work areas would undermine the stability in the map needed for firms to be able to make sensible investment decisions. I recognise that the relative positions of travel-to-work areas have changed since the 1984 review but, based on the most recent figures—for September 1987—the Truro TTWA's unemployment rate, 9·6 per cent. is below the average for Great Britain at 11·3 per cent., and well below the average for intermediate areas at 14·1 per cent. St. Austell's rate of 13·2 per cent., which is higher than Truro's, is nevertheless also below the intermediate area average. Indeed the unemployment rates of both TTWAs are lower than they were when the assisted areas map was altered in November 1984. Truro's rate, in particular, has shown a marked decrease—from 12·2 per cent. in November 1984 to 9·6 per cent. in September 1987. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Birmingham. The people of Birmingham would be delighted if they could report similar figures.

Truro's claim to assisted area status on unemployment grounds can hardly be described as a strong one. As I am sure the hon. Member will acknowledge, there are many non-assisted areas which suffer from levels of unemployment considerably in excess of both Truro's and St. Austell's rates.

I have spoken at some length about the unemployment level because, although one has to bear in mind a number of criteria when considering status, prime among them —as I am sure the hon. Gentleman agrees—must be the level of unemployment, which is a measure of social and economic activity, and the level of long-term unemployment. We try to regard them as the heart of the consideration.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to say a few words about the way in which the Government's policies are having an impact on the unemployment and other problems he has described. We are creating an economic climate which is helping industry and commerce increase the national production of wealth. We are in our seventh year of growth at an annual rate approaching 3 per cent. Investment was at a record level in 1986.

Since 1980, the United Kingdom has grown faster, on average, than any other major European Community country and our productivity growth since 1979 has been

[Mr. John Butcher]

better than in any major industrial country—including Japan. In the three months to July 1987, output per head was nearly 48 per cent. up on the 1980 level. At the same time inflation has been substantially reduced—last year it was at its lowest level for almost 20 years.

We are encouraging the growth of the enterprise culture through lower taxes and the removal of price and dividend controls. We have introduced a whole range of measures to improve the responsiveness of commerce and industry through the restoration of incentives and the removal of unnecessary regulation and by enlarging the scope for enterprise through privatisation. We are emphasising to industry the importance of education and training. These are the steps we are taking to produce a climate which promotes enterprise and prosperity. They are at the heart of my Department's programmes.

There is a range of financial and practical support designed to help industry develop its competitive strengths and take advantage of the resulting opportunities. Support of this kind is available nationally and there is no reason why companies in the hon. Member's constituency should not benefit. There are subsidised consultancy services dealing with design, quality and marketing, which aim to introduce small and medium-sized firms to best practice and encourage them to make use of outside specialist advice by demonstrating the benefits of such advice. Information, advice and support for exporters is the business of the British Overseas Trade Board and the assistance given by the board is available throughout the country.

If the hon. Gentleman doubts the efficacy of such measures, I can only say that, during the past three or four years, I have seen many vivid examples of companies' prospects being changed by the implementation of the highest quality advice on design, quality and marketing. If it would be helpful, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to bring a delegation from his chamber of commerce to my Office to discuss these matters, which I have mentioned as being the main part of our agenda. I have found that through promotion of these measures, it is possible to help some regions and travel-to-work areas.

The success of the Government's policies in tackling unemployment is apparent in all regions of the country. Unemployment is now falling throughout Great Britain. In Truro and St. Austell, as elsewhere, people are benefiting from the wide range of employment, training and enterprise schemes run by the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission. And there are local enterprise agencies in St. Austell and in Camborne, which covers the Truro area. I understand that last year the West Cornwall enterprise agency assisted in the start-up of 87 new businesses and that it carried out, on average, 65 business advice consultations each month. I believe it has also set up a loan fund aided by RTZ plc with the aim of supporting small business development by making loans available to new or existing businesses for either capital or working expenditure. I am sure that that will be most beneficial in helping to extend further the enterprise culture in the area.

As the hon. Member will acknowledge, a large part of his constituency has been classified as a rural development area. This is a designated priority area drawn up by the Development Commission on the basis of a number of criteria, including unemployment rates, age structures, access to services and so on. The Development Commission concentrates its efforts in these rural development areas with the aim of increasing the number and range of job opportunities in the countryside. Its main programmes include the provision of small workshops and support for small businesses through advice, finance and training provided through its agency COSIRA. The commission also provides some support for rural services such as transport and housing and encourages community activity and self-help. In the Truro area the commission has funded 53 units, providing 73,000 sq ft of factory space, which accounts for nearly 300 job opportunities.

In the farming and rural enterprise package announced earlier this year, the Government provide an extra £1 million to enable the Development Commission to carry forward an innovative package of measures to stimulate new job opportunities in the countryside and encourage the development and diversification of the rural economy. One of these initiatives is the private sector partnership scheme, ACCORD — assistance for co-ordinated rural development — launched in June. Its aim is to attract £2·50 of private money for every £1 from the commission. I am sure the hon. Member will recognise the value of these developments.

The Government also recognise that the Truro and St. Austell areas, along with many other parts of Cornwall, contain significant amounts of derelict land. Because of this, both areas were designated, in 1985, as derelict land clearance areas, thus restoring the availability of derelict land grants at the highest rates. Reclamation schemes carried out by local authorities in such areas are eligible for derelict land grant at the rate of 100 per cent. of approved costs; 80 per cent. is payable for non-local authority schemes. These are the same rates that apply to schemes located in assisted areas.

I am sure the hon. Gentleman will join me in paying tribute to the valuable reclamation work being done by Carrick and Restormel councils with the assistance of derelict land grant. Carrick council, in particular, has been active in reclaiming derelict land for a variety of uses, including industry and public open space and has a large scheme at Scorrier in the derelict land programme for the current financial year. There has been less activity in Restormel so far, but discussions are now under way about the possible use of derelict land grant to reclaim some former china clay workings in the St. Austell area. The Government are prepared to respond positively to the acknowledged problems associated with dereliction.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's willingness to look beyond the boundaries of his own constituency, and I make it clear that I am well aware of the value of English Estates' factory building in the areas surrounding his own constituency. While my Department has this year increased the allocation of funds to English Estates, there is a very high level of demand on its resources in assisted areas throughout the country as the economy continues to grow. It is, rightly, for the board of English Estates to determine how money allocated in the south-west is best spent on viable projects that will do most to stimulate new and increased business activity which alone can provide secure jobs. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has kept a close eye on the role of English Estates.

During the current financial year, English Estates will spend about £2 million in west Cornwall. The Truro office will continue its efforts to identify suitable sites for future development. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands and supports the need for new and better sites, for future development. I hope that he will join us in using his best endeavours with local authorities in his constituency to ensure that sufficient sites of the right quality will be available, and that they will show enlightened flexibility in their approach to planning consents, so that the needs of industry and commerce can be met.

Despite the hon. Gentleman's inclination to point up the disadvantages as he sees them of the absence of assisted area status, there has, nevertheless, been some very recent welcome news on the investment front. He will, for example, be delighted that Clear Water Fine Foods of Nova Scotia, the new owners of Channel Foods, is to invest £3 million in the Truro company and has plans to recruit an extra 40 workers following a move to new premises in the Newnham industrial estate. He will also be aware that St. Austell-based Partech Ltd., which employs 20 people in the manufacture of quality control monitoring equipment, has announced plans to double its work force within the next 18 months.

This sort of activity is evidence, if any were needed, of the confidence in the local area brought about by the Government's prudent management of the economy and the praiseworthy reactions of local employers in the hon. Gentleman's area to the new breeze. The hon. Gentleman asked specific questions about the organisation of the south-west regional office. There are no plans to close the Plymouth office, but good management requires that the tasks and resources are continually monitored. The change was made to give the best possible service to those eligible for regional development grant while maintaining the quality of all the other services provided from Bristol.

It is no longer possible to justify a free-standing regional selective assistance unit in Plymouth. Bristol-based staff handle the full range of the Department's services and instruments across the whole region, with no complaints from the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the A30. Although it is a matter for the Department of Transport, I recognise that this road is a vital communications link for industry and commerce in Cornwall, which includes the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The Government have a list of impressive improvements made, under construction and planned. These together with the improvements in air communications, not least to the London docklands airport, are doing much to reduce the sense of distance of Cornwall from the main market places of Britain.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 27 October 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NATIONAL PROVIDENT INSTITUTION BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered.
Amendment made.
To be read the Third time.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hip Replacements

2. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of hip replacement operations under the National Health Service.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): In 1978 there were 28,000 such operations in England. By 1985 this had risen to 37,650, an increase of 34 per cent. While the number of operations has increased steadily, so, too, has the demand. We have made it clear to health authorities that hip replacement operations should be regarded as a priority for the development of services in the acute sector. The aim is for 48,000 such operations a year by the year 1990.

Mr. Steen: Although, clearly, many thousands of elderly people have cause to be grateful to the Government for the number of hip replacement operations, is my right hon. Friend aware that there are special problems for elderly people in retirement areas? There is increasing demand there for hip operations, and the special needs of those people must be met if they are not to become prisoners in their own homes. Will my right hon. Friend say something particularly about the Plymouth and Torbay area health authorities, in which I have a special interest because of my constituents?

Mr. Moore: I know that my hon. Friend would thank not the Government, but the excellent National Health Service for the success in this area. I cannot give details but I shall write to my hon. Friend about the specifics on the Torbay and Plymouth areas. In my hon. Friend's region, waiting times have been radically reduced from 32 weeks in 1979 to 22 weeks at present, which is only a fraction above the national average and is a major improvement.

Miss Abbott: Will the Secretary of State issue an instruction to all regional health authorities not to close operating theatres over Christmas, as this would enable a further reduction to be made in the waiting lists?

Mr. Moore: I am not sure how the hon. Lady's question connects precisely with the specific question on hip operations. Obviously, her remarks about the particular management of regions will be drawn to the attention of the region in question.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Norwich district authority proposes to close the Wells cottage hospital to save £150,000? Is he further aware that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Member's question deal with hip operations?

London Ambulance Service

3. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the response times of the London ambulance service during April, May and June of 1987; and what action he has taken to ensure that previous levels of performance are maintained.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): In general, yes. During the period January-June 1987 the London ambulance service responded to 89 per cent. of accident and emergency calls within 14 minutes and 95 per cent. within 17 minutes. That is an improvement on last year.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister agree that the question was about April, May and June? In her letter to me dated 8 September the hon. Lady admitted not only that shifts were not covered but that more than 50 emergency ambulances were single manned during that period. Is it not a fact also that the London ambulance service will have to contribute from its resources and, therefore, from economies 1 per cent. of the pay offer now on the table? Does the hon. Lady agree that the effectiveness of ambulance services is not helped by spreading resources ever more thinly and that the emergency services must be demand-led and not budget-prescribed?

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied with the figures that I give him. He never is. However, I point out that in the period that I mentioned —the first half of this year—the average response time for emergency calls in this city was just over 10 minutes. Given the traffic conditions in the capital that is absolutely marvellous, and it compares very well with the average response time in Derbyshire — which contains my constituency—where that time is well over 13 minutes.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency and in many others car parking is so dense and tight that emergency services such as the ambulance service simply cannot get to the people whom they need to collect for serious and emergency operations? Will her Department take a serious interest in this issue to see what can be done to improve matters?

Mrs. Currie: That is a most serious matter. Emergency services are allocated largely on the basis of medical need, and it is a matter of concern if ambulances cannot get through to the people who need them. If my hon. Friend will give me more details, I shall take the matter up with the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Owing to the unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest and most appropriate opportunity.

Maternity Beds

4. **Mrs. Fyfe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to ensure that the number of available maternity beds is sufficient for comfort and safety during confinement.

Mrs. Currie: It is regional health authorities in England who are responsible for maternity services, and this includes determining the number of maternity beds. I am satisfied that we have plenty of beds. The Health Service in Scotland, which covers the hon. Lady's constituency, is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Minister agree to conduct a review of existing maternity services both in England and Wales and in Scotland? Many women thoughout Britain would dispute her complacent response to this matter. They know from direct experience that the service is not always satisfactory. Does the Minister agree that it is vital that women should feel confident that the service offered is safe and secure for them and for their babies? Therefore a review would be in order. The Government should consult not only the area health authorities but women's groups.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady asked me about beds. We have plenty of maternity beds throughout the country. Occupancy of maternity beds ranges from 59 per cent. in the Trent regional health authority area, which covers my area, to 70 per cent. in Glasgow. The average maternity bed produces only one baby per week. That does not suggest overcrowding or excessive pressure on resources.

Mr. Redwood: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the West Berkshire district health authority area one of the problems in keeping beds open is the high cost of recruiting labour, which is extremely difficult given the national average rates agreed? Does she have any proposals for breaking the log-jam so that we may recruit the staff that we need to keep the beds open?

Mrs. Currie: For some time it has been our policy to pay to our staff—including midwives—the rates of pay that the review boards recommend. That includes a 9 per cent. pay rise this year. As a simple matter of fact, there has been a large increase in the number of midwives whom we employ, from 20,000 when we took control in 1979 to nearly 23,000 in 1985.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister note that if the Northumberland health authority goes ahead with its plan to close down all the maternity beds in Alnwick many babies will be born, not in maternity units, but in ambulances on 40-mile journeys to a distant hospital? Will she take careful note of that when the matter eventually comes before her?

Mrs. Currie: If the community health council objects to any major proposal for such a change, the matter will come before Ministers in due course. We treat each proposal on its merits and we try ultimately to base our decision on the interests not only of mothers but of babies.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister take steps to improve maternity services so that pregnant women do not have to wait for hours in ante-natal clinics to see a different doctor or midwife on each visit? Will she ensure that extra resources are rapidly provided to regional health authorities when there is a sudden increase in the birth rate, to avoid women being left not knowing in which hospitals their babies will be born? Will she also increase the number of special care baby cots so that all low birth weight babies have a fighting chance of survival?

Mrs. Currie: I could not agree more with the hon. Lady's first sentence. The way in which pregnant women are made to wait is sometimes a disgrace, but that is a matter not of resources, but, frequently, of the need for careful management and treating the individual as a human being rather than just as a patient.

Mental Patients

5. **Mr. Bowis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for mental patients *(a)* living in National Health Service hospitals, *(b)* living in residential care accommodation and *(c)* living in the community; and if he will give these figures for those in England and Wales and for the Wandsworth health authority, respectively.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): On 31 December 1986 there were 60,279 mentally ill in-patients in hospitals in England, including 807 under the care of the Wandsworth health authority. The number of places in residential care accommodation provided specifically for mentally ill people is 8,267 for England, including 133 provided by the London borough of Wandsworth. We have no comprehensive figures for people living in the community who could be described as in some degree mentally ill, many of whom are being treated by their general practitioners.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an imbalance in the mental health budget whereby 90 per cent. of the funds go to the hospital service and only 10 per cent. to care in the community? Does he agree that the satisfactory transfer of patients to the community requires adequate housing, personal income and aftercare as well as adequate co-operation and co-ordination between the Health Service and social services departments? Does he agree that the programme of mental hospital closures should proceed extremely slowly until those prerequisites are met and the mental health budget rebalanced?

Mr. Newton: There are really three questions there. First, I think that the 90:10 statistic is oversimplified, bearing in mind how many mentally ill people are living in their ordinary homes.

On the second part of the question, I very much agree with the general thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks. That is one reason why we have asked Sir Roy Griffiths to conduct a review of many of these important matters.

On the third point, I entirely accept that closure proposals, where such exist, should be handled very carefully, because the aim is not to close hospitals but to ensure better care for the patients.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Minister aware of the serious concern of parents of mentally handicapped and mentally ill people with respect to two different needs, in that people in that situation might be better off in hospital until the

Secretary of State provides the funding to ensure that the necessary care in the community is available? Does the Minister agree that there is no excuse for closing hospitals before that provision is made?

Mr. Newton: I have already made my view clear. The aim of health authorities in this area is to improve the pattern of patient care. Hospital closures are incidental. If the hon. Gentleman studies the figures, he will see that there have been very substantial increases in resources for the care of mentally ill people in the community, including, for example a more than doubling of the number of community psychiatric nurses.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. Friend take on board the fact that there is widespread concern that people are being let out of hospital when there is not always adequate care available for the community as well as for the patient? Is he aware that a great deal of trouble may be caused when neighbours suddenly find these poor people living next door? I beg my hon. Friend to bear that in mind.

Mr. Newton: I fully accept that there is concern, and in some cases I share it. That is one reason why at almost every meeting with district or regional health authorities I stress the point that I have emphasised to the House—that discharges need to be properly planned and based on proper provision of alternative facilities.

Mr. Wigley: If that is so, when do the Government intend to implement one of the essential first steps towards ensuring proper care in the community—the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which has still not been implemented?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the primary focus of discussions between my hon. Friend the Minister and the local authority associations relate to sections 5 and 6 of that Act, which are concerned with disabled school leavers. We are very conscious of the importance of section 7, and one of my aims is to get that implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that included in the statistics are the children of the Princess Marina hospital? I extend a personal "thank you" to our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for visiting that hospital. Is my hon. Friend aware that those children are in tragic circumstances? May I press him for an early decision that they should remain in hospital?

Mr. Newton: I shall take careful note of what my hon. Friend said. As he mentioned, our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State recently visited that hospital. I wish to take this opportunity to make it clear to him and the House that in my judgment there are still many people who need hospital care. The policy of care in the community is not something to be pursued regardless of the needs of the individual concerned.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that his response to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), in which he explained the delay in implementing one section of the Disabled Persons Act, does not excuse the delay in implementing another section? Does he further accept that there is a need for proper funding of bridging arrangements? The transitional period between hospital discharge and patients going into the community is of profound importance, if only because those who suffer from mental illness almost certainly have the additional adversity of poverty, unemployment, homelessness and family break-ups. If the Government continue with their inadequately funded community care policy, will it not simply be seen as a euphemism for community neglect?

Mr. Newton: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I did not in any way use my references to sections 5 and 6 as an excuse for not implementing section 7. I said that, quite rightly, a great deal of pressure in the House and elsewhere has been concerned with the provision for disabled school leavers. However, I also said that I attached high priority to implementing section 7. Regional health authorities have substantial resources available, and we look to them to use those resources sensibly to provide for the transitional period, as the hon. Gentleman rightly recommended.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give a firm assurance that he will slow down the closure of psychiatric hospitals until there are sufficient trained and qualified staff to look after the patients when they are in the community, and also that suitable accommodation is available? We do not want them to end up in prisons, as the Select Committee on Social Services found in its inquiry into the prison medical service.

Will my hon. Friend also confirm—as I believe he has indicated already—that there will be a long-term need for hospital care for many of the mentally ill, especially the more acute and severe schizophrenics?

Mr. Newton: Certainly the answer to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question is yes. I think that, by implication, I have already answered the first part. The slowing down of the programme is not the issue; rather, it is that we will not approve hospital closures until we are satisfied that proper alternative provision is available.

Health Inequalities

6. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding health inequalities in and between regions in England and Wales.

Mr. Moore: It has always been one of the principal aims of the National Health Service to ensure that services are equally available to all who are in equal need and considerable progress has been made since 1977-78 in ironing out long-standing inequalities in health provision between regions.

Mr. Lloyd: The right hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that almost all experts disagree with his view that progress has been made. The reality is that my constituents and others in the northern region stand a much higher chance of ill health and of dying early than do those in the more fortunate regions. Given that background, and given that every Member of Parliament from the North-West has files bulging with cases of failures of social service provision, why did the north-west region recently say that it would accept service reductions from the district health authorities to balance the budget? If the right hon. Gentleman does not wish to comment on that matter now, will he accept my challenge to come to the north-west and debate the failure of the Health Service in that region so that the public can make up its mind on the matter?

Mr. Moore: I shall correct the misimpression given by the hon. Gentleman about NHS progress in his region as against the country generally. Since 1977-78, the RAWP reallocation, to the advantage of the northern region, has progressed from the point where its resources were 9 per cent. below target to being currently 2 per cent. below target. As opposed to the appalling collapse in the capital programme under the last Labour Government, the region now has the second largest capital receipt programme. Its citizens are benefiting from the RAWP reallocation undertaken by this Government.

Mr. McCrindle: Has the time not arrived to reconsider the allocation of resources to the four Thames health regions? Whereas in 1977-78 it could be said that facilities in the four regions were ahead of those in the rest of the country, that is no longer the case, and unless there is an increase in resources for the four Thames health regions, patient care is ultimately bound to suffer?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will know that I have been a London Member for many years. I am somewhat conscious of what he said when I look at the relative data throughout the country. The RAWP programme ensures that service provision is equalised throughout the country. I recognise what my hon. Friend said to the extent that the RAWP formula is currently under review.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister dispute all the evidence that we now have a two-nation divide in health as well as in wealth?

Mr. Moore: I sometimes wonder whether the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members might consider what they say in regard to the relative comparators between our country and the rest. The hon. Lady may not be aware that health—*[Interruption.]* The answer will come in proper time. The hon. Lady may not be aware that health inequalities are less significant in the United Kingdom than in most other Western countries, including the United States, Japan and France. That is the reality of the relative lack of inequality. The question related to equality in the provision of services. RAWP is seeking to do precisely that.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend most seriously consider the inequalities that arise specifically in areas where there is a large retired and aged population and where doctors must spend much more time dealing with the elderly? Perhaps hip operations can be dealt with in the private and public sectors to relieve the specific problems that the elderly face in such areas.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend made an important point. I have been particularly conscious of it when I have looked at the concept of the primary health care review. I hope that I shall be able to assist in that direction.

Tameside and Glossop General Hospital

7. **Mr. Hawkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the Tameside and Glossop general hospital development.

Mr. Newton: I am pleased to report that, after a delay while additional post-contract work is carried out, the admission of the first patients to phase II of Tameside general hospital is scheduled for the autumn of 1988.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend's statement will be well received in my constituency of High Peak and in the north-west as a whole. The large expansion of the hospital shows the Government's commitment to the Health Service and to the north. None the less, I seek an assurance from my hon. Friend that adequate funds will be made available in future so that the magnificent new facilities can be fully staffed without detriment to other important facilities in the north-west.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's first remarks. I am glad to know that, even in this place, one can please some of the people some of the time. My hon. Friend will know that the region and the district are currently discussing funding issues. I think I am right in saying that the region has already offered £2·6 million as revenue consequences, but some issues remain to be settled.

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Well—yes—Mr. Favell.

Mr. Favell: I am entranced by the way in which you receive my question, Mr. Speaker.

As another north-west hon. Member, I do not have a postbag bulging with letters about the services that are being delivered in Stockport. Is one of the problems not inequality——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Member's question cover Tameside and Glossop general hospital?

Mr. Favell: It covers the north-west region and the north-west regional health authority.

Is one of the problems not inequality of resources but inequality of performance? Are not many districts just not performing?

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I could not hear part of my hon. Friend's question, so I can hardly expect that he will be as entranced by the answer as Mr. Speaker was by the question. However, I can at least confirm that Stockport and Tameside are in the north-west region.

Handicapped Children

8. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the level of physiotherapy support available from the National Health Service to special schools for handicapped children in Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. The provision of physiotherapy services to special schools is the responsibility of the local health authorities in co-operation with the local education authorities. It is for them together to decide on the appropriate level of physiotherapy services.

Mr. Rooker: I am surprised that the Minister is satisfied, given the amount of concern that has been expressed by parents at the Wilson Stuart special school in my constituency. That school caters for children from at least six constituencies. Is the Minister satisfied that the differences between health authorities in the city of Birmingham can lead to the position where the Wilson Stuart school in West Birmingham health authority has 140 handicapped pupils with two physiotherapists and two who are rotational, whereas at Bray's special school, which is covered by South Birmingham health authority, 110 pupils, who have almost the same type of disability, have the services of 4½ full-time physiotherapists? The Minister cannot be satisfied with such discrimination against the pupils from the six constituencies in north Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: The Wilson Stuart school, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, was affected by a shortage of paediatric physiotherapists at the end of last year, but is currently up to establishment. The number of physiotherapists who are employed by the Birmingham health authorities has jumped from 268 in 1982 to 302 this year. The biggest increase has been in West Birmingham health authority, which covers the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), has exemplified, by reference to Birmingham, a problem which grievously affects handicapped children all over Britain? Is she further aware that giving the right help in the right place at the right time can make all the difference between enabling a handicapped child to live an independent life and living a life of dependence and preventible disability? Will she consider this problem more urgently and accept that we would like a fuller statement at an early date?

Mrs. Currie: I accept much of what the right hon. Gentleman has rightly said. The number of physiotherapists who are employed in the Health Service has climbed rapidly from about 7,000 when he was a member of the Government to about 11,000 now. Perhaps that will help to answer his question.

AIDS

9. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he plans to respond to the third report of the Social Services Committee on problems associated with AIDS, HC 182, Session 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: I expect to respond to the Committee's report before Christmas.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a programme of anonymised screening represents by far the simplest way of obtaining accurate information about the spread of AIDS through the population? Does he further agree that without that information it is impossible to evaluate the efforts that the Government are making to combat the spread of this appalling disease? Does he agree that such a programme could be introduced at a low cost because blood samples are already routinely collected from large numbers of people?

Mr. Moore: What I can agree with is that we need better information about the spread of the HIV infection. I know that my hon. Friend served honourably on the Select Committee in the previous Parliament and that the Committee did not share his view on anonymised screening. Having said that, I am, of course, anxious to ensure that we have the best scientific advice, and I am considering the issue. I hope that my hon. Friend will share my desire for better information, not necessarily gained from the route that he seeks to pursue.

Mr. Frank Field: Following the Committee's report, have the Government been able to respond positively to the capital needs of London Lighthouse, and if so to what extent?

Mr. Moore: I know of that particular issue, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Health is actively considering it at the moment. I hope that he will be able to make a statement, which I hope will be helpful, in the not too distant future.

Sir David Price: May I confirm to my right hon. Friend that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) was in a minority of one in proposing anonymised screening? All other members of the Select Committee felt that it would be entirely irresponsible clinically. However, if a person is found to have a blood sample which is HIV positive, it must be right to do something about that patient.

Mr. Moore: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments. As he and hon. Members on both sides of the House will know, my predecessor welcomed unreservedly the advice of the Committee and the help that it gave in this difficult area.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State accept the estimate of the Select Committee that 1,200 haemophiliacs are antibody positive as a result of infection at the hands of the NHS? Does he recognise that the Government must bear part of the responsibility for that number because of the failure to make Britain self-sufficient in blood products, which has left us dependent on imports from commercial sources in the United States? Does he agree with the robust statement of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), that anyone who denies that AIDS can be transmitted by blood products needs his head examined? Therefore, does he accept that, whatever the legal liability, the Government have a moral obligation to help those haemophiliacs and to protect their dependants against mortgage defaults and homelessness?

Mr. Moore: I can confirm the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave with regard to the 1,200 haemophiliacs. I have received letters from my hon. Friends on this issue. Some of their constituents have suffered from this, and I share their deep sympathy, but the House will be aware that there has never been a general state scheme to compensate those who suffer the unavoidable adverse effects that arise from medical procedures. The Government have tried to provide all NHS facilities to those who suffer illness as a result of the infection. So far we have provided £104,000 to each of the six haemophilia reference centres in England so that they can provide a counselling service. In addition, the DHSS is working closely with the Haemophilia Society. Beyond that, I can say that I will meet representatives of the Haemophilia Society next week.

Elderly Households

10. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent evidence his Department has compiled on the expenditure of elderly households on domestic appliances and other durable goods.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The latest information is for 1985, when the average pensioner household spent more than £230 on durable household goods. This forms the fastest growing area of pensioners' spending and is two thirds higher in real terms than in 1979.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about pensioners' spending. Will he comment on pensioners' incomes which underlie that spending? How do they compare with 1979?

Mr. Scott: Again, the latest information available is for 1985. Between 1979 and 1985 pensioners' incomes increased in real terms by about 18 per cent., which is roughly twice as fast as incomes in the community as a whole.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister will be aware that one of the most important items of expenditure in any elderly household is the purchase or rental of a television set. Indeed, given the lack of safety on the streets, and the fact that many elderly people are afraid to go out after dark, it could be argued that acquiring a television set is an essential item of expenditure in elderly households. Therefore, to keep as many elderly people as possible living independently in the community, will the DHSS support the proposal for a system of concessionary television licences for pensioners, which would cost the Treasury only £330 million? It gives thousands of millions of pounds in tax cuts to the rich every year.

Mr. Scott: No doubt many hon. Members will recall the time when pensioners were given vouchers with which to buy cigarettes and other tobacco products. We should concentrate on protecting the real value of the retirement pension rather than embarking on a series of specific grants for items which some pensioners may not want.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister not recognise that there is something a little more than ironic about Ministers congratulating themselves on the increase in pensioners' incomes, which stemmed directly from the changes made in state and occupational pensions by the Labour Government in 1975 and which were seriously weakened by the activities of this Government in the Social Security Act 1986? Does he admit that that Act will weaken the standard of living of pensioners?

Mr. Scott: No. The steady maturing of the SERPS scheme, the reforms which we shall introduce for pensions in 1988, the increase in pensioners' savings and the Government's success in controlling inflation will all contribute to rising standards of living for our pensioners.

Ambulance Service

11. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage change in non-emergency ambulance patient miles in Lewisham between 1983 and 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The London ambulance service does not calculate patient mileage statistics by district health authority.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister not think that it should begin to collect such statistics, given that there is an increasing percentage of elderly, chronically sick and disabled people in the community, particularly as a result of Government policies on community care, the fact that the dial-a-ride schemes are vastly oversubscribed and given that a walking case is defined as someone who can walk with the help of one other person and who can sit in a vehicle and therefore may not use the ambulance service?

Mrs. Currie: The London ambulance service runs some 1,000 vehicles. Last year it performed 2·3 million patient journeys and covered some 12 million miles. It answers emergencies at the rate of 1,300 every day of the year and the average ambulance journey costs £18. I can give the hon. Member no end of statistics, but I apologise for the fact that I cannot give her exactly the ones that she wants.

Health Services and Public Health Act 1968

12. **Mr. Ian Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the Government are making available in the current year for grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): In the current financial year the Department is planning to provide funding of more than £37 million to the voluntary sector, an increase of 82·5 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. Of that money about £26·3 million is provided under section 64.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent reply. Although I know he is aware that the new Chesil counselling centre in Weymouth is doing excellent work, can he confirm that, through section 64, the Government are giving funds to this type of project to support the work to overcome alcoholism and drug abuse?

Mr. Portillo: Section 64 money is principally available for national schemes. I know about the Chesil counselling service, and I know that my hon. Friend is in touch with the county council about that service. We provide about £¾ million section 64 money to voluntary bodies concerned with alcohol abuse.

Retirement Pensions

13. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed increase in retirement pensions.

Mr. Scott: This matter will be covered in the statement that my right hon. Friend will be making to the House shortly.

Consultant Geriatricians

14. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant geriatricians there are now compared with 1978.

Mrs. Currie: The number of consultants in geriatric medicine in England has increased from 330 in 1978 to 479 in 1986. That is an increase of nearly 50 per cent. and it demonstrates our commitment to care for the elderly in this country.

Mr. Butterfill: I offer my hon. Friend congratulations on such a satisfactory reply. Does she agree that the success of the NHS under this Government means that many people are living much longer than hitherto and that the demand for geriatric services is likely to increase still further in the future?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I agree. The increasing number of old people in our society and rising life expectancy are a tribute to success in the Health Service. There are more nurses in the geriatric service, more district nurses, more private residential care, more nursing homes, more home helps, more day centres and more people cared for in day hospitals. We expect those increases to continue.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that far too many geriatric hospitals are outdated, ancient and inadequate and are totally unsuitable for the people who must live in them? Is the Minister aware that far too many pensioners are in hospitals because there is inadequate care available for them in their homes and that the entire system of care for old people is cracking?

Mrs. Currie: Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman is unaware that 1·6 million old people are currently cared for at home by home nurses and that that is a rapid increase on recent years. I take on board the point he makes about the tatty state of some old geriatric hospitals, and I hope that he will support the Government when we make moves to close and replace those hospitals.

Elderly People

15. **Mr. Hinchliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many elderly persons were admitted to private residential homes with Department of Health and Social Security financial support during the year ended 31 March.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the exact form requested. Figures for February 1987 show that there were 65,000 people of pension age in private and voluntary residential care homes claiming supplementary benefit help with their fees.

Mr. Hinchliffe: In view of the situation demonstrated by the recent Yorkshire Television programme, "First Tuesday", which looked at the care of the elderly, are the Government satisfied with the impact of their free market ideology on the care of the elderly? Furthermore, does the Minister accept that it is in the best interests of elderly physically or mentally handicapped people to be advertised as chattels in estate agents' descriptions of houses to be sold for the private care of handicapped people?

Mr. Portillo: Recent concern has centred not only on private homes but on local authority homes. We shall look at the report of Lady Wagner's review of residential care, which is expected shortly. Meanwhile, the social services inspectorate is discussing with local authorities the ways in which it can improve its monitoring.

Bridlington New Community Hospital

16. **Mr. Cran** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the Bridlington new community hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I am delighted to say that Bridlington new community hospital was handed over by the contractors to East Yorkshire health authority on 23 October this year, three months ahead of schedule. The hospital cost £16 million and is expected to receive its first patients around Easter.

Mr. Cran: I am sure my hon. Friend knows how delighted we are at having that hospital in east Yorkshire, but does she not agree that the mere fact that the consultant medical staff are being drawn from Scarborough should not be used as an excuse by those who would like to see East Yorkshire health authority die on the vine and be taken over—if I can be allowed to say it —by Hull health authority?

Mrs. Currie: I shall convey to my colleagues in the regional health authority the views and remarks of my hon. Friend. I thank him for his kind words about that new development.

PRIME MINISTER

Select Committees

Q1. **Mr. Allen** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to put before the House proposals for changes in the constitution or powers of Select Committees.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): No, Sir.

Mr. Allen: Does the Prime Minister agree that the continuing failure to set up departmental Select Committees is undermining the role of this House in holding the Government to account? To ensure that the Select Committees have a life of their own, independent of Government — indeed, independent of shadow Government—will the right hon. Lady consider putting her personal weight behind the proposal that Members of this House should directly elect the members of the Select Committees?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said last Thursday at business questions, he is working through the usual channels to get the Select Committees going as soon as possible. I cannot add to that point. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, the membership of Select Committees is ultimately for the House to determine. The membership is determined by the House on an amendable motion tabled on behalf of the Committee of Selection. I am not aware of any strong support for changing the present system.

Mr. Michael Morris: With regard to the powers of Select Committees, does my right hon. Friend not think that the time is now appropriate for the Public Accounts Committee to monitor the nationalised industries, because now there are far fewer nationalised industries that was the case when they were last considered?

The Prime Minister: Ultimately, I think that this is a matter for the House itself. The Public Accounts Committee does an extremely good job.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure the Prime Minister is aware that 40 per cent. of Scottish Conservative Back Benchers have stated publicly that they do not want to sit on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Given that that will make it difficult for the Government to have a majority on the Committee, is it not time that the right hon. Lady bit the bullet and allowed a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs that reflected accurately the party situation in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the point was put to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House last Thursday. The Committee is being considered along with the others, and my right hon. Friend is working through the usual channels to get the Committee going as soon as possible.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the reason for the difficulties with the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is the way in which that Committee has behaved in a partisan manner in the past? Those of us who worked hard to make the Committee effective were disappointed by the way in which it developed.

The Prime Minister: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I am sure that there is no stauncher representative of Scotland than him.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Roberts: In the light of the BP share issue fiasco, have the Government revised down the amount of money that they expect to raise from selling off our water industry? They estimated that they might raise £8 billion, even though the assets are worth £29 billion; so they were selling it off cheaply anyway. Are they going to raise about £3 billion-£4 billion now, bearing in mind that it will cost between £2 billion to £3 billion to install water meters on a compulsory basis in every home?

The Prime Minister: With regard to water privatisation, there is a paving Bill before the House that will have to go through the House, and there will be other legislation before that process can be completed.

With regard to BP, the underwriters have made representations to the Treasury that the BP issue should be withdrawn, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is considering those representations, as he is contractually bound to do under the terms of the underwriting agreement. He will explain the procedures in the statement that he is to make shortly.

Sir Peter Tapsell: May I put it to my right hon. Friend that the present crisis in stock markets around the world is primarily an international rather than a national problem, and that it needs an internationally co-operative response? In particular, it needs, first, an early announcement by the Federal Republic of Germany that it intends to reduce its interest rates. Secondly, it needs an early announcement from the President and the Congress of the United States that they intend to put up their taxes. Thirdly, it needs continuing international supervision and control of the new and ever-proliferating financial mechanisms, which, if necessary, will prohibit some of those speculative instruments so that we shall not all be faced by an international financial Frankenstein.

The Prime Minister: With regard to the several points that my hon. Friend has made, I would agree with him that the matter of the United States' budget deficit needs dealing with. I believe that it is being dealt with by the President and Congress. I agree with my hon. Friend that that is a significant part of the matter. With regard to the co-operation of Germany and, of course, Japan, I point out that the Louvre agreement was reaffirmed by Mr. Baker, Mr. Stoltenberg and Mr. Poehl, and that has had a considerable effect on exchange rates. I also point out that interest rates have been falling, particularly at the long end of the market, as people have gone into gilts and bonds. We have reduced our interest rates recently, as my hon. Friend knows, so we have played our full part in sound financing, for which I have sometimes been criticised, but which has turned out to be the safest thing that we could possibly have done.

Mr. Kinnock: It is clear, as the Prime Minister said, that the underwriters of the BP share issue do not consider the sale to be a proper underwriting risk in terms of the prospectus. Does the right hon. Lady agree or disagree with them?

The Prime Minister: I think, perhaps, that the right hon. Gentleman could not quite hear what I said earlier. He will know that I am restricted as to what I can say——

Several Hon. Members: Why?

The Prime Minister: For legal reasons. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that the Chancellor is to make a statement. Therefore, I repeat what I said: the underwriters have made representations to the Treasury that the BP issue should be withdrawn. The Chancellor is considering those representations, as he is contractually bound to do under the terms of the underwriting agreement and he will explain the procedures in the statement that he is to make shortly.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows very well that there is no legal consideration that forbids her responding, especially when the underwriters have made their position so clear. Indeed, she has an absolute duty under the prospectus to respond. Is she not aware that the absence of a firm decision only prolongs and increases instability? Is not the Prime Minister's refusal to say what the position is a pathetic evasion of responsibility when the underwriters have made their position so clear?

The Prime Minister: With all due respect, I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has taken full account of what I said. The Chancellor is contractually bound to consider the representations. Under the terms of the underwriting agreement he must give due and proper consideration. That is what he is doing.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows that the underwriters made their representations yesterday. Everybody knows that the Chancellor has an obligation to discuss the matter with them and, in the event of failure to agree, to consult the Bank of England. I ask again, why the delay? Why is the Prime Minister prolonging instability?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Chancellor must genuinely go through the procedures. That is what he is doing. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that there is a private notice question from his Front Bench on precisely this matter.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: During my right hon. Friend's busy day, did she have a chance this morning to hear Sir Nicholas Goodison, the chairman of the stock exchange, whose motto is "My word is my bond"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: The chairman of the stock exchange, whose motto is "My word is my bond", said that the BP issue was fully underwritten and should go ahead. Underwriters have done well for some years, and now is the time for the motto "My word is my bond" to be taken up.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor must follow the procedures that he is contractually bound to follow. If he were not to follow those he would be the subject of criticism. He is following them and will make his decision and announcement, not today, but in due time.

Q3. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKay: When the Government come to make a decision on the BP flotation, which group will be the most important — the small shareholder or the fat cat underwriter?

The Prime Minister: I cannot add to what I have already said. The Chancellor will be answering further after Question Time.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. Friend try to find time today to consider the desperate plight of the haemophiliac AIDS victims who are suffering through no fault of their own and who many hon. Members believe deserve very special consideration?

The Prime Minister: I will, of course, discuss this matter with my hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Prime Minister say what advice I should give to people in my constituency who have taken her advice and invested in private occupational pension funds? Those constituents are now at risk because of the belief in market forces, to which she has been telling us we should respond. What advice should pension fund holders be given in relation to any BP issue?

The Prime Minister: In general, the market is just about where it was just before the turn of the year, and very much higher than it has been on previous occasions.

Q4. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents are furious at the persistent attacks on the Government and herself by Commonwealth Prime Ministers, many of whom are leaders of one-party states condemned by Amnesty International? Is it not time that they were told that in future the ruder they get the smaller will be their allocation from our very large overseas aid budget?

The Prime Minister: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern, but I think that he will agree, after a moment's reflection, that we must give aid according to where people need it most. That has been, and will continue to be, our policy.

Mr. Faulds: As the Prime Minister's — [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] Some of us choose our words carefully.

As the Prime Minister's separation from reality increases and the corruption of power mars her judgment ever more, will she contemplate today that in the last three general elections she was returned on a minority of the votes of the British electorate? Will she understand that that basis does not justify her policies of destroying the welfare state, wrecking British industry and slavishly backing every misjudgment in international affairs that the American President makes?

The Prime Minister: Nor does the Labour party's performance during the last election or since lead me to listen to it, from any front.

Q5. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowden: Will my right hon. Friend spare some time today to reflect upon the success of the Government's right-to-buy policies, whereby some 1 million families, formerly tenants, now enjoy the security and independence of home ownership? Will she join me in deploring the delay and delaying tactics of some councils in dealing with right-to-buy applications? I have constituents who have waited for 18 months to two years before their applications have been dealt with, and I believe that Southwark council has some 2,000 applications before it at the moment.

The Prime Minister: I join my hon. Friend in deploring any delays in allowing tenants to take up their right to buy. My hon. Friend will know that in extreme cases the Department of the Environment can take over from the local authority the entire right-to-buy responsibility for council houses. Therefore, perhaps he would have a word with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Financial Situation

3.32 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications of the financial situation for economic policies and the consequences for the sale of BP shares.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I am glad to have the right hon. and learned Gentleman opposite me once again, as he was some years ago when I was Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is not much left now.

Mr. Lawson: You wait and see.

The sharp falls in share prices throughout the world over the past fortnight will tighten monetary conditions somewhat and are likely to have a dampening effect on world demand. It is far too soon to put any figures to this, but I have already responded by reducing interest rates by half a per cent. Interest rates have also come down in the United States.

I will, of course, continue to watch the situation closely, and take whatever steps are required. I am also in regular contact by telephone with my opposite numbers in the other major industrial countries.

Meanwhile, the robust economic health and sound public finances that we have in this country put us in the strongest possible position to weather this storm, just as we successfully coped with the year-long coal strike and the collapse in the world oil price.

As for the implications of the stock market slide for the BP sale, there is provision under clause 8 of the BP fixed price underwriting agreement for the underwriters to seek consultation with the Treasury if a majority of them form the opinion that there has been an adverse change of circumstances, as specified by the agreement, in the light of which they believe that they are no longer assuming a proper underwriting risk. I have been informed by N. M. Rothschild and Sons, on behalf of the United Kingdom underwriters, that a majority of them now take that view. They therefore sent a written representation to the Treasury yesterday afternoon seeking consultation with a view to terminating the offer for sale. I have to say that I was surprised by this. *[Laughter.]* I am now considering the points that they have made, as I am contractually bound to do.

The underwriting agreement sets out a series of steps, which must be followed if the consultation process is triggered. The Treasury considers the representations and consults BP. Rothschild's also seeks BP's views. Rothschild's and the Treasury then consult together. If they are unable to agree, they jointly approach the Bank of England for its assessment. I shall take full account of that assessment before I take a final decision.

I understand that a copy of the agreement has today been deposited in the Library.

It is my intention to proceed as quickly as possible, consistent with the proper observation of the procedures. The House will understand that, now that the underwriters have invoked this consultation process, I cannot say more until the process is concluded, but I will gladly listen to the views of right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Smith: Is the Chancellor not ashamed that he had to be dragged reluctantly to the House to answer a private notice question, when he should have volunteered a statement on his own initiative days ago? Does he not think that he should apologise to the House for treating it as being a good deal less important to him than the stock exchange?

Is it not clear that the fundamental reason for the collapse in international markets has been the irresponsibility of Governments, including the British Government, in facing up to the twin problems of the United States' deficit and the Japanese and German surpluses? Instead of taking action to reduce gradually the United States' trade deficit and simultaneously expand the other economies, Governments — who are staffed by people such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who are addicted to free market theories—have abandoned their responsibilities to markets that the Chancellor describes as having absurd activities and which, according to the Prime Minister, are involved in 5 per cent. trade and 95 per cent. speculation?

Does the Chancellor understand that the free-market chickens have come home to roost? The markets are desperately seeking responsibility from the Governments that have abandoned them. Is it not now urgent for Her Majesty's Government to co-operate in setting up a new economic summit of the G7 countries with an agenda to concert a plan to tackle the deficit-surplus problem in a way that will avoid recession, reopen opportunities for growth and engage in a fresh and constructive examination of the debt problems of the developing world?

Will the Government accept that, as a result of the events of the past few weeks, free market theories no longer work?

As to BP, will the Government explain why they must take so long to go through the procedures that the Chancellor has outlined? In what he said to the House, he has made it crystal clear that he intends to hold the underwriters to their obligations. Would it not be wiser, given that we are only hours from the closing of this offer, for a little more urgency to be shown in these consultations and for the Chancellor to be more prepared to give a definitive answer to the House today?

Whatever happens with the underwriters or about anything else, will the Chancellor confirm that the Government are obliged to purchase 450 million new shares at the price of 330p and that the difference between the price at which they committed themselves to buy new shares and the present value in the markets is over £300 million?

Will the Chancellor also confirm that whatever happens, £20 million will have been wasted on an extravagant advertising hype? Is it not extraordinary that this colossal waste of money occurs at the same time as the Government are cutting child benefit, apparently on the ground that decent levels of such benefit cannot be afforded in this country?

Is it not clear that, whatever happens to the underwriters, the decision to sell the whole of the Government's stake in BP has been profoundly foolish? The company will suffer, the Government have wasted money and the shares will not be purchased. Repeatedly the Chancellor has claimed that his sole purpose in the BP share sale is wider share ownership. Since the shares will not have been sold to willing purchasers, what will be left of his purpose?

Mr. Lawson: I shall try to deal with the questions in the order in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman asked them. I start with something on which I can agree with him. I agree that the size of the American budget deficit, which is way ahead of its own capacity to finance it, is a major problem in the world economy today. I think, however, that it is a bit of an impertinence for him to blame me or the British Government for that. I vividly recall the time, some three years ago, when I was saying just that and I was being attacked by him and other right hon. and hon. Members who said that we should follow the policies of expanding the budget deficit in this country.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to international co-operation between the members of G7. I agree with him too that that is important. That is in better shape than it has been at any time in the period that I have been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it has been very successful in the context of stabilising exchange rates, among other things. But I have to say that the sort of workmanlike co-operation that we do have and which I hope can be built upon and improved, is rather more serious than empty waffle about a non-existent plan and some summit.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman then went on to the question of taking so long on the BP front. He obviously failed to listen to what I said. I said that it was not until yesterday afternoon that the BP underwriters made their approach to the Treasury—4.20 yesterday afternoon, to be precise. I have now informed the House and I shall go through the procedures as quickly as can be done, while properly going through those procedures. I would hope to be able to reach a conclusion by Thursday.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman then asked me whether it was true that the Government were obliged to purchase a large number of BP shares at 330p a share. I can tell him, of course, that it is not true. He then said that this episode demonstrated that it was wrong to sell BP shares. But of course, he will recall that the first sale of BP shares was conducted by the Government in which he performed in 1977.

As to the question of wider share ownership, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to be against, I have to tell him that he is in conflict with the views of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who is the rising star of the Labour party—or at least he used to be the rising star of the Labour party—when he said:

> "Instead of opposing wider share ownership, for example, we should set about making it a reality . . . The idea of owning shares is catching on and as socialists we should support it."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asks was not wider share ownership the sole purpose of the BP share offer? Obviously, the answer is no, because if that had been the sole purpose we would not have had the issue underwritten in the first place.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which has previously taken evidence on the underwriting of privatisation issues and on wider international matters, should be set up this week so that it has an opportunity of reporting to the House on these important issues?

I welcome the reduction in interest rates. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this must be combined with fiscal balance and that, therefore, it is important that the United States fiscal deficit should be reduced? I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the representations he has already made to the United States Government, but I urge him to redouble them. Does my right hon. Friend agree that many people think that it would be dangerous to put underwriters in a position when they can say, "Heads we win, tails you lose"?

Mr. Lawson: On the question of the BP underwriters, of course I have noted carefully what my right hon. Friend has said. On the question of the Select Committee, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has heard my right hon. Friend's comments. I personally have always welcomed the constructive discussions that I have had during my period as Chancellor with the Select Committee, which my right hon. Friend heads with such distinction. The sooner it can be reconstituted the better.

As for the wider economic issues, as I said in my opening remarks, I think that it is very important that we continue to keep up the pressure on the United States. The President has made statements showing a lesser degreee of unwillingness to raise taxes than has ever been the case before. I was speaking to Secretary Baker on the telephone this morning.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does not the Chancellor think that it is rather perverse for it to be suggested that he could either have caused in some way or prevented the recent upheavals, since they derive mainly from the decision of the President, whom the right hon. Gentleman and Prime Minister so much admire, to cut taxes and increase defence expenditure at the same time? Is it not time to tell the United States that the party is over and that we have to put the main industrial countries together to decide what to do to pay for it?

With regard to the BP share issue, what will the Chancellor do about all those inexperienced small investors who were beguiled by the expensive publicity? What good will it do to the cause of wider share ownership to deliver those people a kick in the teeth?

Mr. Lawson: On the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I welcome, just as I did when it came from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), this late conversion to the cause of sound finance, which is something that the Government have been preaching for a very long time, when the only policies advocated by the Opposition were ever bigger budget deficits. I remember the speech I made to the IMF annual meeting in September 1984 when I said that if the United States' budget deficit was not vigorously tackled it would all end in tears. We inherited a huge budget deficit from the Labour party. Even though we were in favour of lower taxes, we initially put up taxes to deal with the deficit first before we could get on with the tax-reducing programme.

As for the question of the small shareholders who may have applied for BP shares, as the hon. Gentleman will understand, like the Treasury, applicants for shares are bound by the terms and conditions of the offer.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will my right hon. Friend resist the blandishments of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) in favour of abandoning the free market? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reason why our present economy is so strong compared with, say, the 1979 economy is that we have allowed the free market to operate within the Treasury's control? It would be folly if we were to change

[Sir William Clark]

course now. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to get international confidence back into the various money markets throughout the world, the most urgent need is for the American President to make up his mind as quickly as possible to increase American taxes and to reduce public expenditure?

Mr. Lawson: I think there is probably general agreement in the House with what my hon. Friend has said. Of course, to be fair, it is not only on the side of the Americans that action is called for. I believe that in current circumstances there is a danger that monetary policy in the Federal Republic of Germany is really rather too tight, and I hope that some action will be directed on that front as well.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): No one can accuse the Chancellor of hyperbole when he says that the events of the past fortnight will have a dampening effect on world demand. The real effects are far more likely to be a serious curtailment of investment, a curtailment of consumer spending and a resulting increase in unemployment. Therefore, will the Chancellor assure the House that he is ready to take counter-recession measures — a package of them, both national and international — to meet the scale of events?

Mr. Lawson: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that, as I said in my opening remarks, I shall take whatever actions I believe to be necessary in the circumstances. It is too soon to say what actions will be necessary, although I have already reduced interest rates. That goes, I think, for all other members of the Group of Seven. The right hon. Gentleman will know, for example, that the President and Congressional leaders have been in active discussions on the subject of getting down the American deficit.

There is no need for the alarmist consequences that the right hon. Gentleman fears if, as I believe will be the case, economic policies in the major nations are conducted in a sensible way.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, if the BP share issue is withdrawn, it will be widely felt that the underwriters cannot meet their commitments? If that is the case, the damage caused will be much greater than will result if the issue proceeds.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is very knowledgeable in these matters, and I have carefully noted what he has said.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Will the Chancellor dismiss the impertinence shown by the underwriters in coming to him to seek to forgo their liabilities and responsibilities? Is he aware that the Public Accounts Committee has condemned the very large fees paid to the underwriters and that, on each occasion, we have been informed that this was necessary because of the large risks involved? If we are to remove the risks and give the underwriters a copper-bottomed, gold-plated guarantee, what is the purpose of underwriting at this level?

Mr. Lawson: As Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the right hon. Gentleman occupies a very important position in this House, and I have very carefully noted the point that he has made.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Before my right hon. Friend reaches any final decision on this matter, will he bear in mind that he has a responsibility that overrides that of acting as a guardian of underwriting institutions in the City, or even of share applicants? I refer to his responsibility as a trustee of the public purse. Will he bear in mind the fact that the interests of the taxpayer, who will forgo a substantial sum by way of proceeds if the sale is called off should weigh heavily on his mind. After all, does my right hon. Friend really believe that if the market had risen dramatically, rather than slumped, the City institutions would for one minute have considered calling the underwriting arrangements off?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend's point deals with a number of the matters that I have to bear in mind.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Why has the Chancellor spent a week telling television viewers that it is possible to wipe 25 per cent. or more off the value of stocks and shares all round the world without serious consequences for liquidity, borrowing, trade, output and employment? In the face of impending recession, what does the Chancellor intend to do—other than to lecture foreign Governments?

Mr. Lawson: There is no need to share the apocalyptic visions of the hon. Gentleman provided that the Governments of the major countries pursue the appropriate economic policies. What turned the 1929 crash, which I think is in many people's minds, into the slump of the 1930s was not the crash itself but the wholly inappropriate economic and monetary policies that followed it.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present situation is a splendid vindication of the Government's judgment in underwriting this and other privatisation issues and that the Government deserve the wholehearted appreciation both of the House and of the general public in the exercise of that judgment? Does he agree that the main problem with the underwriters is that the foreign underwriters have not underwritten their commitment to BP with investing institutions, and that if they have to sell shares to meet that commitment they will not mainly be British shares that they have to sell?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend—and I am grateful to him for his earlier remarks—is, of course, right to point to a fundamental difference between the underwriting system in this country and the underwriting system on the other side of the Atlantic. In this country it is a feature of our system that we go in for—the underwriters go in for — sub-underwriting on a very substantial scale and therefore the risk is spread very, very widely. In the United States and Canada that practice is not adopted and of course the risk falls entirely with the underwriters.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Has the Chancellor read the speech made in the House in 1914 by Winston Churchill when he acquired a majority holding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company for £2 million? Does the Chancellor agree that that investment, albeit by the First Lord of the Admiralty in a Liberal Government, was the wisest public investment ever made?

Does the Chancellor agree that the proper course now would be to cancel the privatisation of BP and retain the assets in the public domain?

Mr. Lawson: I have to confess to the right hon. Gentleman that I have not read that speech very recently, but I do recall a more recent event—that it was when the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Energy that the first sale of BP shares was made, at a price of well under 100p per share.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Is it not important that the overreactions of the stock exchange should not confuse the public and lead them to believe that the state of British industry and commerce is less strong than it is? At the same time, would it not be very bad for the long-term future of this country if emergency measures were sought to be taken at this time? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should carry on with the rules as they are and that the undertakers should not be relieved of their responsibilities.

Hon. Members: "Underwriters."

Mr. Lawson: As far as the undertakers, if I heard my hon. Friends right, are concerned, I have noted carefully what he has said. So far as his earlier points are concerned, yes, I think that if the House looks, for example, at the latest CBI trends survey, it will see an extremely strong and confident performance by British industry and I know that the leaders of British industry do feel that there is absolutely no cause for changing that confidence in the light of recent events on the stock market.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As the flotation was underwritten by four major American institutions, when the Chancellor weighs these matters in the next few days will one of his considerations be the fact that they may be called upon again, to underwrite the flotations with regard to water and electricity?

Mr. Lawson: As I have said to other hon. Members, I shall certainly take very much into account the view expressed by the hon. Member.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the offer for sale in formal terms remains open, with all its full legal impact? Will he take steps to ensure that when the privatisation programme is resumed, measures are taken to ensure that the undertakers—the light off *[Laughter]* — underwriters — cannot again appeal against the last ball of the over?

Mr. Lawson: I have noted the suggestion which my hon. Friend has made.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Does the Chancellor accept that in our democracy accountability for the economy and what happens to public assets rests with him, as accountable to this House, and that the so-called capital-owning, share-owning democracy is neither democratic nor effective? As a consequence, does he agree that he should give an assurance to the House that further sales of major public assets will cease and accept that the most widespread form of share ownership is social ownership?

Mr. Lawson: I entirely accept the fact that I do have a heavy responsibility in this job, but I do not accept anything else that the hon. Member said, particularly his belief that share ownership is something which is to be condemned. I welcome the growth of share ownership; it will continue. The privatisation programme will continue and I am delighted that we now have a convert to the cause of share ownership in the person, the important person, of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does the Chancellor agree that there are times when concerted foreign exchange intervention can be dangerous before the underlying problem of the deficit has been resolved? Is not that danger especially clear if the German and Japanese authorities put up their interest rates to deal with the monetary consequences of that intervention?

Mr. Lawson: I see no need for German or Japanese interest rates to rise in present circumstances, although that is obviously primarily a matter for those countries. As for intervention in the foreign exchange markets, what my hon. Friend has to recall is that we did not intervene in order to stabilise markets until we had first intervened in a massive way following the Plaza agreement to drive the dollar down, and we only intervened to stabilise it after the deutschmark and the yen had risen by as much as 50 per cent. against the dollar in order to give that massive change in exchange rates time to work through.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I represent a constituency where BP is the largest employer, employing more than 2,000 people. Does the Chancellor understand that it is distressing that throughout this fiasco no reference has been made to those who have spent their lives working for BP? Is he aware that I do not hold any strong feelings about what might happen to the directors of BP, and that I care even less about what might happen to the underwriters? However, I care deeply about what will happen to the workers. Will he give an assurance that, whatever decision he reaches, the working people will not be made to pay for the fiasco for which he is now responsible?

Mr. Lawson: I am glad to be able to reassure the hon. Gentleman that there is no danger whatsoever either to BP or those who work for that company, which is indeed one of the finest companies in the world.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend both on his sensible answer and, more importantly, on the calmness that he has demonstrated during this most difficult time? Is it not in such stark contrast to the hysterical posturings of the Opposition, who have no credible economic policy?

Reference has been made to the problems in the United States, and there is no doubt about them. However, as there has not yet been any real problem with exchange rates, will my right hon. Friend be most careful to resist any pressures for managed, even fixed, rates, such as were suggested during the Louvre agreement before the crash took place?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him for the remarks he made in the early part of his intervention, is mistaken if he thinks that the Louvre agreement is an agreement to try to create fixed rates à la Bretton Woods. It is nothing of the sort and, indeed, I devoted a considerable part of my speech to the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank in September of this year to explaining the system of what I called managed floating, which we have arrived at and which I think is beneficial, not least to industry, which finds the wild gyrations in the dollar in recent years extremely disruptive and, indeed, which has had an adverse effect on world trade.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): As the casino economy, otherwise named by the Prime Minister as

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

people's capitalism, is now coming apart at the seams, is it not clear that the time has come for a proper recognition by the people of this country, especially those in this House, that the capitalist system is falling apart? Is it not time that the Government learnt that lesson and stopped their nonsense with privatisation, which is hurting a great many ordinary working people who have been kidded by the Government?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is really one of the dinosaurs of this House, and as such I have a great affection for him. The workers of this country know a great deal better what is good for them than he does and they have shown this in their response to privatisation issues, in their response to worker share schemes and in their response, indeed, at the last general election.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): To help stabilise the position, will my right hon. Friend point out to the public, the Opposition and the press that in today's stock market list in *The Times* hardly one share is not well above the low mark of this year? The concept that there is panic in overall share ownership should be hit hard. The Opposition do nothing to stabilise the position — indeed, they are creating the panic.

Mr. Lawson: I think there is much in what my hon. Friend says, although I do not credit the Opposition with such influence that they were able to start the Wall street slide which began the movement in share prices throughout the world. Nevertheless, if they could have done they would have done.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The right hon. Gentleman suggested that he had been made aware of the view of the majority of the United Kingdom underwriters. Would he care to tell the House whether he has received any communication from the American underwriters, American business or the American Administration? Was the matter a subject of his conversation this morning with Mr. Baker?

Mr. Lawson: I, of course, never reveal private conversations, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman never reveals private conversations, but the provisions in clause 8 of the underwriting agreement concern the fixed price underwriting agreement and they concern the United Kingdom underwriters. There may, of course, have been conversations between the United Kingdom underwriters and the overseas underwriters, but that would not be directly known to me.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend pay a more generous tribute to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? Was it not he who, under the benign influence of Dr. Johannes Witteveen, came before this House 10 years ago and commended the sale of BP shares? Faced with that precedent, will my right hon. Friend pay a glowing tribute to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that I could possibly improve on the tribute that my hon. Friend has already paid.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have another important statement this afternoon. I shall take two more questions from either side and then we must move on. However, I say to those hon. Members who will not be called today that there will be another opportunity at Trade and Industry questions tomorrow and also at Treasury questions on Thursday, when I will bear their legitimate interests in mind.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The Chancellor gave the impression at the IMF that there were intervention bands for the dollar in the Louvre accord, but it now appears that that is not the case. Is it his intention that the pound should not stay with the deutschmark but come somewhere between it and the dollar?

Mr. Lawson: So far as my speech at the IMF is concerned it was an accurate description of the Louvre agreement and anything that the hon. Gentleman may have subsequently read in any newspapers which may conflict with that is therefore incorrect. So far as sterling is concerned, I believe that the maintenance of stability of the sterling exchange rate is in the interests both of British economic policy, including anti-inflationary policy, and the interests of British industry.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): In rejecting the Opposition's advice, will my right hon. Friend agree that the nation and the international financial community will conclude that the economy of this country is in far better hands with a Chancellor who sticks to his policies and strategy, rather than with one who follows the Opposition's advice? In the 1960s and 1970s Labour Chancellor after Labour Chancellor gave the impression of running around like a wet hen but did nothing to help the economy.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is correct.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): Last week, did the Chancellor read an edition of *The Wall Street Journal*, which pointed out that the eight occasions since the end of the second world war when shares fell sharply—this is the sharpest fall of all—were followed eight to nine months later by a recession or a severe slowing down of the world economy? That led to increases in poverty, unemployment and economic misery. Will he explain to the people of my constituency what is popular about a people's capitalism which offers them shares at 64p below the market price?

Mr. Lawson: It is indeed fortunate that this Government are in office in this country, as they are the one Government who can steer the country's economy successfully through the stormier period which we may be in. As for share price falls, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pointed out, although there has been a sharp fall in share prices, they are now roughly where they stood at the beginning of this year. That is in sharp contrast to what happened in 1974, when the Labour party came to power, and shares fell during the course of that year by some 50 per cent.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor explain the position of the small shareholder who has applied for BP shares but does not pay the second instalment?

Mr. Lawson: The rules are very clear in the terms of the offer document. If the second subscription is not paid up the shares are forfeited.

Social Security Benefits

4.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): With permission, I wish to make a statement about the next uprating of social security benefits and the introduction of a reformed system of income-related benefits. This will take place for most benefits in the week beginning 11 April 1988, the first full week in the tax year, and the same provisions will apply in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The retail price index published on 9 October showed an increase in prices over the 12 months to September 1987 of 4·2 per cent. Retirement pension for a married couple will accordingly rise from £63·25 a week to £65·90, and for a single person from £39·50 to £41·15. These increases of £2·65 and £1·65 a week respectively mean that the cash amount of basic retirement pension has risen by almost £35 a week for a couple since this Government came to office. The increase will add about £780 million to the social security budget next year. It must be seen in the context of significant improvements in pensioners' total incomes. Total state pension provision represents, on average, about half of pensioners' net incomes, and those net incomes have risen by 18 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The uprating increases will ensure that the value of this provision is maintained. They are fully in line with our pledges to pensioners and recipients of other linked long-term benefits.

I have decided to uprate all contributory benefits, benefits for the disabled, war pensions and similar benefits by 4·2 per cent. also. Public service pensions will likewise increase by 4·2 per cent. as will statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay paid by employers. Because of the payment arrangements for SSP and SMP, the changes will take effect from the start of the tax year.

In April 1988, we shall be introducing our new system of income-related benefits. Supplementary benefit will be replaced by the simpler income support; housing benefit by a reshaped system aligned with income support; and family income supplement by the new family credit, which will provide help to more than twice as many low-paid working families. This new, more coherent and better-targeted structure will direct help more clearly where it is most needed and will foster incentives to work.

I shall shortly be laying before the House regulations for the new benefits. Since these are new schemes, the regulations will include the relevant rates. I shall also be laying revised regulations on claims and payments which will provide common basic provisions between benefits. Earlier this month, I consulted the local authority associations, as I am required to do under the Social Security Act 1986, on the proposed rates for housing benefit. Because of the close alignment of the benefit rates for all three income-related benefits, final decisions cannot be reached until I have considered their responses.

The income support rates proposed are £33·40 for single people aged 25 and over, and £51·45 for couples. These would also apply as the applicable amounts for housing benefit purposes and as the threshold in family credit. The family premium would be £6·15, the premium for a single pensioner £10·65, and for couples £16·25.

The personal allowances include the average amounts which we expect householders who are income support claimants will have to pay next April as their minimum contribution to domestic rates. These amounts are £1·30 for couples, lone parents and single claimants aged 25 and over, and £1 for other single claimants over 18.

Compared with the illustrative figures published at the time Parliament approved the reformed benefit schemes, the premium payments would be some 6·5 to 7 per cent. higher—essentially the movement in the relevant price index. The personal allowances, leaving aside the element for domestic rates, would be some 4·5 to 5 per cent. higher; including that element they would be 7 to 9 per cent. higher. So, overall, income support claimants would be receiving higher real levels of benefit than under the previous figures. The number of gainers from the structural reform would rise by a million—from 2·2 million to 3·2 million. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members outside the House who are benefit recipients will be as interested as those hon. Members who have the patience to listen to this statement.

The number who gain or are unaffected would go up to 4·9 million, while the number who lose would drop to 3·7 million. In reality, of course, existing supplementary beneficiaries moving to income support would not lose any of their benefit at the point of change. We are spending £200 million to make sure of that.

We are proposing to introduce the capital limits and the family credit and rate rebate tapers at the same level as those illustrated in the 1985 White Paper. Under the new schemes, housing benefit claimants at all income levels will be fully reimbursed for any increases in their rent. In view of this, I now propose that the rent taper should be 65 per cent. calculated on the basis of net income. This is equivalent to 42 per cent. in the present system, based on gross income for someone paying standard rate tax and national insurance.

For the convenience of the House, I am today publishing tables which show the likely distributional effects of the new schemes. Copies are available in the Vote Office. I am particularly pleased to note that the figures show for sick and disabled people getting the disability premium an increase under the new scheme of nearly £5 a week in disposable income. This is in addition to substantial increases in estimated expenditure on the disability benefits themselves.

Complementing the new structure of income-related benefits, the social fund will be fully introduced next April. Its gross budget for community care grants and budgeting and crisis loans for the first year will be just over £200 million, of which some 70 per cent. will be in the form of loans recoverable over a period. Separate announcements will be made concerning social fund provisions in Northern Ireland.

I turn now to child benefit, which currently costs over £4 billion, nearly 10 per cent. of the whole social security budget. Every 10p increase has a net additional cost of over £40 million. Yet higher child benefit would be of greatest help to people who are already relatively well off, whose living standards are already rising. By contrast, it would give no extra help to over 3 million children in families on benefit, including low income working families: they gain the same from the uprating whatever is done to child benefit. Against this background, and the particular need to target help on those who most need it and to control the overall growth in social security expenditure, I have concluded that an increase in child benefit would not be the best use of resources at present. Therefore, I do not propose to increase the rate next April.

[Mr. John Moore]

One-parent benefit will, however, increase to £4·90, and the maternity payment from the social fund will be increased to £85.

Let me emphasise to the House that, even with no change in the rate of child benefit, we will be increasing, not reducing, the overall level of resources devoted to families with children. We shall be spending £220 million extra on the new family credit and £100 million extra on families on income support. By contrast, a full uprating of child benefit would have cost £120 million. Moreover, family credit will go directly to help low income working families with children and will reach twice as many people as the present family income supplement. Thus, more will be spent on families overall, but the greatest emphasis will be on those with the greatest needs.

The details of what this announcement will mean for individual benefits and the proposed housing benefit rates as issued for consultation are set out in a full schedule of rates which, as previously, is now available in the Vote Office and, with permission, will be published in the *Official Report*. The schedule also covers our proposals for board and lodging limits for the coming year.

Overall, the uprating increases will add some £1·3 billion to a social security budget which already stands at over £44 billion this year. This is a substantial increase in spending on a programme that is already the biggest in Government. We believe that our proposals strike a fair balance between protecting the interests of the poorest and of those, such as pensioners, who have substantial reliance on state benefits; and protecting the interests of those whose taxes and contributions pay for benefits.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): May I be the first to congratulate the Secretary of State on achieving a new record, even by the standards of his Government? Is he aware that the statement that he has made today will result in a cut in benefit for more claimants than any uprating statement by any of his predecessors during the past eight years? That may be the path to promotion in the modern Conservative party, but it is rough justice for the poorest families in Britain who must live on the benefits that he has just announced.

Is not the net effect of the figures that he has quoted for income support that almost 4 million claimants on supplementary benefit will not get a penny extra in increased benefit next April? Is he not concerned that those who will be the worst affected will be those disabled claimants who do not qualify for disability premium and who could lose entitlement of up to £50 a week? Does he appreciate that at current levels of inflation such claimants will wait 12 years under the new scheme before their next annual increase? How does he square that with his predecessor's claim that the new scheme would direct more help, more effectively, to those who need it most?

On housing benefit, will the Secretary of State confirm the estimate contained in the circular from his Department that one million claimants will lose all their entitlement to housing benefit — or, as the same thought was more delicately expressed in the circular:

> "There will be a reduction in caseload of a million"?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the cut that he has just announced in the rent taper is the fourth cut that has been made by his Government since they invented housing benefit only four years ago? Does he not appreciate that, every time that he sharpens the rent taper, he sharpens the poverty trap also, and that a family of four who receive family credit and housing benefit could lose 98p in benefit for every extra pound of earnings? That is a higher rate of marginal taxation than is paid by any Cabinet Minister. How does the right hon. Gentleman square that with his own speech last month on the importance of reducing dependency on benefits?

Does the Secretary of State recognise that the exclusion of a fifth of rates from housing benefit will mean that a couple of million pensioners will now receive a rates demand for the first time in years? The Secretary of State assured the House that the figures that he announced for income support contained an extra £1·30 in compensation for such demands. The right hon. Gentleman misled the House. If the figures for income support that were published in the White Paper in 1985 are fully uprated in line with prices, it is plain that the allowance that he has announced today does not include £1·30 a week for rates demands, but a beggarly 30p a week. How does he square that with his party's pre-election pledge to protect claimants from the new liability in rates next year, and the poll tax in two years, to which his Government have exposed them?

Once again, the Secretary of State announced that pensions are to increase by no more than prices. Is he aware that, during the past year, earnings have increased twice as fast as prices? Will he confirm that, if the Government had preserved the link between pensions and earnings, the pension next April for a couple would be worth £14·60 more per week than he has just announced? If, as the Prime Minister keeps claiming, Britain has the fastest-growing economy in Europe, why has she given us the lowest pensions in Europe?

Finally, I turn to the biggest cut of all—the freezing of child benefit, which will affect 7 million mothers. At the last election, the Conservative party's manifesto stated:

> "Child benefit will continue to be paid as now".

We were obviously intended to take that strictly literally. How can Conservative Members pose as the party of the family, when their Government have cut support for school meals, school transport and school clothes, and are now cutting the value of child benefit for the second time in three years? Will the Secretary of State deny press reports that he has set up yet another review of the future of child benefit? How can he square such a review with assurances, given a month before the election, by the then Minister for Social Security:

> "child benefit will continue as a non-means-tested universal payment, paid to the mother tax free. There ought to be no question about that."?

What has changed during the past six months to bring that into question, other than the fact that the election is safely out of the way?

Today's statement is a package of broken promises and breadline benefits. As a result, next April millions of claimants who already have to survive on incomes that Conservative Members could not even begin to imagine will face still worse hardship. We shall therefore oppose every regulation that is designed to impose the cuts that have been announced today.

Mr. Moore: May I start by reminding the House of the facts, as opposed to the hyperbole that we have just heard? As opposed to a cut, the decisions on the new rates do not involve an overall cut. Quite the contrary — total spending on income-related benefits is now estimated to be half a billion pounds higher than in the last published plans. I should repeat that total income-related benefits will be half a billion pounds higher. That is my answer to the first point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

On pensions, Opposition Members do not seem to understand the difference between their election promises and the reality of what occurred to the real income of pensioners under the previous Labour Government and what has occurred since we took office. That is one of the reasons why the Labour party has failed three times in three general elections. The reality is that, whatever that Labour Government sought to do — I recognise that they sought to give during their last period in office by uprating the pension by whichever was the better of earnings or prices — Opposition Members do not seem to understand what that produced as a consequence of their appalling failure to manage the economy or to understand that pensioners have an income beyond that which is given to them by the state.

We are concerned with the real well-being of pensioners and not simply, as are Opposition Members, with electoral promises. In terms of real well-being, the pensioner saw a real improvement between 1974 and 1979, a real increase —*[Interruption.]* I accept that the facts hurt Opposition Members—of only 3 per cent. That 3 per cent. over five years was an average of 0·6 per cent. per year, which was appalling for pensioners. During the past six years, the figure has increased by 2·7 per cent. a year.

Despite the uprating in earnings during most of the period between 1974 and 1979, I acknowledge that pensioners' average net total income fell slightly as a proportion of the incomes of people in work.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Did the Secretary of State not like the question?

Mr. Moore: I am delighted with the question. Although during the Labour Government the position of pensioners' income relative to that of workers worsened, during the past six years it has increased to 60 per cent. The Opposition seem to forget that more than 70 per cent. of pensioners and 83 per cent. of those who have retired have other savings. Those savings were stolen during Labour's period of office. Their income from savings decreased by 3·4 per cent. a year, so the Government need no lectures about concern for the real well-being of pensioners, in contrast to simple Socialist pretence.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the net effect. I thought that I had suggested an improvement on the technical annex illustrations in 1985, so that 4·9 million people in the overall reform package will either gain or not suffer losses. For another 3·7 million people, there will be transitional protection so that they do not suffer cash losses.

The hon. Gentleman asked me specifically about the disabled. Again, the Opposition should look more carefully at the overall package. There will be a net increase to the disabled of nearly £60 million. The hon. Gentleman referred especially to the severely disabled, 4,500 of whom receive the domestic assistance additional requirement, which averages £6·35 a week and which represents a total expenditure of £1·5 million. Under the proposed reforms, about 7,000 people will receive the special disability premium of £24·75 a week. That is a significant increase for that important section of the community. However, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, only about 250 people get more than £20 a week and very few get as much as £50 a week. I am conscious of that group. It is hard to arrange a reform structure to target that group, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled is trying hard to find a way of targeting that tiny group. But, overall, the disabled will benefit from the reform structure.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me about housing benefit reforms. He was right to say—this has already been announced in the House—that the number of people who will receive housing benefit will decrease by 1 million, but hon. Members should remember that, during the Conservative Government, housing benefit expenditure has increased from £1·25 billion to more than £5 billion. We should see it in that context.

The hon. Gentleman was right to draw our attention to the change in the taper, because matters have changed since we published the illustrated technical annex to the White Paper. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are moving to 100 per cent. protection against rent rises as opposed to the previous figure of 60 per cent. But that fact was known during the discussions on the technical annex. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of beneficiaries to about 600,000 and an increase of 100,000 in the potential recipients of housing benefit under the arrangements for income support. There is also the important addition to income support rates of the 20 per cent. compensation, which clearly affects the housing benefit calculation. Just to put the hon. Gentleman's point in context, I should say that the net impact of the movement from 60 per cent. to 65 per cent. of net income will mean an additional loss to 100,000 people out of the 6 million people who receive housing benefit.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the 20 per cent. contribution. He knows that I would not try to mislead the House, and I hope that at some stage he will rephrase the words that he used. The commitment that was made before the election in relation to the 20 per cent. has been maintained. The hon. Gentleman might argue that overall income support is not as high as he would have wished, but the commitment made specifically in regard to the 20 per cent. uprating has been matched in full.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Can my right hon. Friend not see, especially in view of what the Chancellor told us this afternoon about the sound state of public finances, that his thoroughly insensitive treatment of child benefit is discrimination pure and simple against families with young children? Since, even before this afternoon, the real benefit of child benefit has fallen since 1979 and the real value of the married man's allowance and the single person's allowance has increased, how can my right hon. Friend justify such discrimination?

Mr. Moore: I have great respect for my right hon. Friend. I hope that he listened to what I said and that he is not trapped, as many hon. Members on both sides of the House sometimes are, in a set of historical views. I said with great care that I was seeking to increase help to families with children. Three million children in the poorest families in the land — families on income support, low-income families and families on family credit —would not receive a penny piece from an increase in child benefit. I should have thought that my right hon. Friend, with his long-standing legitimate interest in trying

[Mr. Moore]

to assist the poorest, would have complimented me on securing increased assets of more than £300 million to spend on those people as opposed to the better off. I should have thought that he would have wanted me to target those people intelligently.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Secretary of State said that some Opposition Members do not understand the figures. Does he accept that the severe disability premium is a fine concept in theory but is in fact, according to what the Government intend to do, a grossly inadequate, generalised substitute for the individual help now given to severely disabled people who are trying to live at home and stay out of institutions? Those people will be worse off in future. Why is the Secretary of State discouraging severely disabled people from living at home and instead propelling them into institutions?

Mr. Moore: I always listen carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. Indeed, I do more than listen. The Government have an outstanding record, as do other Governments, on the disabled. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will remember what I said. The reform structure will increase help to the disabled — *[Interruption.]* Some of us in this House care about the disabled, as I know the right hon. Gentleman does. The reform structure will add £60 million of benefits to the disabled. The right hon. Gentleman rightly emphasised the small group of severely disabled people whom we would wish to help to stay in their homes. The severe disability premium will help many more people than the 4,500 who receive £6-odd a week at present. We intend that more than 7,000 people will receive about £24·75 a week. I accept that a few people do not fit into the classic structure. Sir Roy Griffiths is advising us on how to help in this area, and I have asked my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled to focus on those few hundred people because I recognise that they do not fit naturally into the system.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Does not my right hon. Friend find it rather odd that the Opposition should have declared a fight on the question of reform of a system whereby wealthy people immediately draw — untaxed and unneeded — weekly benefits on the very same day that they may well be putting down their sons or daughters for Eton or Benenden? Is there any sense to be found in a system that pours public money on to people who have no need of it and denies extra benefit to those who have?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is of course right. I find the debate very difficult. There are those who simply cannot get out of the past and understand that, in this announcement, we are focusing £320 million on families with children — 3 million-plus children. I fully understand people's attitude towards child benefit, but we are talking about a child benefit system that is still spending £4·5 billion on top of the amount that I am talking about, so I find it a very unusual set of priorities for the Opposition to focus on the degree to which we are trying to target — *[Interruption.]* I apologise; from a sedentary position I have been reminded that I did not properly answer one of the questions on child benefit put by the hon. Member for Livingston. He asked whether there was a review in progress. I repeat that I have no specific proposals at present to change the nature of child benefit, but — I believe that this has been said from the Dispatch Box by almost every Minister of every Government since the benefit was introduced — in view of its cost and its ill-targeted nature, there is clearly a need to keep it constantly under review. I am beholden to do that.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): If child benefit is to be frozen, is it not a fact that a great administrative cost will be involved? Is it also true that the Secretary of State now has a team working in the belief that child benefit will be abolished some time next year?

Mr. Moore: No. I have made the position on child benefit quite clear. I read clearly the precise words that I obviously intended to use. I am beholden under section 63 of the Social Security Act 1986 to look at the uprating of child benefit each year, but there is no statutory requirement. I have explained precisely why I believe that this year I have been able to target better on those families with children who are poorer. I have also clearly said that there is no review in progress.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): May we warmly welcome the move to family credit, which is [illegible] improvement on the old, defective family income supplement?

With regard to what my right hon. Friend has said on child benefit, does he not agree that what he is doing is incompatible with the policies for which the Prime Minister has won widespread approval — namely, her support for the family as an institution and her desire to reduce the tax burden on families and to encourage the British people to work and save for their independence? For the large majority of families who draw child benefit and pay more in income tax than they draw in benefit, a cut in the real value of child benefit constitutes an increase in their relative tax burden, targeted particularly against the mothers.

For the more than 2 million families who draw more in child benefit than they pay in income tax, is not my right hon. Friend simply forcing them down into dependency on means-tested benefits? That is also incompatible with the Prime Minister's injunction to people to work and save. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend undertake that, for a future year, he will keep an open mind on a completely fresh approach to taxation and benefit for families, so as to release the millions to work and save for their independence without breaking the rules?

Mr. Moore: I start by thanking my hon. Friend for, so far, being one of the few who have noticed the importance and significance of the family credit. I imagine that family credit will be welcomed by all sides of the House. Although I respect his views, may I ask my hon. Friend to try to see what I have sought to achieve today — to secure additional resources of £320 million as opposed to the £120 million which a simple, indiscriminate uprating of child benefit would have secured. I believe that that suggests that I have done precisely what my hon. Friend would have wanted, to concentrate rare resources on the area of greatest need.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that the House is aware that the increased support of £320 million going to families is accompanied by a real cost? By means-testing that support, he has increased the disincentive to work. Since, as we learned from a well-leaked speech just before the Tory conference, the aim of the Secretary of State is to increase the incentive to work, why has he done a U-turn so early in his career?

Secondly, can he help us to clarify whether there have been real cuts in the amount of money spent bringing in income support? Can he tell the House what would have been the cost of uprating the old system had it not been reformed by today's statement? How does that figure compare with the total sum being spent on the new system, minus 20 per cent. for rate support? Lastly, as he was very precise about the real value of pensions for old people, will he confirm that, in money terms, 4 million people will not be worse off as a result of this scheme, but that in real terms 4 million people face cuts?

Mr. Moore: I will try to cover the points raised by the hon. Gentleman, because he always brings a good mind to these issues.

On his last point, there are obvious shifts when there is a structural reform as between——

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Cuts.

Mr. Moore: No — shifts. There are obvious shifts when there is a structural reform as between the benefits that go to different parts of the community. This was debated well before the election, and the electorate seemed to make a clear judgment on 11 June as to their view of the nature of the shifts.

With regard to the transitional system, 3·7 million people will be disadvantaged, whereas 4·9 million people will be advantaged or their position will stay unchanged. I am aware of the extent to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead wishes to consider the technical annex and I am sure that that study will produce more detailed debates at a later stage. With regard to that technical annex, the hon. Gentleman was trying to get me to give a precise figure on the relative moneys involved in the whole of income support as opposed to the offsetting 20 per cent. compensation for income support recipients against benefits.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the technical annex rates were illustrative. To demonstrate some of the difficulties involved in making the comparisons that the hon. Gentleman understandably wants, those illustrations covered 4·3 million people on income support. The revised illustration covers nearly half a million more people. Obviously, when we came to set the rate, we had to take account of the increase in claimant numbers, the rising costs and the continuing need to keep public spending under control. That is the perfectly proper judgment that I am seeking to express to the House today.

I believe that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) wanted me to express the net product for income support recipients. For singles over 25, the net product will be 80p higher in real terms compared to the technical annex; for singles between the age of 18 and 24 the net product will be 50p higher in real terms; for couples the net product will be 30p higher in real terms; and for 16-17-year-olds the net product will be broadly unchanged.

With regard to income support — *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members are seeking to ask more questions from a sedentary position, but I am seeking to answer the hon. Member for Birkenhead, who had the courtesy to rise. With regard to the overall gross figures, I thought that I had made it clear at the beginning of my statement that there was half a billion net addition to public expenditure as a consequence of the changes.

As for the first question put by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, I do not regard this statement as in any way a U-turn. Quite the reverse: it is an attempt by some of us, in a confused and, I recognise, difficult structure, to ensure that we use rare resources to help those in genuine need.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House not to repeat questions that have been asked before and not to ask a great many questions, because all these matters will be subject to later debate, and I am anxious to get as many Members in as possible.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Although I agree with my right hon. Friend that we must try to target benefits much more accurately, does he not agree that his announcement on child benefits runs the severe risk of increasing the poverty trap? If an unemployed man, receiving frozen child benefit and, in addition, some assistance through family support, were to take a job and lose that support, there would be a particular disincentive to seek a job in the first place.

Mr. Moore: I do not deny for one moment my hon. Friend's recognition of one of the means-testing problems, but equally, looking at the overall context of the introduction of the reform package, he will be aware that, as a consequence of having net income throughout, we are reducing that overall marginal disincentive. Thus we are looking at an overall package that has improved, not decreased, the incentive to work.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Secretary of State said that pensioners felt that, when the Opposition were in government, they robbed them of the money. Does he recognise that, under the new package, some pensioners will say that they have lost because they have been thrifty and have saved? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise further that, in adjusting finances, while we welcome an increase, there is something wrong with a system that makes anybody worse off in April 1988 than he is now?

Mr. Moore: Let me repeat that those people will not be worse off, but with regard to the housing benefit taper — *[Interruption.]* We are back to the debate from a sedentary position that we had earlier about the relativity of the position of those people as opposed to the cash protection. The hon. Gentleman asked a specific question about, I assume, the capital disregard. It has been doubled, but there is a taper between the £3,000 and £6,000 so that it affects those who, I accept, have been thrifty and have assets, but they are thus slightly better able to contend with the problems they face than those who have no such assets.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): While it is obviously proper that state basic pensions should be uprated by the rate of inflation, could not we have done better than that this year, when the PSBR may fall to zero?

Mr. Moore: But I thought that I tried to draw the attention of my hon. Friend and the House to the fact that, as a consequence of sticking to our election manifesto promises, and of our ability to run the economy effectively, pensioners' real income, as opposed to that

[Mr. Moore]

part of it that they receive from the state, has improved beyond anything comparable when the Labour party was in office. That is the reality of what we have been able to achieve because of our policies. Therefore, I am not sure why we should seek to hurt pensioners by changing those policies.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does not the Secretary of State agree that the decision of the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make it legal for schools to charge parents for things such as music lessons, field trips and so on will increase considerably the problems for families with children? Does not that make the right hon. Gentleman's decision not to increase child benefit particularly mean? Does he accept that the more he talks about targeting, the more he must come up with a solution to the problem of take-up among families on low incomes who do not apply for many of the means-tested benefits, so the attraction for the Government of such benefits is that many people do not apply for them? The big attraction of child benefit is that there is almost 100 per cent. take-up.

Mr. Moore: On the hon. Gentleman's final point, I recognise the problem of take-up, although we are expecting over 70 per cent., and I hope more, take-up of family credit. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address the issue, which is how one seeks to help the poorest families with children. He does not seem to have accepted the reality, which is that by increasing child benefit, they receive not a penny piece more. Through the measures that I have announced today, those families will receive additional help of £320 million. Such help would have disappeared if we had used child benefit.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that the welfare payments since 1979 have kept well in front of inflation, and the Government should be congratulated thereon? Does he agree that, with regard to the retirement pension, the best service that any Government could give to the retired person is to keep inflation under strict control, which the Government have done? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the first duty of any Government of any party is to make certain that taxpayers' money is distributed to those in need, and it is incumbent upon the Government to ensure that? Consequently, is it not economic madness to continue paying child benefit to all and sundry, irrespective of need? For example, a person on a 60 per cent. tax rate is receiving child benefit at the gross amount of over £18 a week, which is nonsense. Surely it would be much better to channel that money to people in need, to increase their benefits.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House—although I made the position clear on child benefit—that somebody on a 60 per cent. tax rate has an £18 gain as opposed to someone who does not pay tax and gets £7·25. My hon. Friend is also right to remind the House that benefit expenditure has increased massively during the Government's period of office—in fact, by 43 per cent. in real terms. For taxpayers and the public, especially the old who do not have the opportunity to earn any more, the fear of inflation is the most destructive disease imaginable. The last thing we must do is to allow those pensioners to suffer that fear again. We have protected their real income successfully, far better than the Opposition did when in power. We shall do that by sticking to the economic policies that will destroy inflation.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the Minister admit that he is not taking adequate steps to improve the incomes of the poorest children, but he is using their poverty as an excuse for attacking children in general, by freezing child benefit? Does he not understand that, instead of playing off one section of children against the other, he should be diverting large national resources towards children in general? Furthermore, if the right hon. Gentleman is so interested in the poorest, why is he instituting the cash-limited social fund, which will give 70 per cent. loans, thus plunging the poorest further into debt?

Mr. Moore: I have seldom heard such a bizarre description of the realities of trying to help those in need. Having said that, I do not think that I need make further comment on child benefit. The gross amount of £203 million that I announced today, which is planned for the social fund, looks reasonable alongside the reality of the expected level of expenditure on single payments this year, which is running at around £190 million. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should put into context that £200 million against the totality of income support of £8 billion. The social fund should be seen alongside the £8 billion of income support, when one sees the purpose for which it is intended—to help those in genuine difficulty and in crisis.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the major concerns of those of us who support child benefit, and have done for some time, is that a switch to the means-tested benefits which, on the Government's best estimates, will not be collected by 40 per cent. of those entitled to do so, means only that many poor families will not get such assistance? Will my right hon. Friend consider instead discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer with a view to taxing benefit at the higher rates of taxation—in other words, for those who pay tax at more than the standard rate—if he wishes to make the distinction between the well off and the less well off in our society?

Mr. Moore: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to my hon. Friend's remarks, but, with regard to his first point, I imagine that he is seeking to encourage take-up. We do not want to deny the ability to target effectively towards those in real need, but we want to encourage far more to take up what they are entitled to.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State mentioned £203 million for the social fund. Will he clarify the position of local DHSS offices, which may be requested to make a crisis loan to someone in considerable difficulty, who may already have loans which the local DHSS office feels he does not have the means to repay? Does the £203 million include provision for writing off old loans in those circumstances or converting them to a grant, or are the offices expected to refuse to make a further loan?

Mr. Moore: Within the figures, there are arrangements for local offices to be able to do so. We must make a set of assumptions about the extent to which some loans will have to be written off. I should prefer it if I or one of my colleagues could go into further details with the hon. Gentleman when we debate the specifics. There will be not only a contingency fund at the centre but the ability to recognise that some loans will not be repaid. Enshrined in the figures is the assumption that not all loans will be repaid. That must be an assumption.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the majority of disabled people will benefit from the introduction of the new two-tier support system but, as he has acknowledged, is he not aware that a problem can develop with the severely disabled? Will he confirm that those who are at present severely disabled will continue to receive the income support that they receive at present? Will he look carefully at finding a method to help those who are severely disabled after April next year, since otherwise the process of bringing them out into the community will be reversed and they will go back into institutionalised care?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is quite right to raise that point. I should make it clear that they will be protected in real terms. That is essential and I have tried to make it clear that we want to target the very few—they are very few—as opposed to the vast majority who will benefit from the changes. I shall consider the premiums regularly in the light of the surveys that are taking place. I am delighted to say in public to my hon. Friend and other hon. Members who have argued so vehemently for the disabled over the years that they should be proud that the share of national wealth for the disabled has increased by 50 per cent. since 1979. That is a very praiseworthy achievement.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that hundreds of thousands of pensioners now receiving a works or occupational pension will be worse off in terms of housing benefit if they pay rent and rates?

Mr. Moore: There will be some richer people who will suffer because of the way in which the disregard works. There cannot be a reduction in the housing benefit caseload from 7 million to 6 million without some of the better-off, including pensioners, suffering as a consequence and losing some of their benefits.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend accept that concern about the impact of freezing child benefit is not felt on this side of the House only by the so-called "wets"? Following the excellent question of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), will he give a categoric assurance that there will be no loss of income for the severely handicapped, even those who register as severely handicapped, after 1 April 1988?

Mr. Moore: Obviously, I can repeat my reassurance about those who are already registered. Clearly, those who register after 1 April 1988 will come under the scope of the new system, but we must find a way of targeting more effectively those few people whom we have not been able to recognise within the system.

With regard to my hon. Friend's previous question, I recognise his dryness and his long history of support for child benefit. *[Interruption.]* He is a genuinely honourable friend and he considers these matters rationally and objectively. He will be pleased that we have been able to set aside additional resources for families with children. I know that he welcomes that.

Mr. Alastair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Secretary of State accept that many of the increases that he has announced this afternoon will be funded by removing many people from the protection of benefit? Both the changes in tapers in the housing benefit regulations and changing the method by which single payments are made will pay for the increases. Does he not accept that people will be paying for the increases and that, if he wants to help those on low incomes, one of the best routes would be to encourage the Chancellor of the Exchequer to change the income tax regime so that low income taxes are not provided for by the expedient of cutting the amount of money used on social expenditure, such as the benefits that we have discussed this afternoon?

Mr. Moore: First of all, I said earlier that we are in a process of structural reform and change. However, I also said—I wonder if the hon. Gentleman heard me—that the net product of these changes is £500 million additional public expenditure, so it is not a matter of the Chancellor of the Exchequer saving. He is funding £500 million additional net public expenditure. However, I will draw the hon. Gentleman's tax suggestions to the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I welcome the concern of my right hon. Friend in targeting help among the poorest families. In the light of the very important contribution which child benefit has made to helping those families, will he undertake to monitor the consequences of the proposals which he has put forward today?

Mr. Moore: Of course, like any Secretary of State in my position, I shall be considering carefully a budgetary area that still spends £4·5 billion. I have a duty to review that constantly and I will continue to do so.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given the Secretary of State's repeated emphasis on helping those most in need, how can he reconcile today's statement and the Government's overall strategy with the reality of the continuing rise, as shown by statistics, in the number of people living in poverty? Is he aware, for example, that one recent survey in Scotland showed that more than one third of Scots lived on or below the poverty line, as defined by his own Department? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore tell the House how many people will be lifted out of that situation by today's statement? If he cannot give the figures now, will he record them in the *Official Report* as soon as possible?

Mr. Moore: First, just to correct the record, my Department does not have such a definition. There is a set of definitions that some people outside use with regard to the relativity of supplementary benefit. One of the absurdities about this debate in the national context is that by reducing supplementary benefits I could theoretically reduce poverty. That is complete nonsense. I ask the hon. Lady to recognise, as do most people who study our country, that while we recognise the value of targeting those in genuine need, there has been a relative improvement in the well-being of all our people.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): May I first inform my right hon. Friend that, at the last general election, I did not gain a seat from the Labour party by preaching messages

[Mr. Tim Janman]

of increasing public expenditure, taxation, inflation or blanket benefits that go to the whole population, irrespective of need? I took the seat from Labour by standing on the Government's record of reducing taxation and inflation, and of pinpointing the expenditure on areas of real need. In that context, and given the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on child benefit, which I and many of my hon. Friends warmly welcome, will he give us an assurance that the Government will carry out a review with the specific objective of examining changing this appalling blanket benefit to one that can be effectively targeted on those really in need?

Mr. Moore: I am interested in my hon. Friend's support, especially his concern to target benefits on those in need. I made the position clear earlier: I said that, in view of its cost and its ill-targeted nature, we obviously have a responsibility to keep child benefit constantly under review, and we shall continue to do that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am bound to have regard to the large number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the subsequent debate. I shall allow a further two questions from each side, and then we must move on.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Since, historically, the tax-free child benefit has taken the place of child tax allowances, is not the effect of the Secretary of State's announcement to tax some families with children in order to help other families with children; whereas, in the Budget next March, under the Rooker-Wise amendment, those whose tax allowances are not related to having children will automatically have their tax allowances increased? Would it not be right to spread the burden among all taxpayers instead of among only families with children?

Secondly, how on earth does the Secretary of State work out that a woman in poverty can have a child for £85?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Member seems to ignore the fact that the proposals are coincidental with a major restructuring of the whole social security system. Consequential upon that restructuring, an extra £220 million will go to families with children through family credit—as opposed to what happens under the present family income supplement system—and an extra £100 million will go to families with children in income support. It is the net product of the ability to put an extra £320 million into the system, as opposed to the £120 million that could have gone into child benefit uprating, that denies the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend has answered one question about his decision on child benefit, but he has not answered the main question. Looked at overall, if child benefit is being frozen at the same time as—hopefully—my right hon. Friend the Chancellor reduces the rates of taxation, among the taxpaying public there will be a transfer of wealth from those with children to those without them. As a representative of the party of the family, my right hon. Friend will, I am sure, agree that that would be nonsense. What discussions has my right hon. Friend had with the Chancellor to reintroduce the child tax allowance?

Mr. Moore: I know of my hon. Friend's deep interest in this matter. He will be aware that, as far as this statement is concerned, I am adding half a billion pounds net to public expenditure. Clearly, I must have had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be able to do that.

Equally, I know that my hon. Friend will be aware that, whatever the Chancellor does in his Budget and tax judgment, I can put £220 million more into helping families with children than I would have been able to do with an increase in child benefit, and those specific families would not have benefited by one penny from a child benefit increase.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm to someone like me, who worked for an organisation for the disabled for eight years prior to coming to this House, that many organisations for the disabled may find his statement very misleading? In particular, they will find misleading his claim that millions of disabled people will not lose out from April as new claimants. Will he confirm that among the groups that will lose out are new claimants for kidney dialysis who can presently claim £10·85 a week; new claimants who are blind and presently get the non-householder addition of £7·70 which is to be abolished; and new claimants who are incontinent and elderly who at the moment can claim £11·05 and more a week and who will not be able to claim after April? Will he also confirm that people who because of incontinence or disability require additional clothing and who receive up to £10 a week now will not be eligible after April? Not only do those lost benefits total £45 a week or more, but existing claimants will lose as well because those benefits will not be uprated.

Mr. Moore: I compliment the hon. Gentleman on his ability to put many reasonable points. He will obviously expect me and my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled to stay in close touch with the disabled lobby about these matters. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Is he right or wrong?"] He was wrong not to have heard what I said twice before, that new claimants would be covered under the new system. I referred to that particularly. I know that the disabled organisations will not have made that mistake and will have noticed that there is a substantial overall increase for the disabled from this restructuring. There is no question of that not being accepted by those organisations.

I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that I shall keep closely in touch with the nature of the premium arrangements in this area. I shall keep closely in touch with my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and for the Disabled, because I am concerned to ensure that the reality of the additional money that we are putting into this area is received by the disabled.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that probably as many as 75 per cent. of families in receipt of child benefit pay income tax as well? Child benefit is expensive to dish out and if we are to solve the continuing problems of the poverty trap and make substantial increases in tax thresholds and reduce income tax rates, we must not only target benefits more distinctly, but remove altogether the universality of benefits such as child benefit. If my right hon. Friend is not already contemplating a review of that position, he should be.

Mr. Moore: I have heard very different advice from different parts of the House on this issue, but I shall stand where I was before by saying that we are not in the midst of a review, but that I have a statutory duty to review this issue each year.

Mr. Speaker: I will bear in mind those hon. Members that I have not been able to call.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): So I have got two in the bank.

Mr. Speaker: Well, there will be plenty of other opportunities, and I shall do my best to ensure that everyone is fairly treated.

Following is the schedule of main proposed rates:

	Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	
	Old rates 1987	*New rates 1988*
CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS		
Retirement Pension		
On own insurance—Category A or B	39·50	41·15
On spouse's insurance—Category B (lower)	23·75	24·75
Non-contributory—		
Category C or D	23·75	24·75
Category C (lower)	14·20	14·80
Additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension and graduated retirement benefit	Increased by 4·2 per cent.	
Graduated retirement benefit (unit)	5·17p	5·39p
Increments to basic and additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension, and graduated retirement benefit	Increased by 4·2 per cent.	
Prescribed maximum amount of additional pension (also paid with widows' and invalidity benefits) (from 6 April)	29·11	34·75
Addition at age 80	·25	·25
Invalidity Benefit		
Invalidity pension	39·50	41·15
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·30	8·65
middle rate	5·30	5·50
lower rate	2·65	2·75
Widow's Benefit		
Widow's allowance	55·35	57·65
Widow's payment (lump sum)	—	1,000·00
Widowed mother's allowance	39·50	41·15
Widow's pension		
—standard rate	39·50	41·15
—age related		
54 (49)	36·74	38·27
53 (48)	33·97	35·39
52 (47)	31·21	32·51
51 (46)	28·44	29·63
50 (45)	25·68	26·75
49 (44)	22·91	23[illegible]
48 (43)	20·15	20·99
47 (42)	17·38	18·11
46 (41)	14·62	15·23
45 (40)	11·85	12·35
Note: For entitlements arising before 11 April 1988 refer to age points shown in brackets.		
Unemployment Benefit		
Over pension age	39·50	41·15
Under pension age	31·45	32·75
Occupational pension abatement	35·00	35·00
Sickness Benefit		
Over pension age	37·85	39·45
Under pension age	30·05	31·30
Maternity Allowance	30·05	31·30
Statutory Sick Pay		
Earnings threshold	39·00	41·00
Standard rate threshold	76·50	79·50
Lower rate	32·85	34·25
Standard rate	47·20	49·20
Statutory Maternity Pay		
Earnings threshold	39·00	41·00
Lower rate	32·85	34·25
Industrial Death Benefit		
Widow's pension		
first 26 weeks	55·35	57·65
higher permanent rate[1]	40·05	41·15
lower permanent rate	11·85	12·35
[1] Subject to Parliamentary approval of the Social Security Bill 1987		
Industrial Disablement Pension		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
100 per cent.	64·50	67·20
90 per cent.	58·05	60·48
80 per cent.	51·60	53·76
70 per cent.	45·15	47·04
60 per cent.	38·70	40·32
50 per cent.	32·25	33·60
40 per cent.	25·80	26·88
30 per cent.	19·35	20·16
20 per cent.	12·90	13·44
Under 18		
100 per cent.	39·50	41·15
90 per cent.	35·55	37·04
80 per cent.	31·60	32·92
70 per cent.	27·65	28·81
60 per cent.	23·70	24·69
50 per cent.	19·75	20·58
40 per cent.	15·80	16·46
30 per cent.	11·85	12·35
20 per cent.	7·90	8·23
Maximum life gratuity (lump sum)	4,290·00	4,470·00
Unemployability Supplement	39·50	41·15
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity at		
higher rate	8·30	8·65
middle rate	5·30	5·50
lower rate	2·65	2·75
Maximum reduced earnings allowance	25·80	26·88
Constant attendance allowance		
part-time rate	12·90	13·45
normal maximum	25·80	26·90
intermediate rate	38·70	40·35
exceptional rate	51·60	53·80
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·80	26·90
Guardian's Allowance—each child	8·05	8·40
Child's Special Allowance	8·05	8·40
NON-CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS		
Child Benefit—each child	7·25	7·25
One-parent Benefit	4·70	4·90
Invalid care allowance	23·75	24·75

	Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	
	Old rates 1987	*New rates 1988*
Severe Disablement Allowance	23·75	24·75
Attendance Allowance		
higher rate	31·60	32·95
lower rate	21·10	22·00
Mobility Allowance	22·10	23·05
War Pensions		
Disablement pension (100% rates)		
private or equivalent	64[illegible]	67·20
officer (£ per annum)	3,363·00	3,504·00
Age allowances		
40%-50%	4·50	4·70
over 50% but not over 70%	7·00	7·30
over 70% but not over 90%	10·05	10·45
over 90%	14·00	14·60
Disablement gratuity (£ per annum) —base figures for		
specified minor injury	4,290·00	4,470·00
unspecified minor injury	2,359·50	2,458·50
Unemployability allowance		
personal allowance	41·95	43·70
adult dependency addition	23·75	24·75
addition for each child	8·05	8·40
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·30	8·65
middle rate	5·30	5·50
lower rate	2·65	2·75
Constant attendance allowance		
part-time rate	12·90	13·45
normal maximum rate	25·80	26·90
intermediate rate	38·70	40·35
exceptional rate	51·60	53·80
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	11·10	11·60
lower rate	5·55	5·80
Mobility supplement	24·55	25·60
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	25·80	26·88
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·80	26·90
Severe disablement occupational allowance	12·90	13·45
Clothing allowance (per annum)		
higher rate	88·00	92·00
lower rate	56·00	58·00
Education allowance (per annum)	120·00	120·00
War widows' pension (private)		
widow	51·35	53·50
childless widow under age 40	11·85	12·35
age allowance		
—age 65 to 69	5·50	5·75
—age 70 to 79	11·00	11·50
—age 80 and over	13·85	14·45
child addition	11·60	12·00
addition for motherless or fatherless child	12·70	13·15
Unmarried dependant living as wife	49·30	51·45
Rent allowance (maximum)	19·55	20·35
Adult orphan's pension	39·50	41·15
Widower's pension (maximum)	51·35	53·50
Pneumoconiosis, byssinosis, workman's compensation (supplementation) and other schemes		
Total disablement allowance and major incapacity allowance (maximum)	64·50	67·20
Partial disablement allowance	23·75	24·75
Unemployability supplement	39·50	41·15
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity at		
higher rate	8·30	8·65
middle rate	5·30	5·50
lower rate	2·65	2·75
Constant attendance allowance		
part-time rate	12·90	13·45
normal maximum rate	25·80	26·90
intermediate rate	38·70	40·35
exceptional rate	51·60	53·80
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·80	26·90
Lesser incapacity allowance		
based on loss of earnings over	31·60	32·95
maximum rate of allowance	23·75	24·75
COMMON PROVISIONS		
Dependency Additions—Adults		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:—		
Retirement pension on own insurance, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit	23·75	24·75
Non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance	14·20	14·80
Sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	22·70	23·65
Unemployment benefit	19·40	20·20
Sickness benefit, maternity allowance	18·60	19·40
Dependency Additions—Children		
For each child with: Retirement pension, widows benefit, industrial death benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care allowance, severe disablement allowance, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, with sickness or unemployment benefit	8·05	8·40
Earnings Rules		
Retirement pension	75·00	75·00
Invalid care allowance	12·00	12·00
Unemployment benefit (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Therapeutic earnings limit	26·00	27·00
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,352·00	1,404·00
War pensioners' unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,352·00	1,404·00
Adult dependency additions with:—		
Sickness benefit if claimant is		
under pension age	18·60	19·40
over pension age	22·70	23·65
Maternity allowance	18·60	19·40
Unemployment benefit if claimant is		
under pension age	19·40	20·20
over pension age	23·75	24·75
Retirement pension, invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance and unemployability supplement where dependant:		
is living with the claimant	31·45	32·75
still qualifies for the tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
Retirement pension, invalidity pension and unemployability supplement where dependant not living with claimant	23·75	24·75
Severe disablement allowance where dependant not living with claimant	14·20	14·80
Invalid care allowance	14·20	14·80
Child dependency additions—		

	Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	
	Old rates 1987	*New rates 1988*
Level at which child additions payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner		
first child	85·00	90·00
each subsequent child	10·00	11·00
Hospital downrating		
20% rate	7·90	8·25
40% rate	15·80	16·50
INCOME-RELATED BENEFITS		
Provisions common to all three benefits		
Capital		
upper limit	—	6,000·00
amount disregarded	—	3,000·00
child's limit	—	3,000·00
Tariff Income £1 for each complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Income Support and Housing Benefit—Common Provisions		
Personal allowances		
Single		
—under age 18	—	19·40
—age 18-24	—	26·05
—age 25 or over	—	33·40
Lone parent		
—under age 18	—	19·40
—age 18 or over	—	33·40
Couple		
—both under age 18	—	38·80
—at least one age 18 or over	—	51·45
Dependent children		
—under age 11	—	10·75
—age 11-15	—	16·10
—age 16-17	—	19·40
—age 18	—	26·05
Premiums		
Family	—	6·15
Lone parent (income support)	—	3·70
Lone parent (housing benefit)	—	8·60
Pensioner		
—single	—	10·65
—couple	—	16·25
Pensioner (higher)		
—single	—	13·05
—couple	—	18·60
Disability		
—single	—	13·05
—couple	—	18·60
Severe disability		
—single	—	24·75
—couple (one disabled)	—	24·75
—couple (both disabled)	—	49·50
Disabled child	—	6·15
Income Support		
Maximum amounts for accommodation and meals in		
a. Ordinary board and lodging	between £45 and £70	between £45 and £70
b. Hostels	70·00	70·00
Maximum special increase (a and b)	17·50	17·50
c. Residential care homes		
—old age	130·00	130·00
—very dependent elderly	145·00	155·00
—mental disorder (not handicap)	130·00	130·00
—drug/alcohol dependence	130·00	130·00
—mental handicap	150·00	160·00
—physical disablement		
—(under pension age)	190·00	190·00
—(over pension age)	130·00	130·00
—others	130·00	130·00
—maximum Greater London increase	17·50	17·50
d. Nursing homes		
—mental disorder (not handicap)	180·00	185·00
—drug/alcohol dependence	180·00	185·00
—mental handicap	200·00	200·00
—terminal illness	230·00	230·00
—physical disablement		
—(under pension age)	230·00	230·00
—(over pension age)	175·00	185·00
—others (including elderly)	175.00	185.00
—maximum Greater London increase	17·50	17·50
Allowances for personal expenses for claimants in Board and lodging accommodation and hostels		
Lower		
—single	10·00	10·30
—couple	20·00	20·60
Higher		
—single	11·15	11·50
—couple	22·30	23·00
Dependent children		
—under age 11	3·35	3·45
—age 11-15	5·15	5·30
—age 16-17	6·00	6·20
—age 18	10·00	10·30
Private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes	9·25	9·55
Dependent children allowances above apply except		
—age 18	9·25	9·55
Hospital and local authority (Part III) accommodation	7·90	8·25
The Polish home Ilford Park	11·15	11·50
Housing costs		
Deduction for non-dependants aged 18 or over and in remunerative work		8·20
others, aged 18 or over or on income support and over 25		3·45
Low earnings threshold		49·20
Deductions for direct payment of fuel debt		
5% rate		1·70
10% rate		3·35
Arrears of housing costs		1·70
Reduction in benefit for strikers	17·00	17·70
Disregards		
Standard earnings		5·00
Higher earnings		15·00
War pensions		5·00
Voluntary and charitable payments		5·00
Students covenanted income		5·00
Income from boarders		35·00
Expenses for subtenants		
Furnished or unfurnished		4·00
Where heating is included, additional		6·70
Housing Benefit		
Amenity deductions for		
heating		6·70
hot water		0·80
lighting		0·50
cooking		0·80

	Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	
	Old rates 1987	*New rates 1988*
all fuel		8·80
Non-dependant deductions		
Rent rebates and allowances		
aged 18 or over and in remunerative work		8·20
others, aged 18 or over or on income support and over 25		3·45
Rate rebates, aged 18 or over		3·00
Low earnings threshold		49·20
Expenses for subtenants		
Furnished or unfurnished		4·00
Where heating is included, additional		6·70
Earnings disregards		
where disability premium awarded		15·00
various specified employments		15·00
lone parent		15·00
one of a couple in employment		10·00
single claimant		5·00
Other income disregards		
charitable or voluntary payments		5·00
war pensions		5·00
students covenanted income		5·00
Family Credit		
Adult Credit		32·10
Child Credit		
under age 11		6·05
age 11-15		11·40
age 16-17		14·70
age 18		21·35
Capital		
upper limit		6,000·00
amount disregarded		3,000·00
child's limit		3,000·00
Tariff Income		
£1 for every complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Disregards		
war pensions		5·00
voluntary and charitable payments		5·00
students covenanted income		5·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished		4·00
where heating is included, additional		6·70
Applicable amount (ie taper threshold level)		51·45
Maternity Payment	80·00	85·00

Babcock Power Plant, Renfrew

Mr. Speaker: We now come to an application under Standing Order No. 20.

5.15 pm

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): A moment ago I noticed the Secretary of State for Scotland skulking behind your Chair, Mr. Speaker. Tragically, as is so often the case when we discuss Scottish matters, he seems to have disappeared once again.

The company about which I wish to speak is now called FKI, but I would be more readily understood by hon. Members if I referred to it as the Babcock power plant of Renfrew. On Friday the company announced 500 redundancies following on 500 redundancies that were announced only two months ago. That is a total of 1,000 jobs lost within three months and the work force is now reduced to 800 from its capacity at one time of 8,000. As usual, we were met by a stultifying silence from St. Andrew's house. Not a word was spoken by a single Government Minister on this very serious matter. They stood like rabbits mesmerised by a stoat and uttered not a single sound or made a single vibration.

Obviously, this is an important matter for the people who are losing their jobs and for my constituency, but it is also important for the nation as a whole. At Renfrew we had gathered together some of the finest expertise in the world in the field of power station equipment manufacture. We also had some of the finest expertise in the world in X-ray equipment and lifting gear.

My great fear is that once that expertise is dispersed to the four corners of the world—and at the moment many people are being tempted away by Arab and American money—we shall never reassemble it in one place. If that happens a great British skill which brought a considerable amount of money to this country in terms of exports will never be put together again. That is why I bring the matter to the attention of the House. For many years I brought it to the attention of the Prime Minister and the Department of Energy but to no avail. If I am lucky enough to catch your eye on Thursday, Mr. Speaker, during business questions I shall put to the Leader of the House that we should have a debate on this matter within the next week.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by FKI Electrics, Halifax, to render 500 people redundant at their Renfrew plant."

I listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said and, in particular, to his last comment about business questions on Thursday. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

BP (Share Flotation)

5.17 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the uncertainty surrounding the sale of BP shares."

The House a short time ago listened to a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which he said that he could not give his decision on whether he could release the underwriters from their obligations until Thursday of this week. That means that uncertainties will continue to surround the sale of the shares until then.

This is clearly the biggest privatisation exercise to date, very likely will be the biggest flop of all, and is therefore a specific and important matter. It is urgent, because unless a debate is granted the House will be unable to respond to the invitation which the Chancellor extended that we should give him our views before he reaches a decision. Since the Chancellor deliberately extended this invitation, there ought to be an opportunity whereby the House can respond.

Some very important issues are at stake. It is likely that Britain's greatest company will have over 30 per cent. of its shares held by very unwilling underwriters. There may well be very difficult problems for many private individuals who have applied for shares as a result of the Government's extravagant advertising campaign, and who were perhaps under a misapprehension about the price of the shares for which they were applying. In view of these important factors and, above all, because the Chancellor invited our views and because it is impossible for us to express our views other than in a debate, I move this motion.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the uncertainty surrounding the sale of BP shares."

I have listened with great care to what the right and hon. learned Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised meets the criteria under which I can grant a debate under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could the House have your guidance and direction as to how matters should proceed over the next few days? No one needs to tell you of the crucial importance of the issue of the BP sale, both in terms of general conduct in the markets and the implications of the sale, given the present instability of the markets. No one needs to tell you, Mr. Speaker, of the importance of this matter to several score of thousands of private individuals and the importance of the sale of a major British asset.

In those circumstances, it would appear to be appropriate for the Government, given the general instability, to come before the House voluntarily to make statements or even to initiate a debate, especially since, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, the Chancellor made it apparent that he wanted the view—to quote him—"of right hon. and hon. Members." The Chancellor said that by Thursday the Government will make a decision. That could mean that by Friday trading will commence in these new undervalued shares. In all those circumstances, the House has had scant opportunity to make its views known. I understand that you form your judgment on applications to adjourn the House under Standing Order No. 20, and we respect it, but all I would do is ask you to give us your guidance on the kind of circumstances in which a further submission could be made, given the general urgency of the situation, and the fact that we have, at the earliest, a deadline of Thursday, and, at the latest, a deadline of Friday to record the view of this House.

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate what the right hon. Gentleman has said. He and the House know that I am bound by criteria laid down in Standing Orders. I shall, of course, watch the continuing situation carefully. The House should bear in mind that there will be opportunities during Question Time tomorrow and again on Thursday, but I will certainly bear this matter in mind.

Defence

[Relevant reports from the Select Committee on Defence:

First Report: Expenditure on Major Defence Projects: Accountability to the House of Commons, House of Commons Paper 340; Third Report: The Progress of the Trident Programme, House of Commons Paper 356; Fourth Report: Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign, House of Commons Paper 345-I, and the Government Response thereto, Cm 228; and Fifth Report: Defence Commitments in the South Atlantic, House of Commons Paper 408.]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Defence, I must announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

5.21 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987 contained in Cm. 101.

We are debating the statement on the Defence Estimates today, unusually more than five months after its publication in May. As all hon. Members are aware, the delay has been caused unavoidably by the general election and the pressure of other business in the early weeks of this Session.

Equally unavoidably, the House has not had the benefit of the usual report on the statement by the Select Committee on Defence which has still to be reconstituted.

I very much regret this—as I am sure does the House as a whole. The Defence White Paper covers a good deal of detailed ground — much more than can be covered even in a long debate.

I have greatly valued the time and care that the Committee has devoted both to the statement on the Defence Estimates and to other issues.

This summer, for example, saw the publication of the previous Committee's report on "implementing the lessons of the Falklands campaign". The House will appreciate the care and effort put into this wide-ranging and detailed survey by the then Sir Humphrey Atkins, formerly my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and his colleagues on both sides of the House. The report fully maintains the tradition of thoughtful and constructive analysis of major defence issues which the House has come to associate with the Committee. The Government's observations, published last week, record the substantial progress that we have made in profiting from the experience of the Falklands to strengthen the capability of the armed forces.

Despite the absence of this year's report on the statement on the Defence Estimates, I commend the statement to the House as having passed two equally rigorous tests — the test of time and the test of the electorate.

The theme of this year's statement is not new. It is a reaffirmation of our long-standing policy of securing our defence through our membership of NATO; and, within NATO, pursuing the dual approach of deterrence and detente. That requires us to maintain sufficient strength to deter aggression, while simultaneously seeking, through arms control negotiations, to achieve an inherently less dangerous world in which security can be assured, and, if possible, enhanced, at lower levels of armaments.

The electorate has massively endorsed the policy of deterrence based on a mix of nuclear and conventional weapons. There will be no substitute for the nuclear component in this mixture so long as the risk of war in Europe remains, or until we are confident that we have a better way to keep the peace. Only nuclear weapons can present a potential aggressor with a sufficiently clear risk that the costs of aggression will amply outweigh any conceivable gain.

The debate on the British contribution to NATO's strategic deterrent has now been settled. The Trident programme is on course to provide the necessary updating of that capability from the mid-1990s; and earlier this month I placed the order for the second Vanguard class Trident missile submarine, HMS Victorious.

I must say a word about the operation of Trident, in view of some very strange reports that have been circulating recently. There is no truth whatever in the idea that we shall not own our own missiles for the Trident system. We shall be buying them all, and they will cost us over £1 billion. Trident will be truly independent, and the Labour party is clutching at straws by trying to claim otherwise.

As the House well knows, we have had since 1982 an agreement for servicing them at the United States facility at King's Bay, Georgia. That has been very advantageous to the United Kingdom, producing savings of some £767 million over the original estimate for Trident. Under the agreement, our missiles will go to King's Bay for refurbishment after every seven or eight years of deployment and replacements will be taken into service. That perfectly sensible arrangement will in no way affect the independence of our deterrent, which with its United Kingdom warheads and United Kingdom owned missiles will remain at all times under the control of the British Government.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On the matter of independence, nobody doubts that the warhead would be owned by Britain. However, will the Secretary of State say categorically that it could be fired and targeted without the consent of the Americans who own the satellite system? In the Zircon film, which the Government banned, a clear statement was made by the former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence that we do not have independent use of it. However, as I have said, nobody is questioning the fact that we shall own the hardware when we buy it from the United States.

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that he sees in films of that sort. That was not a fair representation of what the former permanent secretary said. I can confirm that our independent nuclear deterrent is just that and, in the appalling circumstances of having to use it, it can be used entirely on our own should we wish to do so, which, of course, I hope we never will.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State has just said that the warheads made in Britain would be British. I think that we have all long understood that. However, can he explain the paragraph in the July report of the National Audit Office on the control and management of the Trident programme which says:

"Most of the expenditure on development and production is incurred in the United States"?

Mr. Younger: The warhead is entirely made in this country. It is stored in this country and it is under no one else's control at any point. That is an important factor and I confirm that that is so.

The talk about independence is extremely important but I am surprised to find that right hon. and hon. Members are concerned about independence. Until recently they professed to reject the need for any such deterrent. I can well understand their desire now to divert attention from their own lamentable record on defence, but they should not try to divert the public's attention from the facts.

That brings me to the truly remarkable trio of amendments that have been tabled. They are the most compelling reading I have seen on the Order Paper for a long time. For light relief we have the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) and his colleagues — I think that they are colleagues or half colleagues — which draws our attention to their complete departure from the real world. That amendment spells out a non-nuclear world in which independent Wales and independent Scotland would happily sit. They would cancel the Trident programme destroying literally thousands of Scottish jobs and probably some Welsh ones, too, in the process. It says that they would leave NATO, which, as I understood the press reports, is in direct conflict to the decisions taken by the Scottish National party congress in Dundee some weeks ago. I notice that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who I think is the defence spokesman of the SNP, is not present, but no doubt she will let us have the benefit of her views in due course.

We then have not one but two amendments kindly tabled by the main Opposition party. I hope that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will be able to tell us to which one of them he is speaking today because, as the Front Bench spokesman for the Labour party, he is presumably supposed to represent all the hon. Members who sit behind him.

The amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and his colleagues reveals the real Labour party policy; there is no doubt about that. It clearly spells out that it is against the retention of any nuclear weapons; it wrongly says that our weapons cannot be used without the consent of the United States and outlines a future that will be free of all military blocs.

The amendment tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition is the most remarkable of all three. *[Interruption.]* It would be convenient if I did not have to mention this but the House would complain if I did not. It would not be too much to expect the main Opposition amendment to be accurate. It is extraordinary that the right hon. Gentleman and his senior colleagues should have tabled this amendment, because in the third line it says,

"the Government's plans . . . are leading to damaging cuts in the United Kingdom's conventional defences".

That amendment was tabled against a background, as the right hon. Gentleman must know, that since 1979 we have spent £16 billion more on conventional weapons, not nuclear weapons, than would have been spent on the previous Government's record. That is an average of £2 billion extra per year. The amendment says that there would be a running down of our non-nuclear defences. Again, that is against a background when our contribution to NATO is better in quantity and quality than it was in 1979. It further says that the defence industrial base is being run down. That is against the background of the largest ever turnover in defence industries and the record defence sales that we are now recording.

An amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition should at least be accurate, and it is deplorable that that is not the case.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): Is not the comment in the third line of the Opposition's amendment on cuts a continuation of the scare stories that the Labour party put around in each of the major cities where defence industries are based in an effort to win electoral support? Did it not receive its answer at the general election in Bristol, where four of the five constituencies returned Tory Members of Parliament with increased majorities?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right on that point. It is a sobering thought that if the election result had gone the other way all the people concerned would now be out of work.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I know that it is a long time since the White Paper was published, but the Secretary of State should try to read it. Paragraph 603 clearly says:

"the defence budget is expected to decline by some 5 per cent. in real terms over the 1986 Public Expenditure Survey period."

Our amendmant exactly reflects that statement.

Mr. Younger: Unfortunately, it does not; it talks about a reduction in conventional spending, but there is no such reduction. As I have said, there has been a vast increase in spending in that sector.

These days it is more than usually difficult to take seriously what the Labour party has to say on defence. It is the last party that should be offering advice; it should be seeking it. Indeed, if we are to believe the Leader of the Opposition, he has scrapped his policy and is looking for a new one. History has already proven it wrong. It said that the deployment of cruise missiles would wreck the prospects for arms control, but the reverse has happened. NATO's decision to stand firm has brought within our grasp the first-ever deal to reduce nuclear weapons. There might have been a deal earlier but for the actions of the Labour party and CND, which encouraged the Soviet Union to believe that it might achieve all that it wanted without negotiating seriously.

Moreover, the Labour party's defence policy is in tatters. In June, it seems to be generally agreed, even by the Labour party, it had a bad defence policy. But now it has no defence policy at all; no one knows where it stands on any issue. The right hon. Member for Llanelli is forced to stand facing both ways at the same time. He was quoted in *The Times* on 2 October as saying of the disarmament process

"we've got to look at both unilateral and multilateral methods in the new climate".

Talk of using Trident politically will not get the Labour party off the hook either; the result is unilateralism by another name. A deterrent of which one says in advance, "I will never be prepared to use it", is no deterrent at all.

[Mr. Younger]

Why should the Soviet Union negotiate seriously if it knows that a Labour Government will give up our deterrent regardless? Moreover, even if one could get the Soviet Union to agree missile-for-missile reductions with us, it would not enhance our security one jot. In effect, one would be saying, "We will give up all our nuclear weapons if you give up just 3 per cent. of yours".

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I should be interested to know in what circumstances the Secretary of State would use this so-called independent deterrent.

Mr. Younger: The circumstances are clearly spelt out in the White Paper, and they lie behind the defence policy not only of this Government but of every previous Government, including all past Labour Governments. I am sure that the hon. Lady is aware of the circumstances. As for the Liberal—SDP alliance, or what remains of it, I must confess that as regards its defence policy I am even more baffled than it is, and that is very baffled.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who sadly is not present, seems to be a country member of the SDP. He may have principles, but he has no party. The Liberals and SDP may one day have a new party, but it has no principled policies. On that point the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), whom we are glad to see representing the weight of the alliance, let the cat out of the bag by saying in *Liberal News,* which I read avidly, on 18 September:

> "There will be some who insist that a new merged party must have a clear line on Trident in particular, and Britain's own nuclear weaponry in general. We will do our party no service by heeding such calls."

That statement says it all.

Common to all of the Opposition parties is a belief that the world has changed so fundamentally that they are relieved of the responsibility for facing up to the difficult defence issues. But events have not altered the fundamental need for the alliance to negotiate from a position of strength.

We welcome the recognition in Mr. Gorbachev's new political thinking of the interdependence of the countries of the world. We welcome the Soviet Union's new-found willingness to negotiate effective arms control arrangements. We would welcome these matters all the more if Soviet leaders did not quite so often, in the course of negotiations, seek to drive wedges between Europe and North America and between Western Governments and their electorates. We would welcome them all the more if it did not raise so many irrelevant arguments or place so many spurious obstacles in the way of progress on arms control. The events last week in Moscow amply demonstrate its commitment to brinkmanship, if necessary jeopardising the progress which has so far been made. We have even seen Soviet spokesmen attempt to liken the dual key Pershing 1A, with its United States warhead, to the United Kingdom's Trident programme; such analysis is patently false. Trident will be a fully owned, fully independent United Kingdom deterrent, carrying United Kingdom designed and manufactured warheads. Soviet attempts at wedge driving and misinformation have failed and will continue to fail.

The NATO Alliance's solidarity remains intact, and because of this we have brought the Soviet Union not only to the conference table but to the brink of an historic agreement on intermediate nuclear forces. Despite Mr. Gorbachev's refusal to name the date for a summit meeting, steadfast negotiating by the United States managed to make substantial progress on the remaining issues. It is a matter for regret that a treaty as important as this may not now be signed by the leaders of the world's great powers as a demonstration of the improving relationship between them. But nevertheless we are intent on reaching agreement, the right agreement, by maintaining the West's united pressure.

We believe that signature by the United States and the Soviet Union of a treaty eliminating land-based INF missiles above the range of 500 km will be achieved. The result will be that the threat posed by Soviet SS20 missiles to Western Europe will be removed. For the first time an arms control agreement will produce an actual reduction in nuclear armouries, and this without diminishing the security of either East or West.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) asked a legitimate question which the Secretary of State passed over in a facile manner. She asked when the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister would press our button. Would they press it if Russian troops moved into Germany, Holland or Belgium? Would they press it if they landed on our coast? Would they have the complicity and support of the West Germans and the French to nuke their populations as well? When would they press the button?

Mr. Younger: It would be extremely foolish and irresponsible of me to announce publicly in the House of Commons answers to such questions. Of course it is absolutely clear that we have nuclear weapons in case we are put in a position that they are necessary for the survival of our country or the NATO Alliance. It is not only important that we should be prepared to use them, but it is vital that the other side knows that we are prepared to use them. That is the whole purpose. It has been the whole purpose of every Government, Labour as well as Conservative. It is still the purpose of every Western Government, Socialist as well as non-Socialist. On that, some of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues are right out on a limb.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Younger: I should love to give way, but I must press on. Time is against us.

This agreement, if we can get it signed, will be a major success for the Alliance, marking the achievement of a goal that we set ourselves eight years ago. It could not have been achieved unless the Alliance had remained firm in its determination to counter the SS20 threat by deploying long-range INF systems of its own. Those in this House, and outside, who sought to deflect us from this goal have been proved wrong. The proponents of unilateral disarmament have been clearly, and I hope finally, proved wrong.

We should all beware of the trap of viewing arms control as an end in its own right. The statement on the Defence Estimates rightly cautions against negotiating ourselves into a less secure world. In this respect it is right and proper that those concerned for our security should want to look very closely at the details of the arrangements that are being, and will be, negotiated to make sure that our ability to deter war is not impaired.

The proposed agreement on INF missiles has naturally been examined closely on this point. The House will, I am sure, welcome the clear statement by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Galvin, that the strategy of flexible response will remain viable after the elimination of land-based INF missiles.

Clearly the agreement will have implications both for the overall balance and for the structure of our forces. But both NATO and the Warsaw pact will retain sizeable theatre nuclear forces after this agreement, including dual-capable aircraft and sea-based systems.

There may need to be adjustments within NATO's remaining forces to ensure that deterrence remains effective. We are looking at this now in NATO. No conclusions have been reached, nor would I expect final decisions before an INF agreement has been secured. There will also continue to be a requirement, articulated in the 1983 Montebello decisions and SACEUR's subsequent study of theatre nuclear requirements, for the modernisation and improvement measures necessary to allow us to maintain deterrence with the minimum number of warheads. I am, however, totally confident that we shall be able to maintain effective deterrence following such an agreement.

Chemical weapons are another serious cause for concern in the West. We in this country abandoned our chemical warfare capability in the 1950s; the United States has not produced any such weapons since 1969. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has accumulated a massive capability—although it was only six months ago that Mr. Gorbachev brought himself to admit publicly that the Soviet Union possessed chemical weapons. This admission is helpful, but more glasnost is needed. In this context we welcomed the opportunity to send a team to visit the Soviet chemical weapons facility at Shikhany earlier this month. But the fact that the team was shown only weapons and agents dating from the 1950s inevitably begged a few questions. Are we really asked to believe that this is all? Have there been no new developments over the past 30 years? The Soviet Union will have to be far more open if we are to have confidence in its commitment to a chemical weapons ban.

The statement on the Defence Estimates reaffirms the Government's commitment to maintain the conventional leg of deterrence by providing forces capable of meeting the threat on the modern battlefield. This means committing the resources necessary for that purpose.

The House will need no reminding that the years since this Government came to office have seen an unprecedented increase in the funds devoted to defence. The defence budget has increased by a fifth in real terms over that period. Our conventional forces have taken the lion's share of that increase. If we exclude the cost of our strategic forces, we have spent, in real terms since 1978-79, some £16,000 million more on conventional defence than if spending had continued at 1978-79 levels. In cash terms, 95 per cent. of the increase in the budget between 1978-79 and 1986-87 has gone to improving conventional defence.

Most of the benefits of this huge investment are yet to come. At the time that the statement was published we had announced orders, since 1979, for 55 vessels and 75 combat aircraft for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Earlier, the Secretary of State dealt with some of the lessons of the Falklands and the Government's response to the Select Committee's report. In that report is a distinct reference to the need not now to order three type 23 frigates every year. The decision in relation to that goes back to 1982.

Every Select Committee report since 1982 has made it clear that we need to order three type 23 frigates each year to keep the frigate fleet up to date. What effect will his announcement have on job prospects at Yarrow's and other shipyards in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Younger: There are two answers to that legitimate question. The first is that the size of the Royal Navy frigate fleet remains much the same—about 50 frigates. That has not altered, but what has altered since 1982 is the cycle. The type of frigates that we are building will require less maintenance and will have a longer life. That means that the frigates will be able to perform effectively for longer. That is why the workload in the dockyards has declined. The matter is clear and well documented. It is, in a way, a success if we can manage to run our fleet with lower maintenance costs for the same number of ships.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the design of the type 23 frigate is based largely round the computer assisted command system. As CACS has proved a very expensive failure, costing nearly £500 million, on what basis can my right hon. Friend justify his confidence in the building schedule for type 23 frigates?

Mr. Younger: The computer assisted command system is an important part of the frigate, but it does not affect the building programme, except that the first of the line might have to come into service before the full CACS system is available. It is much more important that we should have an effective system than that we should go ahead too quickly with a system that is not satisfactory. My hon. Friend will be able to speak later about that subject.

I was saying that since 1979 we have placed orders for 55 vessels and 75 combat aircraft for the Royal Navy. Many of the vessels have yet to be delivered. This includes 10 of the 12 frigates ordered, three out of five nuclear-powered fleet submarines and all four Upholder class diesel-electric submarines.

The statement records also the Government's decision a year ago to retain an amphibious capability in the longer term. Additionally, since the statement was published, the Ministry of Defence has ordered a further four Sandown class single role minehunters. We remain committed to a modern, well-balanced and capable surface escort force of about 50 frigates and destroyers, and to this end we have recently invited competitive tenders for up to a further four type 23 Duke class frigates.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Can the Secretary of State give a categorical assurance that he will make a decision on those four tenders judging on price only?

Mr. Younger: We will assess the bids, which I hope will come from a number of different suppliers, with regard to price and the capability of the yards to produce the goods in good time. That is the normal way in which we assess all such bids. The Royal Navy's capabilities are continuing to be enhanced by major programmes to update missile air defence systems, underwater weapons systems and sonars.

Substantial enhancements of the Army's capabilities are also in progress. Equipments ordered since 1979 that remain to be delivered include two out of seven Challenger

[Mr. Younger]

tank regiments, 17 out of 23 APC battalions to be equipped with the new Warrior and Saxon vehicles, 14 out of 26 air defence batteries and all three MLRS regiments. Since the statement went to press, I have been able to announce our intention to order a further 16 battlefield helicopters for the Army, bringing the total ordered to 41, of which 24 have been delivered. These new equipments represent a major advance in 1 British Corps' ability to conduct armoured operations. They will increase the mobility and firepower of the infantry, provide effective protection against a wide range of air threats and substantially improve the range and hitting power of the artillery. 1 BR Corps' capabilities will be further enhanced with the formation next year of a 12th in-theatre armoured regiment, equipped with Challenger, and the re-mechanisation of 6 (Airmobile) Brigade beginning next year. In addition, I am pleased to announce that, following the successful trial of 6 Brigade in its current role, we shall be retaining this important capability by conversion of 24 Infantry Brigade, based at Catterick, to the air-mobile role, starting next year.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Has the right hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to review the TRIGAT programme, which is mentioned in the Defence Statement, in the light of the introduction by the Soviets of reactive armour for their tanks?

Mr. Younger: That is a very relevant consideration in our progress on the TRIGAT programme. We are discussing this matter with our partners and hope to get them together for decisions fairly soon.

The RAF is in the midst of a major modernisation programme. The Tornado programme alone is costing nearly £10 billion—more than the Trident submarines and their weapon systems. It is now two-thirds completed, with some 120 aircraft remaining to be delivered. I was recently able to experience for myself what an outstanding aircraft this is. Other aircraft ordered, which have yet to come into service, include 62 Harrier GR5 ground attack aircraft and 130 Tucano basic trainers.

Manning our modern equipment requires well-trained, well-motivated and highly skilled people. We must provide the pay and conditions of service necessary to recruit and train them. Since 1979 the Government have increased service pay in line with the recommendations of the independent Armed Forces Pay Review Body. As a result, more of our service men are staying on for their full period of engagement than in 1979.

At the same time we are building up the reserves. The total of regular reservists in all three services has increased by 31,000 since 1979, and the volunteers and auxiliary forces have increased by 23,000 over the same period. That is the Army which the Opposition say is suffering from cuts in conventional provision.

I have never pretended to the House that a defence programme on this scale is easy to maintain with resources that are necessarily limited. It never is. We must press on with our efforts to get better value for the money we spend. In this respect, the White Paper highlights progress in three areas. First, there has been progress in continuing to transfer resources from the tail to the teeth. For example, the proportion of service manpower devoted to teeth functions has increased from 60 per cent. in 1981-82 to 68 per cent. now. Civilian staff numbers have been cut by one third since 1979. Secondly, there has been progress through a broad range of initiatives designed to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of our equipment procurement. Like others recently, this year's statement shows the dynamism of the changes we have made in this important aspect. Increased competition and a more commercially minded approach to our dealings with our contractors have produced not just financial savings but improved contract performance. Thirdly, there has been progress through international collaboration. The statement records our commitment to collaboration with allies whenever it is the best way of meeting our requirement and getting value for money.

The ending of our commitment to real growth in the defence budget, which I announced in last year's statement, inevitably means that difficult choices have to be made between relative priorities in our forward plans. What will happen—this year, as every year—is the normal process of taking some items out of the programme and putting in others that are considered to be a higher priority. I shall give the House the same assurance as I have given it before. With good management, prudent planning and, not least, the benefit of substantially increased resources over the past eight years, we can maintain our main defence roles. The very large and continuing programme of improvements which these measures have made possible—some of which I have outlined—gives the lie to those who claim that this country can maintain an effective nuclear deterrent only at the cost of weakening our conventional forces. That simply is not the case.

It is because this Conservative Government have looked carefully at the fundamentals of our security that we have realised that nothing has happened in the world to diminish the need for this country to maintain the central pillars of our defence—pillars which have helped to keep the peace for over 40 years. As the statement makes clear, we will not falter in our search for peace with freedom at a lower level of armaments. But in doing so we will never take risks with this country's security. Now is not the time to abandon a policy which experience has shown to work.

There can be no doubt about this Government's determination to take the measures necessary for our national defence. We have charted a clear and consistent course over the past eight years. Our record has twice been put to the test of the polls and twice been endorsed by the electorate. The Conservative party is now the only party in this country that has a defence policy at all. We shall keep steadily to the course we have charted. The task for our third term will be to build on the considerable achievements of the past eight years.

5.57 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> **"believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987, Cm. 101, and in particular the Government's plans for Trident, are leading to damaging cuts in the United Kingdom's conventional defences, in our contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and in our defence industrial base; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to cancel Trident, which clearly will neither be British nor independent, thereby avoiding a run-down in our non-nuclear defences; welcomes the progress made by the governments of the United States and Soviet Union towards concluding an agreement eliminating all longer range and**

shorter range intermediate nuclear missiles, including Cruise missiles, from Europe; further believes that the obstacles created by the Strategic Defence Initiative can be resolved and that a further agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union for a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic ballistic missiles can be successfully pursued; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to press, within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for the speedy commencement of further negotiations to reduce and eliminate all battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe, such negotiations to take place simultaneously with the proposed negotiations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact on the reduction of conventional forces."

The Secretary of State had some fun at the beginning of his speech. It was almost like a knock-about winding-up speech with the right hon. Gentleman stating the various defence policies of the various Opposition parties. Only towards the end of his speech did he address his mind to the real problem and give the game away. Of course, there will be cuts and priorities must be considered. The defence budget is in decline, as I shall show.

The Secretary of State mentioned the INF agreement at some length. We all hope that that agreement will be reached, despite what happened in Moscow recently. The right hon. Gentleman then said that there might have to be adjustments in NATO's nuclear forces in Europe. During the election the right hon. Gentleman talked about compensations, but last Thursday we discovered in the debate on arms control — which, in the main, was a foreign affairs debate — that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office draftsman had got at the drafting and obviously decided that "compensations" was a bit to hard sounding and that "adjustments" sounded much better. Shall we call them "compensatory adjustments"? What will they be? Will they be cruise missiles on submarines? Will they be cruise missiles on frigates? Will they be F111 bombers with hydrogen bombs at Greenham common and Upper Heyford, as has been suggested? Will they be B1 bombers? Perhaps we can be told what these "compensatory adjustments" will be.

As the Russians apparently are giving up three times as much "power", if I may use that word, in terms of the INF agreement, presumably the Warsaw pact countries are entitled to have three times as many "compensatory adjustments". That will make a mockery of any INF agreement, cause NATO considerable political problems and do damage, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany.

I was slightly surprised that the Secretary of State made no mention of the one area outside the United Kingdom where British troops are engaged in—or at least having to operate in — a war zone. We may have had such assurances from the Foreign Office, but we seek a similar assurance from the Minister of State that there will at least be no change of policy and that the Royal Navy will not accompany shipping further than Bahrain and the southern end of the Gulf. As I understand it, that has been the position for the past seven years.

The situation in the Gulf is much more dangerous now than it was seven years ago when the Royal Navy Armilla patrol started to accompany British merchant ships. I am sure that the Secretary of State is more aware than anyone of the real danger arising from Iranian Silkworm missiles based at Bandar Abbas at the mouth of the Gulf. Royal Navy frigates have to pass within range of those missiles, and although it has been fashionable to view them with contempt on the ground that they are old, or inaccurate, or Chinese, over the past few weeks we have seen what damage they can do. The danger to the Royal Navy is far greater than it was when the original decision to send it to the Gulf was made seven years ago. There is a real danger that we could be dragged in behind American involvement in the Gulf, especially as the Government foolishly agreed to reflag Kuwaiti tankers with the British flag.

That was an unfortunate and serious decision—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] — first, because it increases the responsibility placed on the Royal Navy. The Navy has very limited resources, and the more ships that it has to accompany, the more difficult the task becomes. Secondly, the decision places us, with the Americans, on the side of one of the belligerents in the Gulf. Although Kuwait is not a belligerent, it is certainly not a neutral state. Kuwait is funding, or helping to fund, the so-called reflagged Kuwaiti tankers carrying oil, the sale of which goes to finance the Iraqi war. There is a real danger that we may be viewed as being in the Gulf, not to protect international shipping, but to help the Americans to ensure that Iraq does not lose the war. As we know, the American navy has plenty of power in the Gulf. It has more ships there than the Royal Navy. It has three aircraft carriers and the kind of air cover that the Royal Navy does not have. I am sure the Secretary of State realises that we are in a very dangerous position. The danger is that we may get dragged further in behind the rather grandiose designs and aims of the United States of America.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My right hon. Friend gave an account of the military implications of reflagging. Was he not astounded when, in response to questions on this matter, the Government said that these were commercial matters alone?

Mr. Davies: I think that the word used to describe the arrangements was "administrative". I should have thought that these were serious political matters.

The best that can be said about the White Paper—it is clear from the tenor of his speech that the Secretary of State knows this—is that much of it is out of date and irrelevant. It is based on figures for expenditure agreed almost a year ago in last year's public expenditure review. The Secretary of State did not tell us anything about this year's public expenditure review, although I suppose that he has been on his annual trek to the Star Chamber and knows very well what will happen to him. We shall probably have to wait until next week or the week after before the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us what effect this year's review will have on the defence budget.

As the Secretary of State conceded, the White Paper was written about six months ago when the Government no doubt had both eyes firmly fixed on an early general election. The White Paper was written with the aim of perpetuating the myth — the Secretary of State tried it again today — that the Tory Government could somehow meet all their defence commitments within the resources allocated to them under the White Paper and under public expenditure reviews. Most hon. Members honestly know — just as most members of the armed forces and most of the outside commentators who take these matters seriously know — that the Government have no hope of meeting their defence commitments within their expenditure target. Over the next few years we shall see a substantial rundown in the amount and quality of non-nuclear equipment available to our armed forces.

I thought that one fact was quite clear and could not be concealed, but the Secretary of State sought to deny it.

[Mr. Davies]

Expenditure on defence is to decline by about 5 per cent. in real terms as a consequence of a definite decision by the Government to cut Britain's defences. I should have thought it obvious that if expenditure declines we will have fewer defences. The White Paper mentions a 5 per cent. cut in real terms — that is 5 per cent. after taking into account the Government's prediction of a rise of about 3½ per cent. in the general rate of inflation. If that forecast is wrong — it seems to be on the low side — the defence budget will be affected.

We must also remember something that is loosely called internal defence inflation. I do not know whether the process can be described as inflation as such. It is a shorthand description of the position. Over the years, internal defence inflation has invariably been higher than inflation as measured by the retail price index, the general deflator, or whatever the Treasury cares to call it. If we take into account that fact and the Government's rather optimistic forecast for general inflation, we realise that there is a real danger that defence expenditure will decline by more than 5 per cent. over the next few years.

It should not be forgotten—although the Secretary of State seems to have forgotten it — that on 27 May this year, while the Secretary of State was engaged on other matters in Scotland, his representatives attended a NATO meeting and agreed with all the other NATO countries that the Alliance should revert to the requirement of a 3 per cent. growth in real spending. I do not know what happened to that agreement. Perhaps the Minister or the Secretary of State will tell us whether that commitment remains. Perhaps it has been ditched. Perhaps it was not a commitment at all, but something to try to fool the British electorate. We should be told. There was a meeting and there was an agreement. Does that agreement still stand? With a 5 per cent. decline in spending in real terms, how on earth do the Government propose to meet that NATO commitment?

As the House well knows, the two main items in defence expenditure are the pay and pensions of service personnel and the expenditure on defence equipment. Unless the Government cut service pay — I doubt whether they would want to do that — the decline in defence expenditure will fall almost entirely on the equipment budget, even given that a few savings may be made elsewhere. Between 1981-82 and 1984-85 there was a fall in the amount of expenditure on personnel and manpower and the Ministry of Defence was able to use the sums saved on those items to buy extra equipment. As the Secretary of State knows, that course is no longer available to him. I understand that expenditure on personnel and manpower is beginning to increase again, so the whole burden of the cuts will fall on defence equipment.

Not all areas of equipment expenditure will suffer. Some are sacrosanct. The budget for Trident will not be touched because, as we heard again today, Trident is the Ark of the Covenant for the Government. In the next five years, at a time when the total budget is in decline, expenditure on Trident will increase sharply. I was interested to hear the Secretary of State's version of the great "Rent-a-Trident" war last week. Perhaps he was out of the country at the time, but he was scathing about what took place. I remind him, however, that the revelations came, not from the terrible Labour party or the Russians, but from his own officials at Faslane, where they know about these things. They came from experienced officials at the heart of the system. Those officials knew exactly what the position was, although it may have come as a surprise to the Secretary of State as he was not around at the Ministry of Defence when the famous agreement to save £750 million was negotiated, probably by the then Secretary of State, Sir John Nott.

The present Secretary of State may not have known the details. He may not have read the small print. I shall therefore read out the statement. On Friday 23 October, in an article headed

> "Trident will depend on US base staying open",

The Times defence correspondent, Mr. Michael Evans, gave a verbatim quotation which he had clearly taken down in his notebook of what was said by Ministry of Defence officials at Faslane. It read as follows:

> "The rocket bodies are being shared in a common pool with the United States where they are built. The missiles are American. There will be a mingled stock. We've got to treat them the same way that the Americans will treat them.
>
> We're not having to buy the missiles from the Americans. We're sharing them and"——

this is very important—

> "we're not going to have spare missiles in the UK."

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. The remarks that appeared in that newspaper were wrong. [HON. MEMBERS: "Was the hon. Gentleman there?"] Yes, I was there. The reporters were told authoritatively that the story was wrong before it went to press, but they still chose to print it. We have a free press, so I make no criticism of that, but the right hon. Gentleman should know from experience that the press does not always get these matters right, and he does the defence effort no service whatever by latching on to false press reports.

Mr. Davies: I admire the hon. Gentleman. I have watched him operate over the years. Whenever there is a sticky problem at the Ministry of Defence—I remember one or two during that famous weekend of the Ponting trial—it is always the hon. Gentleman who is put up to clear the confusion and set the record straight. He is a very good soldier, and one of these days he should be rewarded by becoming an official spokesman for the Ministry of Defence rather than an unofficial one. He did a good job on the "Today" programme when he said that the missiles were like calor gas cylinders — we take one in and get another one out. Basically, that is exactly what the officials at Faslane were saying.

Mr. Mates: The programme was "The World at One" — I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman listened to it. I was trying to explain the situation in terms that would be understood by those not conversant with the defence world.

Mr. Rogers: Such as the Secretary of State.

Mr. Mates: No, it was not my right hon. Friend's analogy and I do not know that he would have used it. That is a matter for him. I said that the position was like the calor gas system. One buys a cylinder when one buys the stove. It is one's own property and one can use it as and when one wishes. [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] No one else owns it. When it is empty, one takes it back. One might wait to have it refilled, but that is not very intelligent when one can pick up another one instead. Nothing in my analogy in any way derogates from our possession of the missile. If we get another one back it is still ours to use independently, as the right hon. Gentleman well knows.

Mr. Davies: That is an excellent analogy. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The quotation from Faslane continues:

> "With Polaris we own the missiles and process them in the UK. We're renting the Trident missiles."

I accept that "renting" was perhaps not a good word to describe this unusual arrangement. The quotation continues:

> "We're paying for them but we're renting them, not buying them."

Another official — the hon. Gentleman may claim that that official too was inaccurately reported — said that Britain would be paying towards "the totality" of the Trident B5 missiles to be built by the Americans.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman was not in Faslane and I must get on. I have given way two or three times already.

Nothing could be clearer. What we are buying is access to a common pool of missiles all owned by the United States.

Mr. Mates: No.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech rather than shouting inanely from a sedentary position. He has already had two opportunities, plus "The World at One". One missile will be handed in and another taken out. A missile that has been in an American submarine will be put into a British submarine, and vice versa. We are buying access to a common pool.

The Foreign Secretary tried to retrieve the position in last Thursday's debate, but he only made it worse. The Foreign Office draftsman clearly found it difficult to describe the arrangement without giving the game away. The Foreign Secretary said:

> "We shall continue throughout to own the same number of missiles at all times."

I do not know how one can own a number. I thought that one could only own things. Clearly the draftsman had problems. When the junior Minister, the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), wound up that debate, he characteristically made things even worse when he said:

> "The Americans have discovered that if a rocket has to be fully overhauled it might be just as convenient to replace it with another missile."—[*Official Report*, 22 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 949-1012.]

There we have it. A missile which at one time has been in a British submarine will be put into an American submarine, and vice versa.

This is not a pedantic exercise. The nature of the arrangement is extremely important. The Secretary of State was trying to pretend that the terrible Russians were spreading propaganda to the effect that the missiles were not really British and therefore would be treated like the Pershing 1A in relation to the INF talks. The Secretary of State claims that the Pershing 1A is completely different. In that situation, the West Germans own the missile and the Americans own the warheads. In our case the situation is reversed, but the principle is the same. How on earth can the British missile system, if one may so describe it, be described as a third country system, as was attempted with the Pershing 1A? It is not a third country system. There will be a pool of D5 missiles. They will all end up in the arms negotiations and they may well be treated in the same way as the Pershing 1A in the INF talks.

There is another important question. When asked in what circumstances Trident would be used, the Secretary of State would not be drawn. His predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), however, was fond of describing Trident and Polaris with the chilling phrase, "a weapon of last resort." It is a weapon of last resort, presumably to be used when the Russians are at the Channel ports and Britain will have to use its missiles. In the circumstances, the Americans will not even be engaged in a war in Europe. They will have decided not to commit their vast nuclear arsenal to the defence of Europe. It will be Britain's weapon of last resort. In fact, Trident and Polaris are the very negation of the American nuclear guarantee. They exist — and this is the unsaid fact — because we do not trust the Americans. Whatever we might like to think, Trident will be there because we do not believe in the Americans.

There was a great deal of dust during the election about whether we believed in the American nuclear umbrella and their guarantee. The Secretary of State does not believe in the American nuclear guarantee, and the Prime Minister certainly does not subscribe to the mythical concept of an American nuclear umbrella. Trident is to be introduced because they do not believe in the American guarantee. We do not trust the Americans and we do not believe that they will come to the defence of Europe, so we need a weapon of last resort. That weapon is part of a common pool of American missiles, and one from which the Americans are not prepared to draw in the defence of Europe. If the Government are not concerned about political honesty, at least as a matter of linguistic integrity they should drop the words "British" and "independent" when describing Trident.

I must now return to the more mundane subject of equipment. The Secretary of State is smiling — the subject is obviously on his mind all the time. As he knows, other equipment in the defence budget cannot be touched, such as that subject to contract. Unless the Ministry of Defence breaks a contract, nothing much can be done about that. Some equipment is the subject of joint agreement—such as the Tornado agreement—with other countries, and one reason why people want them is that they are beyond the reach of the Treasury because, politically, it is too much of a problem to touch them.

The pool of equipment is becoming more and more limited and, therefore, the right hon. Gentleman has three options. The first is not to buy any equipment, and he will obviously take that option from time to time. Secondly, he can run beyond its normal life the old equipment that should be replaced. As the report from the Select Committee points out, he is already doing that with the Navy. In that way he can avoid the capital cost of replacement, but he will only increase the revenue cost on his defence budget by trying to maintain clapped out equipment. Thirdly, when he has no other option and has to buy, he will buy from America, either off the shelf or through a few licensing agreements. The Americans, with their vast industry, can afford to produce at lower cash prices. The MOD will save cash from its budget by buying American rather than British. However, because we

[Mr. Davies]

cannot afford to build our own equipment, other losses and damage will be high—for example, to the balance of payments, industry and employment.

The Secretary of State said that there would be no cuts, but recently a leading firm of City stockbrokers specialising in this area said in a circular to its clients that as many as 100,000 jobs could be lost in the defence industries during the next three years because of cuts in the equipment budget.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Was that one of the firms of stockbrokers which, three weeks ago, predicted that the bull market would continue?

Mr. Davies: I believe the market implicitly. I think that it always gets it right. On this occasion it is getting it right again.

The Secretary of State has tried to give the impression —as he would—that there have been fantastic, dramatic increases in defence expenditure since 1979; that there have been a few cuts here and there, but as we have a pool of equipment that does not really matter. I concede, because I cannot do other, that until 1984-85 there was an increase in defence expenditure, but since then there has been a continual decline, and that will continue until the period covered by the last expenditure White Paper of 1989-90.

That decline has been about 5 per cent., but if we exclude expenditure on Trident the decline is 12 per cent. If we simply examine the equipment budget, excluding Trident, the fall is 25 per cent., and for the new equipment budget it is about 35 per cent. Therefore, there is a deliberate policy to cut defence expenditure. We must conclude that, despite all the rhetoric of the election, the Government really are not that interested in defence expenditure. They are concerned, not with non-nuclear defence expenditure, but with nuclear illusions. They are not concerned with providing our armed forces with the reality of modern conventional weapons.

Who will suffer? First, there is always the Navy. I am sure that the House will remember Captain Barker, who, when captain of HMS Endurance, warned against withdrawing that ship from the Falklands patrol. That was during the period of the Sir John Nott cuts. His warnings were ignored, no one listened, and General Galtieri invaded. Captain Barker is now the commanding officer designate of HMS Sheffield. I hope that after this debate he still will be. Recently he said:

> "The Navy has its nose to the grindstone the whole time because we haven't got the tools for the job."

That will get worse. Apparently Ministers are committed to about 50 destroyers and frigates. By next summer the figure could be down to 46.

At one time the Government said that they would order three new type 23 frigates a year, but now they will not do that and have told us why. In paragraph 11 of the Government's response to the fourth report from the Defence Select Committee, "Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign", they state in splendid MOD language:

> "The benchmark of about three frigate orders a year was devised in 1982 and was based on a judgement made at the time concerning factors such as hull life, maintenance support and maintenance cycles. Some of these considerations have since changed, leading to decisions to extend ships lives"—

that is, ships will become older and older and will not be replaced; that is what it means in MOD language—

> "and modify upkeep cycles with the result that it is not now necessary to order three frigates a year in order to maintain a surface fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates."

It will be a very old surface fleet——

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that a very large number of hon. Members are waiting to speak. The Chair will have to take interventions into account. Hon. Members cannot make interventions and speeches.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) for giving way again. Is he aware that in terms of hull age we have almost the youngest Navy of all the major navies in the world? Is he further aware that when we inherited the Navy in 1979 we had young hulls with very few weapons systems?

Mr. Davies: From what the Navy tells me, I know as everyone else knows that the surface fleet faces a future of fewer and fewer and older and older frigates and destroyers

Perhaps the Minister will tell us something about our commitment in the Baltic and to Norway, and especially about the negotiations within NATO on our commitment to the Baltic approaches. I hate to mention Schleswig-Holstein in time of tension and war. We know that the Government are trying to get out of that commitment. Will we still defend Schleswig-Holstein during the next few years?

Then, of course, there is the more expensive, real commitment to Norway. Some people say that it will cost about £1 billion to replace Fearless and Intrepid and to have proper aviation support platforms. I do not know whether the Government have the money for that. There are grave doubts about whether they have. If that commitment goes, not only will we destroy a NATO commitment, but we will say goodbye to the Royal Marines also. I hope that we will be told something about what is happening in respect of landing and support vessels.

There are real questions about European fighter aircraft. We are now told that the RAF budget will not be able to sustain the 260 fighters required to replace the Phantom Interceptor and the Jaguar ground attack aircraft. To do so would cost £6·5 billion. Apparently, the idea now is to have about 120 of them. The West Germans are also having problems. They may scale down the number of aircraft. Obviously the time will come when project development costs are not worth while in terms of the number of aircraft that will be ordered. I hope that the Minister will deny the rumours. One can envisage the Secretary of State going off to the Americans to buy the F18. In cash terms that would be cheaper than going ahead with the project. May we be told that there is no intention to do that? If that occurs, 25,000 British aircraft jobs will immediately be lost.

On procurement, there is the matter of tanks for the Army. I read in *Jane's Defence Weekly* that perhaps we have finished building the British tank. In the 1990s we will need 500 tanks to replace the old Chieftain tanks. Perhaps we will buy the Leopard 2 tank from the Federal Republic or the American M1A tank from the United States. If that is the case, it will be the end of the old Leeds RAF tank factory, which is now in the ownership of Vickers Armstrong. May we be told something about tanks?

A reduction in defence expenditure will not only have a damaging effect on the armed forces but will mean that Britain and NATO will rely more on nuclear weapons and less on conventional forces. In the awful jargon of this business, we will lower the nuclear threshold and bring forward the moment when, if war breaks out in Europe, a decision to use nuclear weapons will have to be taken. The point was put clearly by the Foreign Secretary, who is good on such matters. We remember his speech on SDI. He did it again in a speech in Brussels on 16 March, which was reported in the Foreign Office's house magazine "Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review". The right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

> "Of course we do not want to be faced with a nuclear 'yes or no' choice at the outset of any conflict. So we must continue to work for improvement in our conventional defences in order to raise the nuclear threshold."

Mr. Younger *indicated assent.*

Mr. Davies: It is no good the Secretary of State nodding. He is reducing our conventional defences and nuclear threshold and putting more and more money into nuclear weapons and less and less money into conventional equipment.

Our flexible response is more and more dependent upon nuclear weapons, which means that within seven or eight days NATO would have to decide whether to use nuclear weapons. The weapons that NATO would perhaps want to use first are battlefield weapons — the Secretary of State briefly mentioned Montebello—which are located in the Federal Republic. The unfortunate thing is that their range is so short and their power so great that they will destroy 55,000 British troops. They will be killed, not by the Russians, but by our own forces and our own weapons. That is the enormity of such a ridiculous strategy of flexible response, which states that we must fire off nuclear shells, some with a range of 25 km, in that very part of Germany that we are trying to defend.

In the amendment, we ask — this was mentioned in the debate on the arms control legislation last week — that priority in Europe should be given to multilateral negotiations on battlefield nuclear weapons. Such negotiations should be carried out simultaneously with the talks on conventional weapons, which will start between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries in the spring. The Federal Republic desperately wants simultaneous talks because its territory could be destroyed, but apparently the stumbling block is the British Government, and mainly No. 10. There is some fear about what is described as the denuclearisation of Europe. In fact, such weapons would destroy our own forces. The Russians have much more powerful, longer range weapons.

Mr. Cormack: We have heard that the right hon. Gentleman believes the press rather than the Secretary of State for Defence. We have heard a ragbag of accusations, but we have not heard a policy. From what he has said, do we take it that the Labour party believes in multilateralism, not unilateralism, or does it believe in both, or neither?

Mr. Davies: My party's policy is clearly set out in the official amendments. We make no secret of it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Which amendment?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman was not listening. I referred to the Opposition's official amendment, which has been selected for debate and to which I am speaking. The policy is quite clear. Trident should be cancelled — it does not make any sense—so that we can maintain our conventional defences and raise the nuclear threshold, not lower it. As the amendment states, we wish to see talks to get rid of cruise missiles. We want to see a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic weapons. We do not think that the SDI stumbling block——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No, I shall not give way again. Many hon. Members wish to speak.

The policy is clearly stated in the amendment. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should leave the Chamber for five minutes and read it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No, I shall not give way.

There must be simultaneous negotiations on battlefield weapons. I hope that we can get a better response from the defence team than we received from the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when he tried to deal with the subject last Thursday. The policies are set out in the White Paper. The resources that the Government have devoted to defence expenditure will mean a weakening of Britain's conventional forces and an increased reliance on nuclear weapons. Such a policy makes no military sense and is morally wrong. That is why we call upon the House to support the amendment and to oppose the White Paper.

6.37 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I shall make some remarks about an aspect of the defence budget which is not often debated on the Floor of the House — research and development. It is referred to on one page —page 48—of the White Paper. It is not an inexpensive item; it costs the Ministry of Defence over £2 billion. Indeed, from about February 1987, the subject of research and development has become one of national media interest. There have been leading articles in the heavy newspapers, television programmes and rows in the European Community; Sir George Porter, backed by his serried ranks of scientists, has made complaints, and there is now disagreement about space research. Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would rightly say that that is another subject for debate on another day, but I ask the House to note that there is a distinct and obvious correlation between a civil capability and an ability to supply the military when necessary. That should be obvious to anyone who is not defending a departmental budget.

The moral for the Ministry of Defence is that, if a Ministry wishes to put itself in a position in which it must rely completely on a foreign supplier, the way to go about it is to stand back while a civil capability is allowed to decline and atrophy. That means that a foreign supplier gives the Ministry of Defence the parts when it thinks that it is suitable to supply them, that it transfers the technology when that country thinks it suitable for the recipient to have it, and that exports are made with the leave of the other supplying country and not this country. If that consideration is important — it is up to the Ministry of Defence to say whether it is—it cannot sit or stand idly by while another departmental matter is

[Sir Geoffrey Pattie]

apparently being decided — the question of capability, which is apparently in a departmental box, which is not military, but something else. It would be short-sighted to take that attitude.

I should like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who is the only Secretary of State for Defence during the past eight years with whom I have had any dealings, who, when the chips were down on this question of supporting civil capabilities in research, chose to act on his own sense of commitment and vision, as opposed to taking a narrow departmental brief, which, of course, all Ministers get, and to say that it was not in the interests of the Ministry of Defence to support the European Space Agency because it was a civil matter. I hope that in future the Ministry of Defence will continue to follow its instincts, which should be to support the national capability where one should exist.

From the military research point of view, why on earth do we have military research and development? I think that there is consensus in the House that we all wish to see the proper defence of the United Kingdom. There are no differences in the House on that. Therefore, we need the systems and equipment to make that defence possible. If we are to have the systems and the equipment, we must have the research to achieve them. However, the cost of those systems has been rising in real terms. The Ministry of Defence budget allocation does not appear to be rising in similar real terms. That would appear to call into question before long the actual value of the procurement spend. That means that the research and development budget is likely to get out of phase with the amount of equipment that is being procured. Although collaboration on equipment is becoming more common, collaboration on research between various nations is not yet well established. I should like to see the focus put increasingly on collaboration at the research end, as well as at the procurement equipment end.

The White Paper draws our attention to the fact that the research spend—that is the R—is £401 million, and that the D is probably about £1,800 million, although it is not mentioned specifically. It is important to bear that in mind because the R and D spend of the Ministry of Defence is £2·2 billion and the amount spent on pure research is a relatively small part of that large amount.

The claim is often made in various quarters that the Ministry of Defence research budget acts as what one might call, in aerodynamic terms, a drag factor on the whole of the national economic effort as it pre-empts people and money. It is said that too many high-priced people and expert talents are occupied in defence and it is questioned whether that is right. One must say, prima facie, that there is a considerable drag factor and that a lot of people work in, for example, defence electronics. That is not necessarily wrong. However, the way in which it has been approached in the past, in trying to get a spin-off between the military and civil sectors, which is referred to in, for example, paragraph 518, has been to allow companies such as Defence Technology Enterprises Limited to enter certain establishments, to look around and to find a database, which they now have, of items which can be spun off into the civil sector.

However, I have always taken the view that the real spin-off is at the other end of the process, to go upstream rather than downstream, and to co-operate in the early stages of research programmes, such as the Alvey programme with which the Ministry of Defence has been involved, and in various forms of co-operation such as the pattern recognition programme at Malvern, and the Gallia-Mercia programmes, some of which are referred to in paragraph 519.

I still do not believe that the process has gone anything like far enough. When one considers it for a moment, the fundamental future technologies that involve communications, materials, sensors, lasers and many other areas of activity have civil, as well as military, applications. Therefore, the basic research into those topics should be carried out by the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and the private sector, all of which should be involved at the earliest stages. They should not wait until they see some spin-off from the missile programme or from another military programme. That is useful but not fundamental. It is not the best use that we could make of our resources.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his interesting speech. With his experience at the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry, will he reflect on why it has been so difficult to have joint research projects? Is it anything to do with the United Kingdom's patent law?

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: It could be something to do with our patent law. However, it is more often to do with rather basic human considerations, such as Government Departments or different departments of large companies being disinclined to co-operate with each other. It comes down to something as straightforward as that.

I know that many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate, and in conclusion I urge the House to be aware, on the subject of research and development, of the important agency which exists in the United States and from which we could draw some useful parallels and examples. The Defence Advance Research Projects Agency — DARPA as it is known in the land where acronyms seem absolutely essential — acts as an important centre of seedcorn activity in research on both the civil and military sides. If the Ministry of Defence wishes to avoid some of the pressure that is being put on it at the moment to have the R and D budget reduced, I hope that it will consider putting forward a proposal to the effect that it could act and go beyond paragraph 519 in saying that it will allow some firms from the private sector to go into Malvern and "Isn't that good?". Well, it is good but it could counter-attack by taking the initiative into the private sector by saying that there could be a British research procurement agency to seed all the advanced technologies to which I have referred in both military and civil spheres. We must face the fact that, even though our economy has improved enormously, we cannot afford to duplicate activities in the civil and military areas.

Finally, there must be a strong case for the advanced research that is being carried out in military bases in France, Germany, Italy and Britain being combined. It is ridiculous to have four of the leading European NATO allies reinventing the military wheel in their own countries when we know that the Americans have the great advantage of a unified system, with all the plusses that they can gain from that.

6.48 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) is a great expert on many of today's subjects. Indeed, he is so much an expert that some of us cannot understand why he delivered his speech from the Back Benches, rather than from the Front Bench. I hope that he will excuse me if I do not follow him in discussing such detailed matters. I shall return to the larger themes of the White Paper because it is one of the most squalidly inadequate documents that has ever been presented to the House of Commons.

When one considers the scale of world events, the perils of nuclear armaments — whatever the estimate that is made of them — the intensification of the dangers of war in so many parts of the planet, surely the White Paper should have been applied to most, or at any rate, to some of those issues. I suppose the fact that the White Paper was produced five months ago is some excuse. I do not know whether the Ministry of Defence knew about the timing of the election and produced a White Paper which it believed would be good for the election instead of for our defences. I shall give some illustrations of that.

Of course, the Opposition are glad about the prospective agreement on intermediate nuclear weapons. We want that agreement to be carried through. It is one of the best developments for a long time, and the Opposition welcome it eagerly. The White Paper talks as though that was not the case. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will recall that he accompanied me and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) on a vist to Moscow, where we had lengthy discussions on intermediate weapons. At that time, many countries were becoming extremely anxious about the dangerous build-up of SS20s. We asked the Russians whether they would reduce the number of SS20s, saying, "They are not essential to your security, so would it not be the best solution to abolish them?" The Russians did not say that they would do that, but they said that they would consider substantial reductions in SS20s.

That was the first time that anyone had talked about the zero-zero option in regard to those weapons, but when we returned to London we were attacked viciously by a Foreign Office spokesman. I do not remember who it was, but it was an up-and-coming eager Minister at the Foreign Office who wanted to prove that he could defend any policy at any time with the utmost assurance — the David Mellor of his day, I suppose. The House can see how easily I can keep up with these matters. It may even have been the present Home Secretary. The Minister said that it was absurd to return from Moscow talking about a zero-zero option. He said that it was an idealistic and hopeless proposition, and we were denounced in the usual fashion of the Foreign Office.

Two or three weeks later, President Reagan went on television in the United States saying that he favoured the zero-zero option. Immediately, I went on to "The World at One"—the only programme I could go on—and said that we had welcomed it in Moscow, we welcomed it from Washington and we wanted to see it in operation. Lo and behold, 24 hours after President Reagan had said that it was all right, the Foreign Office said that it was all right. That is an illustration of how we can make progress by the most extraordinary routes.

The White Paper is a shameful and shocking document. I cannot cover all of it in the time available, but I believe that no such document should have been presented to the House of Commons. One part of it, entitled "70 Years On: A Country or A Cause", is printed on special pink paper, no doubt to tell us that it should not be taken too seriously. It purports to be a history of the Soviet Union and our relations with it during the past 70 years. It is a hangover from the time when the previous Secretary of State for Defence set up a department of Conservative Central Office in the Ministry — paid for by the taxpayer — to conduct a campaign against the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. I suppose that the people who drew up those documents were responsible for this potted history of our relations with the Soviet Union since the Russian revolution. The document states:

> "Russia has always been a difficult country for the West to understand. 'Secrecy presides over everything'."

Perhaps the former Secretary of State for Defence wrote that paragraph.

There are many more columns, and I looked through them carefully for any reference to the time when we were allies of the Soviet Union. After all, it was an important period in the history of the Soviet Union. First, I thought that it had been omitted, but that would not have been fair. At the fag end of a paragraph, it states:

> "In more recent times, Western intervention during the Russian civil war and, later, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, with its appalling toll of 20 million Soviet dead, reinforced the Soviet obsession."

This is supposed to be a serious document presented to the nation. What is this Soviet obsession? Invasion was a bit more than an obsession; it happened several times in Soviet history. Suppose that Soviet historians wrote about the British obsesssion with the Channel. Suppose that they asked why we had this obsesion that the Channel should be defended. They would be derided. This section is supposed to be the background to the defence White Paper, but no one except the Secretary of State for Defence could have written it, because no civil servant would dare to put his name to such a document.

Let us go on to some of the so-called constructive parts of the document. The Secretary of State mentioned his idea of flexible response. When he was asked about it soon after his appointment, his flexible response was always to say that the central feature of the Government's nuclear strategy was the reliance on a flexible response. The White Paper states:

> "So NATO evolved in the 1960s a new strategy of 'flexible response'; and this remains its strategy today."

Is that true? Does our nuclear defence strategy remain one of flexible response even on the eve of attaining the abolition of intermediate nuclear weapons? Do the Government still rely on flexible response? Flexible response means the readiness to use nuclear weapons first. It is a scandal that we should be presented with a document saying that we still rely on the idea of using nuclear weapons first when we are on the eve of a major agreement which will abolish that class of weapons altogether.

The document fails to deal with many other immediate problems. It does not mention the non-proliferation treaty agreements. Apparently neither the Ministry of Defence nor the Foreign Office cares much about them. The document, which sets out the thinking behind the Government's defence strategy, ends with a paeon of support for nuclear weapons, as though they were the only

[Mr. Michael Foot]

ones on which we could rely. But under the non-proliferation treaty, which Britain signed, we are committed to abolishing nuclear weapons. We are not committed to doing it within months or years, but to doing it as soon as possible. The treaty talks about

> "declaring their intention to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament."

Most of the declarations in this defence White Paper and most of the conclusions at the end of each section are in direct conflict with the obligations of Her Majesty's Government under the non-proliferation treaty agreement which binds the British Government to do everything in their power to get rid of nuclear weapons. The Government are in breach of that obligation. How do they believe that they will be able to persuade other nations to join in the non-proliferation treaty agreement?

The other day I read in the papers that President Reagan had had talks with the Indian Prime Minister. He had had the nerve to say that he hoped that India would carry out its allegiance to the non-proliferation treaty on the Indian sub-continent. That matter must have been raised because the Indian Prime Minister asked the President what he was doing about his relations with Pakistan. Of course there is a great danger that great areas of Asia will be thrust into nuclear competition. Indeed, under the principles of this White Paper there is no reason why they should not. The Government's proposition is that the safest thing that one can do is to have nuclear weapons if one can get them. If that applies to us, it applies to other countries too.

I say to the Government and the country that one of the major propositions for ensuring the future safety of this country is that the non-proliferation treaty should be made a reality. However, instead of any mention of that treaty in the defence White Paper it has been utterly excluded. We had a debate on such matters last week and I am sorry that I could not be present to hear the Foreign Secretary. However, I followed that debate carefully. At the beginning of my speech I said that the world may be in the most delicate and dangerous position of its post-1945 history. That also means it is the most dangerous moment in the history of the world because these nuclear weapons have a destructive character beyond anything that the world has conceived before.

The Foreign Secretary and the Government, as shown by this White Paper, are apparently content to base their case, almost entirely, on what was said by Winston Churchill when he went to the United States Congress in 1952. His speech has been quoted by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and it also appears at the beginning of the White Paper. Indeed, it is almost a test of the Government's whole policy. In 1952 Winston Churchill told the United States Congress:

> "Be careful above all things not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure, and more than sure, that other means of preserving peace are in your hands".

That sounds reasonable. It sounded more than reasonable in 1952 when the world was only equipping itself with atomic weapons—though they were horrific enough. In my opinion, it would have been better in 1951 and 1952 if Mr. Churchill — a man whose word was greatly respected throughout the world — had used all his influence to try to prevent the arms race — atomic or hydrogen—from ever getting under way.

At that time I believe that there should have been a much greater effort to try to secure such agreement. However, I believe that the attempts made at such an agreement were largely a fake. I believe that anyone who looks at the facts and figures of the Baruch plan will come to that conclusion.

Winston Churchill did not only say what the Government were prepared to do—he was a much wiser old man than that. Very often he was inconsistent as people may be when facing new situations. He did not always say, "I must say exactly what I said before". He changed party allegiance on quite a number of occasions. I happened to be in the House, as were some of my hon. Friends including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), when Winston Churchill made pretty well the last speech he was to make to the House on the hydrogen bomb. Perhaps he did not draw a sharp distinction, but he made a major decision in his thought between atomic development and the hydrogen bomb. He talked as if the development of the hydrogen bomb was something beyond any previous reckoning and that statesmen of the world should try new methods to deal with it.

Therefore, when Mr. Churchill had the opportunity his last words to this House were not to repeat the statement which the Foreign Secretary repeated, and which is also the text of the defence White Paper. He made an intervention in the famous H bomb debate in which he tried to tell the House and the world that they were facing a new situation. He tried to do that especially because he said that great and hopeful changes were taking place in the Soviet Union. Nobody could accuse Winston Churchill of being a Communist spy or something of that sort, but he did not under-estimate the changes. After the death of Stalin and the arrival of Malenkov and others in power he said that it was one of the great moments in history when we should be seeking to get a real detente —a detente which did not merely lessen the tension, but which dealt with the fundamental question of the nature of the weapons.

Winston Churchill came to the House and had to acknowledge how he had been thwarted in going ahead with his plans for discussions with the Soviet leaders. I hesitate to use the language that Winston Churchill used — he used it not in the House of Commons, but elsewhere. He put the blame primarily on the United States, but also on the Foreign Office, for preventing the discussions that he had wanted with the Soviet Union at that critical moment.

He was eager for a meeting in Moscow, but he said that his plans had been "bitched up"—those were the words he used — by the Foreign Office and the United States President of the time. Perhaps the present Foreign Secretary knows of some other occasions that have been bitched up by the intervention of the Prime Minister and the United States President, but that is another question.

After the debate, having heard what sane and sensible people from all sides of the House had been saying about the menace of the nuclear arms race, he went back and told his doctor, who recorded the conversation, that he was furious at being prevented from carrying through the negotiations for detente which he had prescribed and which he thought were the right way to proceed. He went on to say — it is not exactly the document that is presented to us in the White Paper, and if the Government want to have Churchill up to date they had better put this quote on the head of their next White Paper:

that is Russia if he had been allowed to go and if his plans had not been bitched up by the Foreign Office and the American President.

> "It might have meant a real UNO, with Russia working with the rest for the good of Europe. We would have promised them that no more atomic bombs would be made, no more research into their manufacture. Those already made would be locked away. They would have had at their disposal much of the money now spent on armaments to provide better conditions for the Russian people. I trust the opportunity may not slip away."

That is what Churchill said about the beginnings of the hydrogen bomb age and, of course, that is what any sensible man or woman should be saying about the present situation.

Tragically the opportunities of 1951-53 after the death of Stalin were cast aside. I am not saying that responsibility rested only with Western statesmen. I have no doubt that it also rested with Soviet statesmen. There were other opportunities such as when Mr. Khrushchev came into power. I am not saying that the entire responsibility for the destruction of that opportunity rested with Western statesmen, but in my judgment most of it did. I believe that that belief is shared by any who apply their minds to that opportunity.

In some respects we have been given a greater opportunity than ever before. So, are we to destroy the possibility of real detente with the new Soviet leadership just as we cast away the chance after Stalin's death and when Khrushchev was the General Secretary in charge of Soviet operations? Will we cast it away again now? I trust not. I trust that the Foreign Secretary will not come to us and say, "Well, again it is the Russians who are causing all the trouble." I want to see not merely the INF agreement agreed, as we all do, but a great big cut in strategic weapons. We want the conditions that can make that possible and we want to carry through our signed obligations under the non-proliferation treaty agreement.

I want all those things to be carried through, and I believe that we in this country could play a major part in securing that, just as Winston Churchill tried to in 1953, although on that occasion he was blocked. What is the blockage today? It is star wars. The Prime Minister can do anything — she does not take any account of these matters—but the Foreign Secretary can hardly come to the House and say, "These wicked Russians are imposing a condition about star wars", because the Foreign Secretary himself said that the star war speech by Reagan was nonsense. He tore it to tatters before the Prime Minister got at him. However, it is still on the record and makes good reading. I have no doubt that it has been translated into Russian. I dare say that when Mr. Gorbachev has the chance to spell out his views, he will spell them out in terms not so different from those which the British Foreign Secretary, in his flash of independence, used when he was outlining a way in which we could proceed.

I believe that we could achieve the most momentous changes in the prospect for our world. We could set behind us the whole of the nuclear arms race. We have a better chance of agreement than ever before. But if we are to secure it we must tear to tatters this wretched little defence White Paper that has been presented to us today because it does not deal with any of those problems. It is a shame and a scandal that it should ever have been presented to the House of Commons.

7.13 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): You must excuse me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not being able to follow the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in such a vintage and distinguished parliamentary style. The content of my speech will be a little different, but it is a special honour to succeed the right hon. Gentleman. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to speak in the debate, the subject matter of which has closely affected so many generations in Portsmouth and which continues to be no less relevant today.

My first duty is to refer to my predecessor, Mr. Michael Hancock, who held the seat for three years as a result of a by-election brought about by the death of Mr. Bonner Pink, whom Members of the House will remember with respect. My predecessor, Mr. Hancock, represented the interests of his constituents to the best of his ability and to the limits of what it was possible for one man to do. He continues to serve as a Portsmouth city councillor and as a Hampshire county councillor. I relieved him of only one of his jobs. He can rest assured that I have no designs on the other two. This year Portsmouth was host to the Social Democratic party conference, bang in the middle of my constituency. Particularly if the SDP can guarantee another like the previous one, it is welcome to come every year.

I shall not stretch the patience of the House by giving a detailed description of such a well-known and historic constituency as mine, because Portsmouth, as the home of the Royal Navy, has for so many centuries played such a conspicuous part in peace and war—since at least the reign of Henry VII. I represent the southern half of the city, including the whole of Southsea. It stretches between Eastney with its fine Royal Marines barracks to old Portsmouth, past the Hard, which will be well known to many hon. Members, to the naval dockyard and the harbour. The heritage area grows more interesting as the years go by, with the latest addition of HMS Warrior, a brilliantly restored symbol of the Victorian Royal Navy. Let no one sneer at the jobs created by tourism in the wake of the increasing attractions in my constituency.

Nobody could live in Portsmouth, as I do, or represent the people of Portsmouth for very long, without being immensely and genuinely impressed by the sheer dedication to duty and quality of those serving in the Royal Navy, including the Royal Marines. They enrich beyond measure the life of the city and any threats to their future send shock waves through the population.

I should like to raise three specific matters—first, the relatively new arrangements in the dockyard, which is home base for more than 30 ships. Few people realise how many are still employed there. Apart from the 600 who look after the stores, and the 600 for the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service, the repair and maintenance organisation employing nearly 3,000 people has found new confidence. The flexible arrangements negotiated with the trade unions mean, as I saw for myself on a recent visit, that the naval base people in green overalls work alongside the service men in blue overalls who work alongside private contractors in white overalls. If one speaks to the captain of any ship that docks there—already I have spoken with many—one hears praise for the service that they receive from the naval base and for the quality of the work.

[Mr. David Martin]

Ship repair and maintenance for both naval and civilian purposes remains a difficult matter for guarantees in particular, but I should like the work force to be publicly assured that, for the foreseeable future, the Government's express commitment to a modern, capable escort force of about 50 frigates and destroyers, the mix of new orders and the extension of ships' lives that that entails, includes a leading future for the present arrangements at the Portsmouth naval base. I should like an assurance that the work force will be treated with frankness and kept well informed at regular intervals of what is expected of it, so that rumours that sap morale can never gain ground.

The second specific matter that I should like to raise is about Royal Navy numbers and sea-going commitments. It is well known—the Government make no secret of it—that reductions in uniformed strength of the Royal Navy since 1981 have led to some pressure on manpower. Is it not time for Wrens to have an opportunity to serve at sea? It should at least be part of the training. Let that be a goal for the 1990s. It would help with numbers and please a great many people.

The third and final matter that I should like to raise is the Royal Marines barracks at Eastney. Debates on the Defence Estimates are principally about money, or resources as they are delicately called. It is common knowledge that there is money to be raised from the redundant service property at Eastney. I am sure that I do not need to remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who recently visited there, of the special affection that the people of Portsmouth have for the Royal Marines presence and in particular the Royal Marines band based at Eastney barracks. This year it is celebrating its 125th birthday. At 9 o'clock on Radio 4, Angela Rippon is introducing a programme that is helping to publicise that fact. Quite simply, it must remain. Also, there should be as wide a Royal Marines presence as possible, including facilities for cadets. It might be inconvenient, but the cadets are important. People have special affection for them, and there are opportunities at present for them in those barracks.

It is intended to preserve the finest buildings, including the magnificent Royal Marines museum, which I recommend anyone to visit. In addition, it would be sad for any part of the frontage to the sea, including the parade ground, to be developed. It should remain open space, and, what is more, a covenant should be included in any sale so that it can be preserved as such.

If one continues on a trip along the sea front—hon. Members are certainly coming on a trip with me now—one sees the naval playing fields, which are adjacent to the barracks. Although the playing fields are a separate issue, when they are sold there should be sensible provision for open space and recreation, particularly against the sea front. Future development at Eastney must take account of the strength of feeling among the people of Portsmouth about the tradition of the service's presence and the importance of open space in an area that is not too well provided with it. The Ministry of Defence has a tremendous opportunity at all times to contribute to the qualities I have mentioned.

While I am in this House I hope that I shall always be ready to take advice as well as to give it. I have taken the advice of the Duke of Wellington to a maiden speaker, which was to say what one has to say, not to quote Latin and to sit down. That is precisely what I have done, what I have refrained from doing and shall now do.

7.21 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I congratulate the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on an eloquent maiden speech, and I am sure that all hon. Members wish to say how much we enjoyed it, and the way in which the hon. Gentleman displayed his knowledge of the defence issues that affect his constituency. I also thank him for the kind tribute he paid to his predecessor, Mike Hancock. Mike Hancock's work at two council levels shows that he has great commitment to that area. I am sure that the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South would be the first to accept that, while he walked away with the victor's laurels, Mike Hancock gave him a good run for his money.

The Secretary of State for Defence showed in his speech that he was a reader of *Liberal News*, but it would appear that he is a selective reader. So that these matters do not remain on the record and get used by Conservative Central office, it is necessary to correct the record. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is a democrat and as such will appreciate that, when a party is being set up on the basis of party membership democracy, it is not right to foist policies on it before the party has ever met. What I said in the report—the Minister did not accept this—was that we should agree on principles; we shall not be a new party without principles—far from it. As an avid reader of *Liberal News*, the Secretary of State can see those principles well set out in the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal party, which was duly reported in the edition of the week following the one from which the Secretary of State quoted.

Before I return to two key issues that have already been raised in the debate—the question of Trident and the costs of the defence budget—I wish to raise two matters that I know have been giving concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. First, there is the issue of low flying aircraft. The fact that there have been a number of incidents—indeed, tragically, fatal accidents—during the summer months has led to grave concern being expressed, not least by those in areas in which there is a concentration of aircraft flying at very low altitudes.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister should take on board the necessity to review low-flying procedures in this country at the present time? In particular, he should ban aircraft from flying at 100 ft or below in this country and have it done in Canada and the Falklands, where the facilities are available.

Mr. Wallace: Although the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is not present, I know that he has given that matter some thought—he has had many representations on it—and I am sure he will have noted my hon. Friend's point, with which I entirely concur.

The second matter concerns the incidents—reported in the press—of new recruits to the services being brutally treated in many ways. I do not expect the Minister to refer to cases that have come to court and been dealt with by courts martial, but as one who was born and brought up in the recruitment area of the King's Own

Scottish Borderers, I may say that it was a matter of dismay to me that that fine regiment with its fine traditions should have had its reputation tarnished in such a way. I am sure that it is not the only regiment in which such incidents happen, and I hope we shall hear, tonight or tomorrow, what steps have been taken by the Ministry of Defence to root out such activities from our armed forces.

An issue that was dealt with in last Thursday's debate is that of the extent to which our so-called independent deterrent is independent. In that debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) set out the reasons that might conceivably be given for supporting an independent deterrent. The Liberal party has always rejected the deterrent as a purely national status symbol, and to adopt one on those grounds can lead to proliferation on a massive scale.

As the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has already said, the underlying reason for an independent deterrent is that we cannot depend on the United States' guarantee. Although Ministers will never publicly admit it, one often finds even people that one could categorise as pro-Atlantists who will privately admit that it is that niggling fear at the back of their minds that causes them to want an independent deterrent. In recent years, that fear has been strengthened by the United States, which has adopted an outlook that is more Pacific than Atlantic. As we saw last year, President Reagan went to Reykjavik and almost reached agreement wth the Soviet Union on strategic nuclear weapons without, apparently, consulting his European and NATO allies beforehand. If that is the case, we are entitled to ask how independent the deterrent is.

The issue of the missile maintenance is clearly addressed in the Defence Estimates. Page 38 refers to

"the decision to process missiles at King's Bay, Georgia."

What came as a surprise to many last week was the fact that there was not going to be any corporeal missile that one could call the British deterrent. There was to be a pooling arrangement that raised questions about the extent to which we were to be technically independent if we were still to be politically independent.

In an earlier intervention during the Secretary of State's speech, I raised the matter of the report earlier this year by the Comptroller and Auditor General as touching the issue of whether or not the warheads will be entirely British-made and independent. The Secretary of State replied, clearly and unequivocally, that they would be British. That does not square with what the Auditor has said. Page 18 of the report states that there are

"four major areas: development, production, special (ie fissile) materials and capital items, although the last item accounts for only five per cent of the nuclear programme expenditure. Most of the development and production expenditure is incurred in the United States under the arrangements described in paragraphs 4·1 to 4·10". One assumes that there was close liaison when compiling that report with the Ministry of Defence; if so, it is a matter of concern to the House that a report from such a respected authority should make references that have been wholly denied by the Secretary of State. If we cannot have an explanation from the Minister in this debate as to why such a misunderstanding has taken place, I am sure that the Public Accounts Select Committee will devote its attention to the matter when it considers the report. Nevertheless, it all adds to uncertainty about how independent or dependent the deterrent is. If the essential ingredient of deterrence is to sow seeds of confusion and uncertainty in the minds of a possible aggressor, it seems to undermine the concept of defence if there is uncertainty and doubt in our own minds. So the more the status of the missiles and warheads can be clarified and cleared up the better."

The subject of costs and the defence budget was explored at some length by the right hon. Member for Llanelli, but I make no apology for returning to the subject. It is at the heart of these Defence Estimates, and what they contain is important to the long-term defence planning of our country. The Secretary of State said that he regretted that there was no Select Committee this year to give useful guidance to our debate. I share his regret, although perhaps if the right hon. Gentleman had been frank he would have used the word "relief" too, because in recent years the Select Committee on Defence has not minced its words about the decline of the defence budget in real terms. One assumes that it might well have done so again on this occasion.

Let us, however, give credit where it is due; a 3 per cent. per annum real increase in expenditure between 1979 and 1984 was an achievement by the Government, and perhaps one for which they have not received sufficient credit from their NATO allies. Now, however, we are in a period in which spending has been in decline, and that decline will apparently continue. The trend is downwards and there are no indications that it will be reversed. There are two main components, running costs and equipment. Service pay is a running cost. The Government say that they want to maintain competitive levels of pay and to their credit they have traditionally implemented in full the independent review body awards. Those awards will almost certainly continue at a level above the rate of inflation. Therefore, there may well be a real increase in costs that is not taken into account in the decrease in the budget as a whole.

One cannot get away from pensions and, because of the increases in pay over the last seven or eight years, pensions are bound to increase. The cost of the Meteorological Office is another running cost. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and, in the light of recent events, we are unlikely to see many economies being made there. Fuel is an important factor. Obviously, savings have been made as a result of the reduction in the price of oil and, while it is difficult to predict, a further fall in the price of oil seems unlikely. If anything, the price is edging up again. What one sometimes suspects, when one sees the amount in the budget allocated to fuel decreasing, is that training and exercises are being curtailed. That can only lead to a fall in morale.

The Defence Estimates say that there is concern about officers voluntarily leaving the service. The Estimates say that in general it is not critical. When a Government report says that in general it is not critical, one suspects that in certain particulars it is getting quite near to being critical. That is an aspect of the rundown in the budget beginning to affect morale, and it shows that certain training and exercise opportunities are being cut.

If we cannot make any savings on running costs, that inevitably means that the burden of the decrease in real terms will inevitably fall on the equipment budget. Regrettably, the Select Committee on Defence has not been in operation. I pay tribute to the work done by Mr. Malcolm Chalmers of the university of Bradford. He carried out a useful piece of work on a detailed breakdown of the analysis of the budget. He estimates that total spending on new equipment will fall by 25 per cent. in real terms between 1984-85 and 1989-90. If one excludes from

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that the amount being spent on Trident, that decrease in real terms is nearer 35 per cent. That must have serious consequences for our air, land and sea defence systems.

What is the Government's response to that? Of course one can tinker at the edges and, as the Secretary of State for Defence says, one can try some prudent planning. The danger there is that, if one takes ad hoc decisions, one can take the wrong decisions, and decisions made out of necessity rather than as a result of some strategic forethought are not always necessarily the right decisions. There are other ways of trying to make savings. Common procurement, especially along with our European allies in NATO, has long been advocated by the Liberal party and savings could be made there. It has been suggested in some places that we should shop around. One suggestion is that rather than buy the European fighter aircraft we could buy American options.

These are important decisions that must be made and it is better that they are made with some idea of principle behind them, because if we find that we are buying increasingly from abroad it raises important questions about the kind of military industrial base that we want at home. That should be determined after some thought and not by the consequence at some later date of a series of ad hoc decisions.

The right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) made an important contribution to the debate when he spoke about research and development. Significantly, he said that research and development is getting out of phase with production. If one extrapolates current trends, one sees that it is not impossible that we could reach the stage at which more is spent on research and development than on producing the equipment that results from R and D. What company will maintain a high research and development budget if it does not get follow-on orders?

Some possible options have been canvassed. What is the future for our surface fleet? Will it be about 50 or will it go down to 40? Will the profile of the fleet have to change as ships are kept in service longer in order to put off the evil day when we will have to order more? Will there be a reduction in the number of orders for the European fighter aircraft? What should be the balance between the surface fleet and the submarine fleet? What should be our commitment out of area in places such as Belize, and what is our future in places such as the Falklands? What will happen if we have to meet difficulties that raise themselves in the Gulf?

The time has come to take a step back and work out exactly our commitment to NATO. Will we spread the jam thinly over a large number of options or focus resources in areas of expertise? If we do not work that out soon, the Secretary of State may get boxed in. We all know about his calm and nonchalant manner. It is the manner that he used time and time again when he told Scottish Members that it was totally impossible to have an independent pay review for teachers. However, two months after demitting office at the Scottish Office he saw his successor managing to do precisely that. If he looks for a pretext, he will find one.

We hope that, in the coming months, an INF agreement will be concluded. If we eliminate intermediate nuclear weapons from Europe, that will provide an opportunity for reassessment. One expects that that will be a reassessment of strategy and will take into account not least the balance between conventional forces. Therefore, the Secretary of State has a pretext that will lose him little politically. The newspaper columns would chide him for a reassessment that was too late, but would say that he had done the right thing. If he announced it in the House, Opposition Members would have something of a field day and would crow and say that we told him so. I have never found the expression, "I told you so," a satisfying or telling political line. It is time the Secretary of State grasped the nettle, and he should do it sooner rather than later.

7.36 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): It is a particular pleasure for me to be the first on the Conservative Benches to congratulate my hon. Friend and political neighbour the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on a quite excellent maiden speech. Not only has he done the world a service by returning that seat to its proper control, where it will long remain, I trust, but the House will have noted from what he said that he had already done his homework. He spoke with knowledge and authority about the major concern in his constituency, the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines. I am sure we look forward to hearing him contribute to many of our future defence debates.

As my hon. Friend said, it is a tradition of the House that one is relatively non-controversial in a maiden speech. Before we acquit him entirely of any charge that he might have breached that tradition, we had better take the blood pressure of the Admiralty Board tomorrow when it reads that he wants to put Wrens on board Her Majesty's ships. That does not quite come into the category of a non-controversial remark, but we will let that pass.

The motion relates to four reports of the former Select Committee of Defence as relevant subjects for debate. As I had the honour of chairing that Committee during the last months of the last Parliament, I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I relate one or two remarks to those reports. First, I shall deal with the Trident report, which is very short and to the point. The reply from the Government was even shorter and to the point because having looked, as we do every year, we found — not going into the merits of the decision that was discussed in a very full report some years ago—that the programme is on course, on time and on schedule and that all is well.

I had an exchange with the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). I am sorry that he is not in his place because I would rather address my remarks to his face. I am grateful to him for his remarks about me. It is impossible not to regard him with a certain affection when, with his Welsh flair and fluency, he reconciles the irreconcilable among the various defence policies of his party. He balances the imbalanceable in trying to walk this tightrope, as any official defence spokesman for the Labour party has to do, because it is not those on the Benches opposite him who will be getting at him but his hon. Friends behind him. They are by far the greater danger to his position.

The only problem is that the right hon. Gentleman gets carried away with his fluency and is sometimes in danger of believing what he says. There is one tremendous flaw in his argument. He is completely obsessed with Trident and its effect on conventional defence. He is so obsessed that it clouds his judgment about what we are doing in terms of conventional defence. I shall quote one short remark from our Trident report because it might have been written for him. I am sure that he did us the honour of reading it but, unfortunately, he has not paid attention to it. I think that the Minister has accepted what we said. The report reads:

> "The pressure on the defence budget has continued to grow, and the proportion devoted to equipment has been further squeezed as we anticipated in 1985. This might have been expected to increase the particular burdens imposed by Trident."

We put the next section in heavy black ink especially for the right hon. Member for Llanelli:

> "However, the decline in Trident costs means that the changes more or less cancel each other out and the expected impact on the defence budget is very similar to the position in 1985."

Therefore, the right hon. Member for Llanelli is wrong when he says that the increasing Trident costs are having an ever greater effect on the conventional budget. That is not the case. In fact, the cost is slightly cheaper in relative terms because of exchange rates, arrangements made about servicing the missiles and other factors. If the right hon. Gentleman did his homework, he would find us listening to his arguments with more care and attention.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the dissolution of Parliament less than a fortnight after the publication of the statement in May meant that the Defence Committee could not carry out its usual survey of this year's White Paper. Those annual examinations have steadily increased in scope and detail over the years and I am grateful for what the Secretary of State said about the efforts of the Committee. The Committee has noticed over the years that the Ministry of Defence has co-operated admirably and increasingly in supplying it with a great deal of detailed evidence in a short time. However, we were able to put before the House just before the Dissolution a substantial report on the implementation of the lessons of the Falklands campaign. It covers almost every aspect of British conventional capability. The Government's reply to the report is also before the House. That report is one of four published by the Committee.

When the election was called the Committee found itself considerably over-stretched, and I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Committee for the immense amount of work done to get the reports agreed and published. That was not an easy matter. I should like to thank the Clerks and advisers who worked all hours to produce what I hope the House will think is a considerable volume of useful work.

We have no report on this year's statement, but we can look back to the report we produced a year ago. We said then, with the sense of warning that was contained first in our report on the consequences of giving up the 3 per cent. real increase, that

> "management of the budget and improved efficiency alone will not avoid consequent cuts or delays, particularly on equipment."

We said that

> "there is a risk of an adverse effect on operational capability, but not in itself amounting to the ending of a major role or commitment."

We also said that

> "any further economies will have a direct effect on capability."

Had we been reporting again, we would not have found cause to change our warnings.

However, we have always tried to approach financial problems, not simply by seeking increased resources—although that would ease a number of the difficult choices that the Secretary of State is constantly telling us he faces—but by seeking a matching of commitments to resources. We carried out an inquiry into expenditure and policy in each Session of the last Parliament. In each inquiry we formed the view that there was a mismatch between commitments and resources. The Ministry of Defence's traditional ways of dealing with that—salami slicing and "managing" the budget — are, I regret, still much in evidence. That way of managing the budget can lead to a gradual degradation of capability, to the point where we may still be doing everything, but not very well. The Falklands report, which is relevant to the debate, identified some danger areas which we observed in our inquiry earlier this year.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely, but I am having a wee bit of difficulty in finding exactly where he parts company with my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) because this is similar to the line of argument he was using. He said that because of the cuts and the impact of other items on the budget the items now being dwelt on by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) would be in danger. I do not see how far the hon. Gentleman is away from my right hon. Friend in the conclusions he is drawing.

Mr. Mates: I am a mile away from the right hon. Gentleman when we are talking about all of this being the fault of Trident. The right hon. Gentleman identified certain problems, and I am certain that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would not deny that the problems and challenges are there. However, unlike the right hon. Member for Llanelli, I may have something to say about one or two solutions. We heard nothing about that from the right hon. Gentleman.

The management of the defence budget by overcoming temporary difficulties, moving expenditure to the right and sacrificing long-term planning certainly for short-term financial expediency is always more expensive in the long run. A warship builder is one of many who will confirm that, whether in the context of frigate ordering or past choices such as shortening and then lengthening the type 42 destroyers, "management" always makes small savings at the margins but in the end the overall cost goes up. The small savings one can make year by year in allowances, track mileage and live firing practice, which are needed for fine tuning, have an impact on training and readiness and we need to watch that closely so that there is no overall degradation.

I shall now deal with expenditure on major defence projects and accountability to the House. We have always had difficulty in scrutinising defence expenditure and reconciling accountability and security. For some years, the Defence Committee has received the major projects statement, which is issued to the Public Accounts Committee. That lists projects costing more than £250 million. The Committee found that the threshold was far too high for its purposes and other characteristics of the statement meant that it was inadequate for the sort of scrutiny that the Defence Committee wanted to exercise.

In our first report of the previous Session we proposed a much more detailed system with much lower thresholds and a great deal more information. We were delighted that the Secretary of State accepted our proposals almost in their entirety. The first defence equipment project report will be submitted to the new Defence Committee between

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April and June next year. I hope that the House will think that that is another step in the growing willingness in the Ministry of Defence to submit its plans and accountability to the Defence Committee.

Having said that, I shall make one or two brief remarks on my own account. The Committee does not exist, but there are some things I should say as someone who keeps an eye on defence matters. I have mentioned the increasing difficulty, admitted by the Ministry of Defence, in matching commitments with resources. In various debates in the past we have heard about the difficulty of trying to reduce commitments which, on occasions, tend to grow. When we made the initial plan five years ago the Falklands had not happened. That is a commitment we took up and keep, quite rightly, but it is an additional strain. Only a year ago the Armilla patrol consisted of two destroyers or frigates and one support ship. It is now considerably larger, one hopes temporarily. However, the strain increases.

Against that background is the Government's decision to allow real defence expenditure to fall slightly. That is tenable for the moment because of the tremendous efforts, which go unacknowledged by the Labour party, during those six years of real increase to bring the equipment up to date and increase it and to improve morale, pay and other things. That was a magnificent achievement by the Government and, therefore, we can take a short breathing space. However, now may be the moment to warn, as the Committee did last year, that the breathing space can only be short, otherwise the mismatch between commitment and resources is bound to grow. One can manage some of that by greater efficiency and better procurement. That is happening now but only at the margins.

What concerns me is that there is no sign that the Government, not the Ministry, have taken a strategic view on what must be put into our defence resources in the next four or five years. It is time that the Government did that, otherwise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to tell us, honest as he always is, that there are some commitments that we will carry out so badly that they will be scarcely worth doing. I do not want to sound doom laden, but I am certain that we must reassess the direction of our strategic requirements for the next three or four years, and how we will find the resources to provide our services with the tools to do the job that they have done so outstandingly for the past seven or eight years and for many years before that.

One example is our totem of 50 frigates, to which the Secretary of State referred today. An article in "Jane's Defence Weekly" two or three weeks ago analysed the refit and repair programme and the new build programme. It alleged that in 1989 there would be 45 frigates. Is that not about 50? Is that not the most intelligent way of trying to share the problem? No one denies that there is a problem, but unless at some stage we are able to increase the resources that we can spare for defence, having taken this short breather, those totems will have to be reviewed. It would be better, not only from a military and planning point of view but from a political one, if the sooner we as a Government faced up to these problems the quicker we would be able to clear the air and see where we were going.

I have no doubt about the Government's determination to keep us properly defended, but I ask whether, having taken their eye off the ball for a moment, due to many other pressing commitments, they are not allowing our ability to do the job that we have done so well for so many years to go by default. If that were to happen, it would be a great tragedy.

7.51 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) ended his speech with an open appeal for more resources for defence. My purpose is to put another question: on what basis is Britain spending over £18 billion per year on weapons of war and its armed forces?

The average family of four, before they have paid rent, bought food or had holidays, pay between £25 and £30 per week for weapons of war, which is three times greater than the amount that is spent on the fire, police and ambulance services combined. In 1986, the world spent £634 billion on defence. The cost of defence in real terms is two and a half times as large as it was in 1960. Does anybody in the House believe that the threat of war is two and a half times greater than it was in 1960? It has been estimated — these figures come from various sources — that everyone in this country will devote three or four years of their working lives to paying for defence, and £1 million spent a minute is the global figure.

I do not want to go behind these facts on technical grounds. I have listened to the speeches that have been made by experts and I recognise their knowledge. But I should like to ask, on what basis is this huge demand made on our people for the present defence programme? I know the answer very well, because the same answer has been given by every Government since the war—Labour as well as Conservative—and the argument broadly rests on three assumptions that are very rarely examined.

The first argument is that, were it not for this enormous defence expenditure, the Soviet Union would attack western Europe, take over France, Germany the Low Countries, Spain and Portugal, and would come here and in some way occupy Britain. In a letter to one of his constituents, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that if we did not have the bomb, the Russians would be here now.

The second argument is that America speaks for freedom, democracy and human rights all over the world and is our natural ally. The third argument is that the bomb makes one safer.

I should like to use this debate to invite the House to consider whether those assumptions are correct, because I do not believe that any of them are. I do not believe for one moment that the Soviet Union has ever planned a military attack on western Europe.

Mr. Mates: What about Berlin?

Mr. Benn: There has never been any evidence whatsoever that the Soviet Union was planning to attack western Europe after the war.

Mr. Mates *rose*——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I remind the House that during the war the Soviet Union was our ally. During the election campaign I met a lady of my own age, who said to me, "Mr. Benn, we must have the bomb because we fought the Russians in the last war and we may have to fight them again." I thought that that was a brilliant example of the cold war propaganda that the Conservative party and the BBC have been feeding us. But the fact is that at no stage since the war has any evidence been submitted of Soviet intentions to attack western Europe.

Mr. Mates: What about Berlin and the airlift blockade?

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the tripartite status of Berlin led to an argument about the rights or wrongs of the currency reform that allegedly triggered the Berlin airlift. But there was no question whatsoever that the tripartite status of Berlin and its blockade was an act of preparation for war against the west and at the time it was never presented as such.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I will not give way immediately.

Some 50 years ago, Lord Halifax went to see Hitler. The captured German Foreign Office documents revealed the view of the pre-war Conservative Government. On 19 November 1937, Lord Halifax said:

> "The great services the Fuhrer had rendered in the rebuilding of Germany were fully and completely recognised, and if British public opinion was sometimes taking a critical attitude towards certain German problems, the reason might be in part that people in England were not fully informed."

The Soviet Union must have known perfectly well what we knew. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) wrote a book entitled "Guilty Men" under the assumed name of Cato. He drew attention to the fact that in 1939, up until the last minute, the British Conservative and National Government, as one must call it, were building up Hitler, and the Russians have not forgotten that. Of course, the Russians also lost some 20 million people in the war. I am putting a point of view which I know will not be accepted by Tory Members, but I hope that the House of Commons is still a place where a point of view can be put. I do not believe that the Soviet Union has ever intended or prepared to attack western Europe.

As a member of the Cabinet I remember some fake figures being produced by the Ministry of Defence. I do not know whether that still occurs, but it did when my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent was in the Cabinet. I think that it was he who spotted them; I certainly did not. The figures showed an enormous preponderance of Soviet forces, but it turned out that the French forces were not included in them. Somebody said, "Where are the French?" I think that it was my old friend, Fred Mulley, who was then the Minister, who said, "The French are not part of the military part of NATO." It was as if we did not know what side the French would fight on in the event of a war. I accuse successive Ministry of Defence officials of misleading us on the military balance.

The reality of the matter is that Russian troops in Russia are included in the figures but American troops in the United States are not. Mothballing is not allowed for and the estimates of the costs of the Soviet armed forces are based on estimates of what it would cost to build them in the United States, where wages are a lot higher.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Mr. Benn: May I finish this point before I give way to another former Defence Minister who is straining at the leash to demonstrate his knowledge, which I would not dispute for a moment?

We have been misled on the main reason for this enormous expenditure.

Sir Antony Buck: Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why his argument did not prevail with the last Labour Administration, who thought it right to update our nuclear deterrent without telling the House? That Administration brought in Chevaline to update the very deterrent which the right hon. Gentleman now decries.

Mr. Benn: I shall deal with that question soon, but for a full account the hon. and learned Gentleman will have to wait for the appropriate volume, which will be coming out some years from now.

The impact that Mr. Gorbachev has on British opinion is underestimated. I never follow disarmament negotiations in detail because I have always thought them to be a propaganda exercise, but I can tell hon. Members why Gorbachev has registered with British opinion. It is because he wants cuts in defence to divert money to raise living standards for the Soviet people. That is what most people in Britain want. It is astonishing that more people today approve of Gorbachev's Russia and its role in the world than of Reagan's America. That is without a single political leader from any Front Bench saying any such thing.

With respect to some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I must say that one of the reasons why we found it difficult to put our defence policy across during the election campaign was that we never dealt with the question of the Soviet threat. We said that we would keep the Russians out with more conventional weapons. That made it much harder to put across the peace argument in which many people, in their hearts, believe.

The second question concerns America speaking for freedom and democracy all over the world. I confess that I was born in 1925 into an empire when 600 million people were governed from this Chamber. The first time that I came here in 1937 I saw Winston Churchill sitting where the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) is now sitting. He was the old imperialist. For him there was no question of human rights in the British empire. We ran it from London. There was no question of votes in India or any of that stuff because everything was run from London. As a little boy of five, I met Mr. Gandhi when he came to London and my father had been Secretary of State for India. A British journalist asked Mr. Gandhi what he thought about civilisation in Britain and Gandhi said, "I think it would be a very good idea." That is how the empire was run. Having been born in an empire, I would have to be very naive not to recognise another empire when it looms up out of the fog. America is an empire.

I accept that it now operates through treaties, but America has 850,000 troops abroad—more than we ever had. America has 3,000 bases around the world and 135 of them are here, housing 30,000 troops. I do not wish to be misunderstood. Empires behave like that, but an empire that fought in Vietnam, attacked Cuba, toppled the Chilean Government, invaded Grenada, supported the colonels in Greece and Franco in Spain and still supports the Turkish regime, is plainly not committed to human rights. It is committed, as all empires are, to the defence of its political and economic interests worldwide.

Iran is most interesting. The Americans toppled Mossadek, probably the first incorruptible leader in Iran. They got the Shah back and when he died they pushed Khomeini in. There is no doubt that the Americans thought that a fundamentalist Muslim leader would be the best safeguard against Communism. Then Teheran was

[Mr. Benn]

attacked; the Americans supplied arms to both sides. That is what Irangate was about. Now the Americans support Iraq and they are about to impose an arms embargo. At every stage, American policy has been motivated by the protection of America's interests.

The other day, I met a former Egyptian Minister in Algiers. He said that, during the crusades, European arms manufacturers supplied arms to Richard the Lionheart and Saladin. That has been going on for centuries. People pursue their own interests. I object to the pretence that empires are somehow vested with a sacred responsibility for safeguarding liberty.

I am concerned about American troops here, because there is no agreement as to their use. I doubt whether there is a written agreement at all. One of the worst things that was done after the war was to allow American bases here. That was allowed by a Labour Government. Parliament was told that they were training bases, but they were not. They were permanent. There is no effective control over the American bases.

Next year, I believe, the Government will ask us to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, a celebration with which I am not in sympathy. But Parliament said then that we would never have a standing army. Today we do have a standing army —which we do not control—on our territory. One must not assume that the friendship, blood, sympathy and common language that bring us close to America will remain for ever. Far from accelerating the process of freedom of democracy, I believe that that could be a threat to British interests.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The right hon. Gentleman will remember clearly that the United States air force went back to the United States when the war ended and returned here only because of the blockade of Berlin.

Mr. Benn: I said that the US air force was brought back by a Labour Government but that at the time the bases were not presented as being permanent. I shall say more about the post-war Government later.

The third argument is that nuclear weapons make one safer. In 1945, there were three nuclear weapons; today there are 60,000.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I have sought in vain for the American troops in this country. I know that they are in various places, but we almost never see an American soldier in uniform. There is a reason— because, basically, our people do not want them here. If Conservatives have seen American troops, let them tell me where, because I can never find any.

Mr. Benn: It is true that American troops are given instructions to wear civilian clothes outside the bases, so that people are not aware of their massive presence.

There were three nuclear weapons in 1945 and now there are 60,000—enough to inflict 1 million Hiroshimas on the world. Those hon. Members who have been to Hiroshima, as I have, will have seen the museum and its exhibits and will know that the overkill in the armouries of the world in nuclear weapons cannot conceivably be justified by any military arguments.

Britain has never had an independent nuclear deterrent that could be fired without the consent of the United States President. That was first brought out by Harold Wilson in an early speech as Prime Minister in 1964. We could not communicate with the Americans at the time without the American underwater telecommunications system. If our weapons were fired and the Americans chose to jam the signals, they could not land anywhere except where they came from. We have fought nine or ten general elections around the argument whether we should or should not have a nuclear deterrent, when we do not have one. That came out, and that was probably why the Zircon film was not allowed to be shown.

In return for being allowed to borrow these weapons on the "Calor gas" principle, the United States controls the entire intelligence system. I know that from my experience as a Minister. I had to go to Washington to seek the consent of the United States Administration on certain key questions that were central to our nuclear policy.

The reason why the trade unions were taken out of GCHQ was that the Americans, having supported us in the Falklands, did not want it to be known what GCHQ was doing.

The next argument is about Chernobyl, which proved beyond any doubt that, if we dropped one of our bombs on the Russians, it would kill us and that if the Russians dropped a bomb on us it would kill them. Radioactivity has not yet learnt the validity of international frontiers. To go on piling up these weapons when we know that if they were used anywhere they would kill people over such a large area is an act of insanity. The next one to go off will almost certainly be an accident. We should also now know why we have pressurised water reactors. The Americans cannot build civil nuclear power stations. We are required to build PWRs to produce plutonium for their use.

The very possession of nuclear weapons has significantly destroyed parliamentary democracy in Britain. Clement Attlee, whom I deeply admired, misled Parliament. He did not tell Parliament or, as far as I know, his Cabinet that the atomic bomb was being built. I was a Government Back Bencher at the end of the 1945 Government and I remember Churchill coming to power and announcing that an atomic bomb had been built secretly. The same was true of Chevaline. From out of the lies which are held, on security grounds, to surround nuclear matters, we have the Cathy Massiters, the Pontings and the Peter Wrights who tell us more than we are allowed to know as Members of Parliament.

If we continue with the public deception which is implicit in the possession of nuclear weapons, we shall destroy what nuclear weapons are there to defend. These arguments—whether or not people agree with them— should be discussed publicly and considered seriously.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The right hon. Gentleman talks about the last Labour Government, of whom he and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) were members. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield was also a member of the 1964-70 Government. Why did he not ever resign during those 11 years when the Labour Government were committed to nuclear weapons?

Mr. Benn: If the hon. Gentleman has ever followed any of the points I have ever made, he will realise not only that Attlee did not tell the Cabinet about the atomic bomb but that the Chevaline project was authorised by two or three Cabinet members without the rest of Cabinet knowing. I hope that the House will give me credit, because I have not tried to use these arguments to belittle or mock any member of any party. I have tried to address my mind to the underlying assumptions on which we are asked to take £18 billion from the British people next year. If we cannot look back and say, "We made mistakes"—I suppose that I must have made an enormous number myself—what is Parliament about? Are we to go through life saying, "I never learnt anything. I was always right, always right"? It is from one's mistakes that one learns what to do next. If this debate is not about that, we may as well pack up the House of Commons.

We are living in a time when there is a better hope of peace than at any time since 1945, during which I served for a short period on an aircraft carrier in the constituency of the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin). I believe that Gorbachev is authentic because he wants for his people what we should want for ours. That point has registered with our people. The bloc system freezes initiatives. If we want to speak to the Hungarians, we have to have a word with Reagan to have a word with Gorbachev to have a word with the Hungarians and the Poles have to do the same to talk to the Portuguese. This bloc system in Europe has prevented us from developing unity through direct links which are necessary. Now, to be launching into a huge programme of nuclear weapons in space — star wars — is an act of sabotage, and Mr. Gorbachev is right to bring that point into the INF discussion.

I have come to believe—this is an old belief which was argued, in one shape or form, by Aneurin Bevan at the end of the war in respect of the third force—that it would benefit this country and its people if we pursued a policy of non-alignment. It would be better if we did not have any American troops in Britain, not merely have no nuclear weapons. It would be better if some countries—Britain is a middle-sized country—devoted their not inconsiderable diplomatic efforts to bridging the gap between Moscow and Washington. We should not just be a pawn of American policies. Resources should be diverted to solving practical problems.

Two nights ago, I heard on the BBC about a crane to lift Trident out of the water — the biggest civil engineering problem in Britain. I think that £700 million is being spent on a crane. There are hospitals with long waiting lists and numerous problems face people in the inner cities, yet we are pouring money into nuclear weapons. The Government cannot justify that any more. Twenty million people die every year in the Third world for lack of a dirt road, a simple clinic, a pump or a pipe, yet we sit in this House and accept that the "Reds" would be here if the Secretary of State for Defence did not have a hire purchase agreement on a Trident system, which he cannot use without Reagan switching on the communications network. President Reagan probably would not dare let the right hon. Gentleman use it. If the Americans do not want to use the system themselves, they would not let us do so and embroil them in war.

There are more emperors with fewer clothes on the Conservative Benches then there can have been for a very long time. It is time someone pointed that out plainly and clearly. This Government's defence policies and the assumptions on which the policies of previous Governments—including those of which I have been a member — have rested need to be re-examined. If a person is wrong, he must not be ashamed to admit it or, at any rate, to examine whether the original idea may have been right. There is a time of hope. History would never forgive us if we did not seize this moment, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent said in a powerful speech and as Churchill said we should in 1953, when Stalin died. Churchill said that we must explore a new prospect at the summit. We must do that now. To vote for this expenditure would run counter to everything that is necessary. I hope that the House supports the Labour amendment and also votes against the Estimates as a whole.

8.16 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me if I do not follow his argument, although, curiously, there are some points on which I share his opinion.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, this debate is about deterrence and diplomacy. The Government have displayed both in all their actions. Page 20 of the Defence Estimates shows this country's international obligations and all the posts which we have to defend. The defence White Paper is a comprehensive study of our defences and those of our Soviet adversaries. If we look at the details carefully, we can reach no other conclusion than that, without the nuclear deterrent, we could not possibly hold the line. It is the last resort and — here I differ from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield — until we arrive at a satisfactory, comprehensive agreement, our only method of defence.

The Territorial Army is our second line of defence. Although the strength of the Territorial Army and all the reserves has increased, there is a great difficulty with employers. It might be in the Government's interests in preserving the reserve forces to induce or compel employers to release men to fulfil what is a necessary reinforcement in a modern war. We know that our Territorial Army can be moved fairly rapidly, but it takes a long time for the Americans to bring over their reserves. We should give more thought to the Territorial Army, especially to the relationship of reservists with their employers. Small firms face difficulties because it may be difficult to replace only one man, but large employers, such as ICI, should be induced, encouraged or compelled to allow men to do their service.

My second point concerns the Merchant Navy, which is dealt with on page 29. I note that we can obtain people for it in times of war, but with a declining Merchant Navy, what powers have we to requisition ships in time of war? For example, can we requisition British ships serving under a flag of convenience? If we cannot, we shall find ourselves extremely short of transport. We all know that the Merchant Navy is declining and our next line of approach would have to be to requisition ships. What are the restrictions and limitations on requisitioning British ships which do not carry our flag?

We must retain Trident until we have a satisfactory disarmament agreement. Whatever the right hon. Member for Chesterfield says, we have an independent nuclear deterrent which has kept the peace for a very long time. The United States' interests and our own may not be the same which makes it even more important that we should have an independent Trident. It would be perfectly understandable if Mr. Gorbachev wanted to drive a wedge between Great Britain and the United States. He would

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

find it difficult but nevertheless, if I were him, that is exactly what I would try to do because it would cripple our defences.

In one respect I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. Gorbachev is rather like Lenin: he wants to convert the Soviet Union into a country with strong agricultural and industrial economies. He understands the dangers of a nuclear war, which would completely destroy his own country, and he wants to concentrate on spending money not on armaments but on developing his country. That is a laudable view. However, we should remember that that is what Lenin tried to do at the beginning but that his efforts were stamped upon when Stalin took power from Trotsky. As I said earlier, at the beginning Lenin imported American tractors and technicians to develop his country, but the process was stopped when Stalin came along.

Mr. Tony Banks: With great respect, the hon. Gentleman is almost old enough to remember this. While Lenin was trying to develop the Russian economy, this country was maintaining an economic strangulation of Russia. In many ways, we are responsible for what happened after Lenin. The hon. Gentleman must remember that. It is history.

Dr. Glyn: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's philosophy that we are responsible for what happens in Russia. I am sure that he would agree that there were other economic factors that stopped the Americans assisting Russia. They did so for a short time during Trotsky's era. Stalin stamped on the arrangements and the whole of the new economic policy was abandoned.

Mr. Banks: Lenin wanted Trotsky.

Dr. Glyn: Whether he wanted Trotsky or not, Stalin did not. That is what happened. It is historical fact.

Gorbachev obviously wants to get his country on its feet and his only way of doing that is to cut down on arms. However, I still admire the stand taken by the United States in its refusal to be pushed into a hasty agreement. Any agreement must be mutual and verifiable and the United States is right to hold back.

An agreement that did not include chemical and biological weapons would be of no value whatever because such weapons are now so sophisticated that they are capable of overcoming completely any conventional force. Without a nuclear deterrent—and all of us want to get rid of nuclear weapons — chemical and biological weapons are as great a danger. They can be hidden. Verification would be difficult as it is extremely difficult to trace such weapons with satellites. It can only be done by on-the-spot verification. They have to be physically inspected. Any arms agreement that we reach with the Soviet Union must be accompanied by verification.

Chernobyl represents a great lesson. It taught Russia the dangers of atomic warfare and gave the world a sharp shock. If Chernobyl, an industrial accident, had such effects, what on earth would happen if there was a military nuclear incident? Chernobyl has accelerated the desire of all countries to arrive at a reasonable solution to the nuclear threat.

We must maintain our defences—both nuclear and conventional—so that if we are challenged at any time we shall be capable of defending ourselves alone if necessary. At the same time, we must seek a real and verifiable agreement on all arms.

8.26 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I was surprised to hear the Secretary of State refer to the electorate having massively endorsed the Government's nuclear-centred defence policy. That is not a credible position for an intelligent person to take. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, only 42 per cent. of those who voted at the election voted for the Government's defence policies. Moreover, the remark is most surprising, coming as it does from a right hon. Member who represents a Scottish constituency. He knows that in Scotland more than 50 per cent. of those who voted, voted for parties who put forward clear non-nuclear defence policies. Indeed, the Secretary of State for Defence will remember that in his constituency he turned a seat where there was a massive Tory majority into a close marginal. He is not in a position to speak about massive electoral endorsements of anything.

To most people on this planet the control of the nuclear arms race would seem to be a very desirable objective, especially when we remember that we already have 60,000 nuclear weapons deployed by both sides of the East-West divide and that more weapons are being added to the massive stockpiles with every passing year.

It may be true that we have witnessed better relations between East and West in recent years. However, on the ground, the reality has been that each side has been making wide-ranging increases in its nuclear forces. That is very disquieting. Indeed, the leaders of the two super-powers have repeatedly acknowledged the dangers and the inherent political instability created by the growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. For example, in the communiqué issued at the beginning of the Geneva summit in 1985, the objectives were spelt out clearly by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The first was the prevention of an arms race in space. The second was the termination of the arms race on earth and the third was the strengthening of the strategic stability between the two super-powers by limiting and eventually eliminating existing stocks of nuclear weapons. Those were the goals which the super-powers set themselves at the beginning of 1985 and which they have pursued through the famous meeting in Reykjavik and beyond: to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to limit, and ultimately eliminate, them. Those are the aims which sensible world leaders have pursued and continue to pursue. Over the past few years the world leaders have continued to link the need to maintain security to the improvement of strategic stability between the super-powers and to link the improvement of strategic stability to the reduction and elimination of nuclear arms and the nuclear arms race.

It is therefore infinitely depressing to find the British Government's defence policy set out in terms which, far from decreasing dependence on nuclear weapons, would increase that dependence. Indeed, if carried to its logical conclusion, the Government's policy would lead to an ever-increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons around the world. While both the Soviet Union and the United States search for agreement on deep cuts in both missiles and warheads and look towards the ultimate goal of comprehensive nuclear disarmament, the British

Government refuse to join them and continue to insist that nuclear weapons are essential for the achievement and maintenance of national security.

There are many ways in which the Government are failing the British people through their rigidly nuclear-centred approach to defence policy, but I shall concentrate on just a few.

First, the Government seek to distort an immensely complex debate for their own narrow political ends. The nuclear stand-off in today's world is essentially a bilateral one between East and West, the Warsaw pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Equally, if nuclear disarmament is to be achieved it will be achieved on the basis of bilateral moves by both sides. No one really expects anything else. The question is where to place Britain's allegedly independent nuclear deterrent in that bilateral process.

The Government seem to want to have it both ways. At one moment our weapons are supposed to be fully integrated into NATO's nuclear weaponry as out contribution to its nuclear strategy and a component in NATO's deterrent stance against the Warsaw pact. The next moment, however, it is apparently something completely different because we are told that Britain's nuclear weapons are not to be counted in the bilateral process. The Prime Minister regards them as completely separate from NATO's nuclear strategy and says that it is vital to keep our independent nuclear deterrent no matter what is agreed between the super-powers. That is a strange position for any Government to adopt. Either our defence policy is based on membership of NATO or it is not. Either our weapons are our contribution to NATO's overall nuclear strategy or they are not. The Government seem to have two separate and distinct defence policies, one looking to membership of NATO as the best means of maintaining the security of our people, the other placing little or no faith in NATO and arguing for our own independent deterrent as an insurance against the day when that Alliance fails.

The Government's second policy is clearly nonsense. If and when the collective security of the West fails, there is no fall-back position for any individual nation within the Alliance. In this nuclear age, if collective security fails every nation will suffer. The Government are well aware of that, but they continue to use the independent nuclear deterrent argument because it suits their political purposes. For instance, it allows them entirely to mislead the British people about the option of a non-nuclear defence role for Britain within NATO. Such a role would not be equivalent to one-sided disarmament. That is effectively to argue for the abandonment of NATO as our basic defence posture. Many members of NATO, including Canada, already fulfil a non-nuclear role within the Alliance. Britain could do the same without in any way weakening NATO's general stance. If Britain joined Canada and the other non-nuclear states in NATO, the world would be that much safer, political stability between East and West that much steadier and the nuclear stand-off between East and West significantly less dangerous.

Ultimately, the Government's betrayal of the real security interests of the British people lies in their pursuit of policies which undermine our security despite the Government's boast that their policies are preserving the peace. Their claim that nuclear weapons have preserved the peace in Europe for the past 40 years is at least debatable. What is not debatable, but patently absurd, is their claim that nuclear weapons can continue to preserve peace in perpetuity, world without end.

Equally unviable is the Government's claim that as we cannot disinvent nuclear weapons we must learn to live with and, indeed, to love them. Taken seriously, that means that it is only a matter of time before nuclear war breaks out, whether it be by accident or design or due to the overwhelming pressures on political leaders in an infinitely complex world. If a sovereign state such as Britain can defend itself only by independently possessing and threatening to use nuclear weapons, every sovereign state must follow that course. That will mean an infinitely dangerous situation with nuclear proliferation throughout the world, including danger spots such as the Gulf, the Middle East and Afghanistan. What price world security if other nations follow the Government's line?

Conservative Members are fond of citing the appeasement of the 1930s to prove that we must arm now to prevent war later. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) pointed out, it was a Tory Government who were guilty of that appeasement in relation to Fascism. In any case, those who use that argument miss the real point. The analogy today is not with the period before the second world war but with the period before the first world war. Then, as now, Europe was divided into two armed and mutually hostile camps engaged in an escalating and, ultimately, dangerous arms race. Unlike then, however, we now have a nuclear arms race which threatens the very existence of our planet. We cannot allow that arms race to run its natural course towards the outbreak of another war because that war must be a nuclear war. Our priority must therefore be to wind down and eventually halt the nuclear arms race. That is only common sense and it is well understood by the vast majority of national leaders around the world. It is an enduring tragedy for this country that the British Government are one of the few exceptions. The nuclear objective that transfixes the Government makes us all less safe, more vulnerable and, ultimately, more poorly defended.

As a number of Opposition Members have said, the opportunity exists for a real wind-down of the nuclear arms race and a real reduction in the number of nuclear arms held by various states around the world. If the Government were truly serving the interests of the British people, they would do all in their power to ensure that that opportunity is not missed, but their conduct of defence policy suggests that they are doing their best to ensure that that opportunity will, indeed, be missed.

8.38 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): First, I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to his new job at the Ministry of Defence. We are delighted to see him on the Treasury Bench.

I was interested by much of what the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said. He suggested that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had no right to make the comments that he did. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Labour party's defence policy was one reason why Labour lost the general election. That election was for membership of this House. The Labour party lost it and we won it. That is why the hon. Gentleman sits on the Opposition side and I on the Government side.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

The hon. Gentleman's analogy of the current position with that prior to the first world war is interesting. Many of us would not disagree that the forces opposing each other were of such a nature that, perhaps, war had to break out. However, perhaps he would now reflect on why only one continent on this planet has remained free from war since 1945, even though the forces have been ideologically opposed to each other, hated each other and often did not speak to each other. There is only one continent that has remained free from war for 40 years despite those factors, and that is western Europe. The reason for that is clear—it is that each side has deterred the other. Although we may argue about the detail, surely no one doubts that. Had that been the case in other parts of the world, it is possible that wars could have been avoided there also. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may find it amusing, but some of us fought in the wars and wished that a deterrent had been in place so that there could have been peace rather than war. We all want peace. The question is whether the Opposition's recipe—and I do not doubt their integrity and belief—could produce the same answers that have existed in western Europe for the past 40 years. That is the major doubt, and that is why the Opposition lost the election.

I remind the hon. Member for Dundee, East that the independent deterrent gives a second area of decision making. While the Soviets retain a nuclear capability, it is—and I want the House to note this—at least prudent for the United Kingdom also to do so. The lessons of history tell us that.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman said that while the Soviet Union retained nuclear weapons it would be prudent for Britain to do so. Does he then suggest that all other independent Governments should retain nuclear weapons while the Soviet Union retains them?

Mr. Walker: That is not what I said. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we helped to invent the nuclear bomb and that, post-1945, a Labour Government decried that we should have that capability, and we have had it ever since. That is why it is prudent.

I am sorry that right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is not in his place. He said that more people in the world believed in Mr. Gorbachev than in President Reagan. I do not find that surprising. More than four fifths of the member states of the United Nations are not democracies. Therefore, it would be incredible if we claimed that the leaders of the mass of the world—and I phrase this carefully—were supportive of the United States. We must not expect them to be because their regimes are quite different from democracies. It is not in their interests for democracy to spread through their areas because that would threaten their regimes and their leaders. Therefore, although I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman, I disagree on how he extrapolates the information. It is astonishing that Opposition Members should think that Conservative Members are not in favour of a reduction in nuclear weapons. We are. However, reductions must be properly balanced, and we support the way that that is being achieved by the United States in its negotiations.

I come now to an area in which I have a particular interest, and I declare that interest as I am an officer of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. I wish to speak mainly about the Royal Air Force and how it is affected by the defence White Paper and other matters. First, I shall deal with the issue of low-flying aircraft. Every hon. Member has, at some time or another, dealt with complaints about noisy, low-flying aircraft. The question often asked is why it is necessary. I want to place on record why I believe that it should continue. Flying low and fast is an essential part of RAF training. If pilots are to be effective in a hostile environment against an enemy equipped with modern, electronic and radar equipment and with surface-to-air missile and gun capability, the only way to survive is to avoid detection and evade the anti-aircraft missiles and shells. That calls for flying skills of a very high order. It will be too late to attempt to achieve those skills once hostilities have begun.

We must recognise that we have a limited capability, a limited number of expensive aircraft and a limited number of very expensively trained pilots. If we lose many of them in the first days of hostilities that will be bad for them and for the country as a whole. Of course, there is the additional deterrent value of making it clear to any potential enemy that RAF pilots are highly skilled, professionally trained and capable of surviving and carrying out their assigned tasks in a war.

Everyone in the country wants effective defence forces. Everyone recognises the need for regular and continuous low and fast flying training exercises. Therefore, I believe that the community view can be summed up as, "Yes, but not in my backyard, thank you very much". A great deal of nonsense is talked about the accident rate. It is important to put on record that last year was the best accident year for the RAF for a long time—although we would not think so from some of the publicity—and that this year appears to be equally as good. Those who remember the RAF's accident record when jet aircraft were first introduced must realise that the current accident record is tiny in comparison.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us the number of pilots killed in the low-flying exercises that he was praising earlier?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has not been in the House long enough to know that when I arrived here I was strapped to a metal cage because I had hit the ground rather hard in one of Her Majesty's flying machines. Anyone who does that sort of work recognises the risk it involves. Indeed, there is risk when driving on our roads. Unfortunately, there will be accidents and people will be killed, but that does not deter people from driving on the roads. More importantly, it should not deter us from doing what is absolutely essential for our defence capability. The RAF pilots accept that. They are courageous, brave and skilled people and we should be proud of them. I certainly am.

Mr. Rogers: The figures for the deaths of RAF personnel can be found on page 46 of the Estimates. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that Opposition Members have paid great tribute to the skill and bravery of our young pilots. However, we feel that some of the exercises carried out at 100 ft and 500 mph do not allow for any skill element. Indeed, they are all one-off flights, and a bird strike, mechanical failure or temporary aberration of the pilot could mean that a very expensive piece of equipment is lost, that highly skilled pilots, who cost more than £3 million to train, are killed and that families are bereaved. All that the Opposition question is not whether the pilots should undergo low-flying training, but whether they should undergo it at such desperately low levels and high speeds. When I reply to the debate tomorrow I hope to develop that point further.

Mr. Walker: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman has made an attempt to study the matter. He will realise that the difference between survival and non-survival in a hostile operational environment is a capability to fly at heights of less than 100 ft. In a hostile environment, the capability of pilots and aircraft are at risk. Aircraft and pilots must be capable of operating effectively. There are limited areas in which aircraft can fly at 100 ft. The hon. Gentleman will know that the areas for low flying are clearly defined; that is to say, levels below 200 ft. It is essential that pilots are trained to fly at such levels, otherwise they will not survive in a hostile environment. The hon. Gentleman should realise that, for that reason, Argentine pilots were able to fly low and fast. That is the best example of why we must avoid the surface-to-air capability of a modern land force.

Much has been written and said about the Tornado. Recently, I saw a programme about it. Will my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that the radar problems of the ADV version of the Tornado have been overcome and that the aircraft will be able to execute its tasks? I believe that they are capable of doing so, but I should like to have it confirmed.

Recently, I read about proposals to change the RAF's role in helicopter support for the Army. There have been suggestions that there may be advantages in transferring such capability to the Army. On paper, that may look to be so, but I remind the House that the RAF pilots who fly helicopters do so after having been selected for pilot training. During their training, many were found to be more suitable to flying helicopters than fast jets. Consequently, if the Royal Air Force loses the ability to transfer its pilots, it could mean a large loss of skilled, competent pilots. If we find that we can train only for fast jet operations, I suggest that pilot training would substantially increase. In other words, we shall have to train many more pilots. There would be a higher rate of wastage and the nation would lose. There is no substantive case for taking the helicopter support role from the Royal Air Force. Any savings would be more than offset by the costs associated with the loss of pilots.

We have come to respect the high professional standards and courage of the crews of search and rescue helicopters. Many people in the Scottish Highlands, whom I represent, and many others around our coasts are thankful for being rescued, often in conditions which are right at the edge of helicopter operational capability. Any attempt to privatise such capability will put at risk the ability of the RAF to respond to its operational needs throughout the world. The real value to the Royal Air Force of search and rescue helicopters lies with trained crews who, by the very nature of their constant duties, are kept at a high standard of professional ability. In addition, I doubt whether any savings will be made. The RAF would still be required to provide the best facilities, and most certainly would be required to give back-up facilities to any privatised search and rescue helicopter capability. Such a transfer of capability would be a mistake. The people of Scotland would certainly not support it. Any consequent savings may be cosmetic, but the loss of aircrew in a constant state of operational readiness would be catastrophic during an international crisis.

I now refer to Tucano flying training. How far has the programme slipped? Does my hon. Friend know what effect it is having? What extra costs are involved in keeping Jet Provosts in service? I compliment the manufacturer of the Tucano. I have been critical of the Tucano, but during the recess I had an opportunity to visit the manufacturer. I was able to see the modifications that have been carried out — the new engine, the re-designed wing and the alterations to the front end of the aircraft, the undercarriage and the exhausts. All such modifications must have been expensive. Of course, as the Royal Air Force bought the aircraft at a fixed price, I imagine that the manufacturer is bearing the costs. The aircraft now looks like an effective trainer.

The men and women in our services are its greatest asset. They are supported by their spouses and families. Unless families are content with service life — in other words, unless their quarters and so on are maintained at a reasonable level—they can become unhappy, and that can affect morale. I should like an assurance that the modernisation and maintenance of married quarters are being given a high priority.

Reference has been made to territorials, auxiliaries and reserves. I agree that we must make greater attempts to ensure that employers grant time off for all those who serve their country. The role of reserves, territorials and auxiliary units—particularly the reserves and auxiliaries in the Royal Air Force — have been substantially increased by the Government. I should like to see that policy continue and more use made of reserves and auxiliaries. I should also like serious studies undertaken into finding a proper flying role for our auxiliaries. The Royal Air Force is about flying. If we wish to encourage young people to our territorial reserve commitment, we must have a greater commitment to flying. That is what brings people to the Royal Air Force; otherwise they would join the Army or the Navy.

The realistic way in future to live within defence budget constraints—I shall not talk about this at length; other hon. Members have spent some time on it—must be to make more effective use of reserves and auxiliaries. I should like to see comprehensive studies into ways to make more effective use of volunteers. There would be no shortage of them provided we properly present our package. If we put together a package that will encourage young men and women to serve in our reserves and auxiliaries, the Royal Air Force and the nation will benefit.

8.57 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I do not agree with all the points raised by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), but I agree with him on the exceedingly important role of search and rescue services. I represent most of Snowdonia national park and have spent a lot of time in the hills and I know that we are always grateful for the contribution made by the rescue services.

I want to take up the challenge issued by the Secretary of State when he accused those of us who produced "unofficial amendments," as he described them, of not living in the real world. He almost found himself back in the real world. He was returned to the House by only a small majority. However, I am glad to see him in his place.

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

I can assure him that the election campaign in Scotland and Wales revealed a firm rejection of his Government's defence policy. I suspect that the result in his constituency had much to do with his commitment to fill Holy Loch with sea-launched cruise missiles to fill the gap that he perceives will exist once a successful INF deal is concluded.

I do not seek to speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) because she is quite capable of defending herself. However, as the joint defence spokesman for our group, I must say that what is set out in our amendment — regrettably there will not be an opportunity to vote on it — reflects the strongly held views of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru about a realistic defence policy. It strikes me that the people who are not living in the real world are the Government.

There are between 50,000 and 60,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The task must surely be to stabilise and reduce their number, to diminish the risks of their use and to move away from a nuclear-centred defence stance. However, the White Paper reveals a strengthening of that stance. It is a more nuclear-centred statement than we have seen in previous years even from the Government. Obviously it was designed as part of the Government's defence propaganda before the election. It shows a clear shift in the Government's attitude. Instead of nuclear weapons being advocated as a way of making up for the alleged imbalance of conventional forces, as has been said in previous years, between the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union and NATO, the Government now propose them as if they were to be a permanent part of defence policy, as if they were the only guarantee of security.

As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has pointed out, the paragraph of the White Paper which deals with that is full of literary marvels. Paragraph 114 argues from the position that the policy of so-called deterrence has kept the peace for 40 years. It goes on to argue as if what has happened during the past 40 years is likely to continue in the next 40 years. However, if we know anything of European history, we know that the cycle of change and disasters that have overtaken us in European history have led us into precisely those conflicts of war and conflagration that defence policy is supposed to avoid.

What is also unjustified in chapter 1 of the White Paper is what is described as Britain's major role in the NATO Alliance, stressing that Britain is the only European member to contribute to all three elements of NATO's triad of forces. Of course, that is not justified anywhere. As has been said, it is an historical accident in the development of nuclear weapons that Britain became a European power which had and which developed those weapons. No logical argument has been put forward in the White Paper or indeed in any of the Government's other propaganda documents for the continued nuclear role of Britain's forces.

In fact, in defending their policy the Government are unable to assess the real arguments that are deployed against those weapons. We have already heard, and I do not need to repeat, the argument about whether Trident is independent. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) argued strongly that there has never been such a thing as an independent British nuclear deterrent. However, from the arguments put forward by those who defend the notion of deterrence, it is obvious that that notion is inherently unstable. As we have heard from the Secretary of State this afternoon, if there is an INF deal, the credibility of the deterrence must be enhanced. There is no such thing as a stability of deterrence, which is why the argument about keeping the peace for 40 years is flawed. For 40 years we have seen an escalation of an arms race on both sides — a concept of deterrence which is unstable because it costantly needs to be made more credible. At some stage in the process of arms escalation, there will come a time when, through accident or design, or the irrationality of political or military decisions, nuclear weapons will be used with results similar to those of the appalling accident at Chernobyl.

We are seeing not only a proliferation in countries, but one downwards to battlefield and tactical weapons, and a proliferation of smaller nuclear systems, with all the complications of the command and control of those weapons. As we see the concept of limited wars and the acceptance of strategies such as the United States air-land battle by NATO in a broader way, the opportunity for the use of nuclear weapons within Europe will be enhanced.

The White Paper is illogical in its attempts to deal with deterrence and the arguments in favour of maintaining nuclear weapons. It is equally implausible in its analysis of arms control negotiations. Part of the rhetoric of such documents is that they must describe non-stable systems — the nuclear weapons systems of East and West — as though they were stable, but they must also describe the arms control negotiations as though they were serious. Since 1979, there have been about 9,000 to 10,000 additional strategic warheads in the United States and Soviet arsenals. When one considers the deployments which are already planned, one sees that by the end of the decade the number of warheads will be almost double the number in 1980. We must consider the limited intermediate nuclear force negotiations in that context.

If the double zero option in the INF deal is agreed, NATO will still have about 4,000 nuclear warheads in or assigned to Europe, in addition to the several hundred weapons possessed by Britain and France. Some American and NATO military leaders have put about the notion that the INF talks are bound to lead Europe into the "valley of denuclearisation", but that falls far short of reality. Not only do we already have the strategic weapons, we have the commitment—which has not been clarified in detail—to fill the gap. The Ministry of Defence is obliged to tell us exactly how it plans to fill the gap, because it will have serious implications for the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the number of weapons in the United Kingdom. Will air-launched cruise missiles be based on B52s? Will sea-launched cruise missiles be allocated to Holy Loch and perhaps to the south of England at Plymouth? Will there be a further increase in the number of F111s based in the United Kingdom? The latter can be armed with cruise or other missiles or they can carry conventional bombs. Those aircraft are also involved in the low-flying training missions which destroy the lives of many people in large parts of Wales, Scotland and the mountainous areas of England. If the gap is filled by the B52s, the double zero option could lead to a doubling in the number of cruise missiles deployed in Britain.

We have already had an analysis of the section on the history of the Soviet Union. I would not give it a pass in a CSE examination in the core curriculum proposed by the

Government. But what is even more distressing is what the White Paper does with the statistics on the so-called conventional balance in Europe. The Ministry of Defence must tell us why the International Institute for Strategic Studies data and the Ministry of Defence data come to such different conclusions about the balance of conventional forces in Europe. The technical data show clearly that the numbers counted by the Ministry and by the IISS are wholly different. The only conclusion that I can draw is that the Ministry wishes to maintain the myth of the Soviet threat, although it says in section 106 of the document:

> "There is nothing to suggest that Soviet leaders have any desire for war in Europe."

But the statistics, especially in annexe A, figure 13, imply through miscalculations and through using a different basis from the IISS that the Soviet Union has a massive conventional superiority. It is part of the myth and exaggeration of escalation that perpetuates the cold war mentality and the justification for further deployments. I suspect that such sentiments are responsible for what we see in this document.

Our amendment, which regrettably will not be voted on, points to a different kind of future for Europe, a future that is not based upon escalation as a result of the Trident programme. It points to a Europe that is not structured upon differing cold war camps, but a Europe in which areas such as nuclear-free Wales and nuclear-free Scotland make a contribution to de-escalation throughout Europe, a Europe that extends from the West through central Europe to eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. We are the people who understand the realities of European history. We are not encumbered with the ideological rhetoric of the Government. Our understanding of European history is that we live in a continent that has been racked by war because of the failure of European Governments to work towards true security.

We look to things such as the Stockholm agreement as a demonstration that it is possible for European peoples to agree as nation states about troop manoeuvres and conventional weapons and that that has led to security building. We believe that similar security building is possible in nuclear operations. However, that security will not emerge because of the lack of Government initiatives.

9.11 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I recently moved into the constituency of Fylde. As I walk out of my front door I am struck by the considerable importance of defence aviation to my constituency. My house lies on the approach run to the British Aerospace military aircraft division at Warton. Daily, during the recess, I saw Tornados and other aeroplanes coming back from their test flights across the Irish sea.

During the recess I visited the plant at Warton not only to acquaint myself in some detail with what went on there, but to share with the management, the staff and the trade unions—I hope that that will please the Opposition—their concerns about the future of the European fighter aircraft project.

At the outset of my remarks I should like to pay tribute to my colleague in Lancashire, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). Sadly, because of his ministerial duties, he is unable to participate in this debate. However, for some time he has shouldered a considerable responsibility for arguing the case for those in the Preston area who make their living from aviation. I thank my hon. Friend for shouldering that burden and it is now a responsibility that I gladly accept.

May I also welcome to the Treasury Front Bench my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. During the election campaign my right hon. Friend visited Lancashire and I was grateful to him for the positive commitment that he gave on the European fighter aircraft. He endorsed those remarks in interviews given during the Conservative party conference at Blackpool. I was delighted to hear that he also endorsed British Aerospace's excellent product work as a result of his recent acquaintance with the Tornado fighter.

I believe that the European fighter aircraft represents a key part in the development of our aviation strategy. In a few moments I will justify my belief in that project. I was delighted to see in the statement on the Defence Estimates, under the heading "Collaborative Projects" on page 47, table 8, that the European fighter aircraft was listed. I wish to deal with the element of collaboration because some doubt has been expressed regarding the future of the project because of difficulties with one of the principal partners—Germany.

I believe that paragraph 510 on page 46, detailing the question of collaboration and its benefits, must have been written as much from our belief in collaboration as that of our European partners. Paragraph 510 states:

> "The impetus towards greater collaboration within Europe in particular comes from the conviction, shared by our partners, that a more cohesive European effort will strengthen the Alliance in a number of important ways: politically, by demonstrating our ability to work closely together; militarily, by reducing the inefficiency that comes from having different and incompatible versions of the same equipment on the battlefield; and industrially, by helping to produce a more competitive European industrial base."

If we and our European partners share that view, it is an incontrovertible case to justify the continuing development of the European fighter aircraft.

It is notable that the joint air chiefs of the four participating countries have already agreed the operational requirements of the aeroplane. At such an early stage in the project, that is a notable achievement. It commends the project to the partner Governments, which should have the courage to go ahead and build the aeroplane.

Recent developments in defence more than ever give strength to the argument that the European fighter aircraft should be built. The INF agreement shows that a much greater emphasis will now be put on the role of conventional weapons. If we are looking at developments in aviation — the development of high technology fighters and bombers that may present a threat to this country in future—we shall need aeroplanes such as the European fighter aircraft to combat such threats.

The European fighter aircraft is at the margins of technology. It contains developments in composite materials and avionics, and other engineering developments that are vital to the future of our own aviation industry. From my constituents' point of view it is also vital that the project goes ahead — 6,500 jobs at the military aircraft division in Warton alone depend on it. Within the Preston area, some 16,500 jobs are dependent on the future of that project. As the orders for Tornado are completed, a gap of work will open out in the flow of materials through the factory at Warton. The European fighter aircraft must be built to fill that gap. With regard

[Mr. Michael Jack]

to its impact on the north-west economy, some £69 million of orders derive from British Aerospace. The loss of that would be incalculable. I referred to technical excellence and the maintenance of it by those who build the plane. Such work is vital if our aviation industry is to prosper.

I refer finally to export potential. It is clear to me that the European fighter aircraft must be built, if for no other reason than the £3,500 billion of business with Saudi Arabia, with the Tornado. A successful customer there will be looking for a replacement for that project in the years to come. Warton has demonstrated its ability to build quality aeroplanes and I believe that it can match the requirements of the European fighter aircraft project.

I should like Ministers to commit themselves to tackle some of the problems that are outstanding. There are difficulties in Germany. Although there were initially strong rumours that cuts in Germany's defence budget would overwhelm its ability to contribute to major defence projects, the fact that the budget was reduced by 142 million deutchmarks meant that it was possible for the Germans to continue their commitment to major projects. But there is concern in Germany about the development costs of the fighter. Going back to my quotation from the statement on the Defence Estimates on the subject of collaboration, I believe that it justifies the philosophical and practical reasons for the project and lends weight to reconsideration by the Germans.

I do not want to see brought before the House an argument or debate about the reasons why we should consider the F18. We in Europe can build an adequate fighter for the needs of the latter part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century. I should like the Secretary of State for Defence to give an assurance that he will raise the matters of concern with his German counterparts and try again to convince them of the need to continue with the European fighter aircraft project.

Finally, I remind the Government of some comments that were made in the defence debate this time last year. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) reminded the Government at that time that the F16 fighter, which was built in the same way as the experimental aircraft project, became one of the world's most successful fighters. If there is doubt among any of the partners, that comment alone should commend the project to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), speaking about the commitment to the European fighter aircraft project, said on 14 July:

> "I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government are planning on the basis of the United Kingdom playing a full part in the EFA programme."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1987; Vol. 101, c. 955.]

That reassuring remark will, I hope, be echoed in the concluding remarks from the Front Bench this evening.

I hope that the Government will confirm that there are sufficient resources in the Defence Estimates to finance further development work that is currently being funded by the companies which are building the European fighter aircraft. I hope that the Government will do all in their power to persuade the partners to go ahead with this exciting project, and that we make certain that we understand the commercial importance of the project. The EFA must be built.

9.21 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): I wish to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), who made his maiden speech this evening. His is a constituency that I know well, having spent several of my schoolboy years there. I am sure the House will listen with interest to the speeches that he makes in the coming Session.

I shall begin by making a crushingly obvious statement: the Conservative party won the election in June, and the parties of opposition lost it. In view of that, perhaps we might be allowed, tonight and throughout the coming Parliament, to debate the policies of the Government, and not be sidetracked into the interesting hypotheses of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) might have presented in our Defence Estimates this evening. Unfortunately, Conservative Members give the impression that they cannot conceive of being in error. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), in a characteristic speech, said that we should all be prepared to admit to our own fallibility. I refer him to a comment in the foreword to the 1987-88 edition of "Jane's Fighting Ships". It states that the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement apparently said in a television programme, "My Department never makes mistakes"—that from a Department that gave us Nimrod.

I listened with special interest to the Foreign Secretary's speech last week, in which he quoted Churchill from page 2 of the Defence Estimates. Churchill said:

> "Be careful above all things not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure, and more than sure, that other means of preserving peace are in your hands."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) referred to that. Apart from the fact that I am always suspicious of people who quote Churchill in defence White Papers as if they were quoting from the Sermon on the Mount, the quotation has been taken not so much out of context as out of time. Often, the fact that Ministers rely so heavily on this quotation, made in the intensity of the cold war 35 years ago, is a sign of their thought processess.

Nothing demonstrates that more than the potted history that is given in the White Paper, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent so rightly savaged. It is entitled, "70 Years On: A Country or a Cause?" For sheer banality, hollowness and insufficient bases, this potted history takes some beating. I am astonished that the Secretary of State can pen his name to what would be considered insufficiently researched material for inclusion in the Ladybird series of history books for younger readers.

I imagine that the 18 paragraphs in the first chapter of the Defence Estimates are supposed to give us the historical background to present-day defence policy. Presumably they provide the premise for the Government's thinking on defence. If this is the premise, it does not exactly inspire us about the Government's conclusions. The section reads more like gossip than history. It is full of platitudes and slogans and quite clearly the facts, such as they are, are used to fit the preconceptions.

I shall give the House a couple of examples. Paragraph 4 on page 4 discusses the Russian view of the world

> "that security can only be achieved from a position of military strength."

is not that the thinking that is at the core of the Government's policy and has that not been true of all the powers, especially the Western powers, in the 19th and 20th centuries?

The Statement on the Defence Estimates talks about the extension of territory from the 16th to the 19th century. I suppose that Britain, France and Germany were all standing aside contemplating the heinous nature of imperialism. The implication is that only Russia was up to these dastardly tricks with a sevenfold expansion in three centuries. It is worth remembering that in 1870 one tenth of Africa was under European control and that by 1900 it was nine tenths. That was achieved in three decades, not three centuries.

Through the ages great powers have defined for themselves spheres of influence, epitomised not least by the Munroe doctrine. The penultimate sentence in paragraph 9, page 5, says:

"most people would profoundly disagree that national insecurity is a fair excuse for the curtailment of others' national and individual freedoms."

That comes a bit rich from the party of GCHQ. There are carefully selected quotations from what Lenin said in 1916, but no mention of how he developed his thinking in the 1920s. There is not even a mention of Stalin, the advocate of Socialism in one country who dominated the USSR for over a quarter of a century.

One particularly entertaining sentence speaks about "the liberal democratic idea of harmony between states". Who are the Government trying to kid? I would expect this sort of thing to come from the Kremlin. I thought that the Russians were the people who rewrote history and touched up paintings to make sure that certain people and certain things did not happen. This is the Government who have emphasised the importance of objective history teaching in our schools.

We have heard several times the assertion that the possession of nuclear arms in Europe has kept the peace over the last 40-odd years. The Secretary of State reaffirmed that in his speech. It is interesting to recall that exactly the same claim was made for the existence of the Common Market during the referendum on Britain's membership. I have never been impressed by this sort of argument. Even the defence White Paper concedes that it cannot be proved.

It reminds me of a chap in my constituency—who is no longer with us — who was convinced that all our economic problems in the late 1970s were the direct result of decimalisation. Forget about the Arab-Israeli war and the subsequent explosion in oil prices: I could never convince him that just because one event precedes a trend there is not necessarily a causal link. The case might just as well be made that it is no mere coincidence that peace in Europe at the end of world war 2 coincided with the introduction of the biro. I cannot prove it and there may be other factors, but in terms of proof it is as valid a statement as the other one.

One of the problems about these debates is the difficulty that we have in arriving at an accurate assessment of the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) said last year in the debate on the Defence Estimates:

"Comparing quantitative factors, such as manpower and equipment, is relatively straightforward, but even that exercise can be unexpectedly difficult — a fact which may explain why no new NATO-Warsaw pact force comparisons have been published by NATO since 1984." — [*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol. 100, c.785.]

Annex A of the defence White Paper confidently tells us that by any objective measure the superiority of Warsaw pact land and air forces is substantial.

Fundamental to NATO's strategy of flexible response is the assumption that the Soviet Union has massive conventional superiority. In most NATO scenarios, Warsaw pact forces would crash through the inner German border and overwhelm the numerically inferior NATO forces. Nothing changes. It is the same Russian steamroller theory of the 19th and early 20th century. So NATO would have to resort to the first use of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Some defence analysts have challenged the notion of Soviet superiority and the way in which NATO compiles its statistics. Many assessments of NATO and Warsaw pact forces rely on distorted figures, as has been pointed out. The last time NATO published an assessment of the conventional balance was, as I have said, in 1984. However, each year the International Institute for Strategic Studies has stated:

"our conclusion remains that the conventional military balance is still such as to make general military aggression a highly risky undertaking for either side."

Ultimately, that is a self-defeating process, because if our assessments are hyped up too much, negotiators must be tempted to take us at our word.

Time and again in the White Paper the Government assert that the United Kingdom is the only European member of NATO which contributes to all three NATO commands — Europe, the Atlantic and the Channel — through the provision of nuclear forces, the defence of the United Kingdom itself, land and air forces based in Europe and our maritime forces. It is the Opposition's contention that we cannot sustain such a grand sweep of commitments as are presently resourced. The simple fact is that, with finite resources, something will have to give.

Of course, the Minister will reply with the same words as we have heard in previous debates and in the way that has been hinted at this evening, by saying that we should not look just at the amounts of money voted by the House but at the qualitative aspect of the money. I suggest that the Minister and Conservative Members should tell that to the Royal Marines. They urgently need new amphibious vessels and aviation support ships for the reinforcement of Norway. In the event of hostilities, the Norwegians would depend, during the most critical period, on the arrival of the United Kingdom-Netherlands amphibious force. To get such a large force ashore requires purpose-built amphibious vessels and adequate aviation support vessels. Yet the Royal Marines have no aviation support ship now that Bulwark and Hermes have been withdrawn and they have only Fearless and Intrepid for the amphibious role. Fearless and Intrepid are old and expensive both in maintenance and manpower and they require crews of about 600 from a Navy that has already been drained of personnel.

Our Air Force is in an appalling state. Northern air space is watched over by five antique Shackleton aircraft with 1941 vintage radar. Most of our fighter aircraft are old and the new ones will probably not even be able to find their targets because their radar only half works. On the central front, the Royal Air Force flies what has been referred to unkindly as the oldest helicopter fleet in the world.

[Mr. Sean Hughes]

The strength of the Royal Navy is less than the level planned by Sir John Nott when he was Secretary of State for Defence in 1981. The Navy now has fewer personnel than Boots the Chemists. The Navy's task has been increased with expensive out-of-area commitments to the Falklands and the Gulf, to which no reference was made by the Secretary of State today. Not only do we lack frigates, destroyers and conventional submarines for our vital NATO task in the eastern Atlantic but many of those we have are obsolete, expensive in maintenance and manpower and lacking in effective armament.

The Army has been crippled by shortages of spares and ammunition and restrictions on fuel. As yet the Army has no purpose-built anti-tank helicopters. In Germany it is short of modern tanks; the Chieftain tank gives off so much smoke that it can be seen for miles. Attempts to procure new self-propelled artillery for the Army ended in disaster, with a bill for the taxpayer of £88 million.

Morale in all three services has been seriously damaged. In the Army, the cut in local overseas allowance for servicemen who are based in Germany, to save £17 million, together with training restrictions on fuel and ammunition, have had a seriously detrimental effect on morale. In a letter to *The Times* on 5 March, Viscount Morpeth said:

> "'Salami Slicing' cuts are making it increasingly difficult for Commanders at all levels to train their formations and units to the highest standard required to maintain a credible deterrence."

He continued:

> "Cuts in overseas allowances are demoralising and bear heavily on junior NCOs and their families who are least able to bear them."

The outflow of skilled personnel will increase by about 25 per cent. this year, which reflects the widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. The RAF is short of skilled engineers and mechanics and is losing pilots faster than it can train them. As has already been said, it costs £3 million to train a fast jet pilot and £1million to train navigators. Yet it seems that many pilots are leaving the RAF to go abroad, or are joining civil airline companies. That is largely due to the penny-pinching cuts in fuel and training restrictions, because 70 per cent. of RAF married quarters are substandard and because they are fed up with making do with obsolete equipment.

Of necessity, we have had to cut short our summing-up speeches. But when the Foreign Secretary and others have quoted Churchill's words about having other means of preserving the peace before giving up the atomic weapon, some of us have gained the impression that the present Government do not believe that there are, or ever will be, means of preserving the peace other than by the nuclear weapon. That point was emphasised in a thoughtful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). The Government do not seem to understand the inherent dangers of a policy that Secretary of State for War, Henry Stimson, once described as

> "wearing this weapon rather ostentatiously on our hip."

The saddest aspect of the defence debate in recent years—perhaps it has always been the case—is that it has degenerated on the margin to accusations of battle lust or defeatism. The reality of the matter is that we are talking about the most effective means of defending our country, while at the same time seeking to foster an atmosphere that avoids the recourse to arms. It is in that spirit that I commend to the House the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition.

9.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): It is about four and a half years since I spoke in a debate, other duties having kept me silent except for contributing occasionally those valuable and usually widely welcomed suggestions that the House might adjourn or that a Question be put. I am glad to end that period of silence by winding up on the first day of this important debate. I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) who, like me, has recently escaped from the silent service, or perhaps in the case of Opposition Whips the not-so-silent service. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his entertaining history lesson. It was a great deal more entertaining, and I hope rather more accurate, than his subsequent remarks about the defence budget.

I am particularly glad to be able to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on an excellent maiden speech. He demonstrated, as I would have expected after spending a most rewarding day in his constituency in early June, a knowledge and concern for his constituents and for their interests and environment.

We have had a most interesting first day on this important debate, although on occasions it seemed that it was more like a history discussion or seminar than a defence debate. A number of important points have been raised by right hon. and hon. Members to which I should like to respond. However, in view of the limitation on time, I intend in general to leave those points which are the particular responsibility of my hon. Friends the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to them for tomorrow when they hope, indeed expect, to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. Examples are the arguments expressed by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about the Armilla patrol and by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and others about low flying.

Before dealing with specific points, I should like to say something about our general approach to defence procurement, which is my particular responsibility. Our objective is clear. It is to obtain the best value for money for every pound of taxpayers' money which we spend.

Value for money is a concept which we have consistently highlighted. It was important in 1983, when we outlined our approach to it in an open Government document issued by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie), and it remains so today. It sounds simple—and, I hope, sensible—to the House but I need to emphasise that the quest for value for money requires us to take account of more than just price. It is therefore more complex than a simple matter of comparing the prices of indentical branded products in, for example, supermarkets.

First—and most important and obvious—equipment must be suitable for the required task, but there are other factors that must be considered. They include a judgment on the risk of failure in technical development. Much, indeed most, of what we procure is not ready-made, so we have to balance the value of using the most up-to-date, state of the art, technology with avoiding over-ambitious, or unattainable targets which experience shows can lead to major difficulties.

We need to make an assessment of the in-service date that we require and have regard to the date that we can reasonably expect to achieve.

Usually we need to take account of the capacity of the equipment to be improved during its life to meet changing threats or new technologies. In today's world that is particularly important as enhancement and improvement programmes can be the most cost effective way of meeting new threats. We always need to take account of reliability, maintainability, spares and manpower requirements, which all contribute to the cost-in-use of the equipment.

In a sense all these factors make up the quality of a product, and the drive for value for money is concerned with both quality and price. The House will be aware that it is nearly always easier to identify the objective than it is to set out the methods of attaining that objective. In my national service days one always first stated clearly the objective and then, usually less clearly, how one would succeed. One always had to say, "We will take that hill", not, "We will try to take that hill."

There are a number of steps which we have taken but the importance of one in particular will be recognised by right hon. and hon. Members from the experience of some of our less successful purchases in the past. We no longer enter into cost-plus contracts except in the very small number of cases where we cannot define the necessary work tightly enough in advance to use other pricing methods. Instead, as hon. Members will know, we have introduced a substantial degree of competition into areas which previously suffered from the inefficiencies that flow from negotiating with only one supplier. It is one of the chief ways in which we have improved our methods of procurement. I need not dwell upon the financial benefits of competition, but we have achieved considerable savings in that way. The White Paper lists convincing examples.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am interested in the points which the hon. Gentleman takes into account in considering value for money. Will he comment on Marconi, which has been accused of making excessive profits on Ministry of Defence contracts and of not paying royalties to Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Sainsbury: It would be wrong if I commented at length. Ministry of Defence police, on the instructions of the Director of Public Prosecutions, made what has been called a raid on the Marconi factory. That is now a matter for the Law Officers rather than for me.

Mr. O'Neill: The Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for the actions of Ministry of Defence police and they are responsible to him. The hon. Gentleman cannot get out of this problem as simply as he is trying to do. The House is entitled to know why between 30 and 50 of these men, using crowbars, raided the premises in Portsmouth at the weekend.

Mr. Sainsbury: I know that the Labour party has expressed a desire to put the police under the political control of local authorities.

Mr. O'Neill: That is not true. It is unfair.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence police, like a county police force, are not under the operational control of the Secretary of State, any more than the county police force is under the operational control of the police committee of a county.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way further on that point?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will let me explain this point. It is clear that, in carrying out their operations, the Ministry of Defence police are not under the direction of the Secretary of State. As I explained to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), in this case, the Ministry of Defence police were under the direction of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The action is now a matter for the Law Officers. I believe that I am right in saying that a question on that matter has been tabled for written answer to morrow by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. O'Neill: I want to get the record straight. During the passage of the Ministry of Defence Police Bill—an extremely amicable process; some might say too amicable —we dealt thoroughly with the business. There was no party rancour and it was a constructive process. We did not need the type of flippant, inaccurate remarks which the hon. Gentleman has made—*[Interruption.]* In this case, it was not fully justified. We know the relationship between the Secretary of State and the police committee. But in this case there was a major exercise. Had it not been for a newspaper disclosure no one would have known about it. We would not have been aware that inquiries had been going on for some 18 months. They were not the responsibility of the Director of Public Prosecutions at the outset. I imagine that they emanated from the Secretary of State for Defence or his predecessor.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not listened to what I said about the operational control of police forces, whether it is the Ministry of Defence police force or a county police force. The latter is answerable for some matters, but not its operational control, to a local authority police committee. As I said, some Labour party members sought to get that operational control into the hands of local authority committees. But we should not spend too much time on this point because many other matters have been raised.

To increase our access to competition, we have broadened the supplier base and thus opened up new sources of supply. We have brought new companies into Ministry of Defence business through, among other things, a successful small firms initiative and through the emphasis we have put on competitive sub-contracting by our prime contractors. In April, we achieved our aim of bringing Royal Ordnance fully into the private sector, when it was bought by British Aerospace. It has now taken its place in the competitive defence market.

The wider the spread of information, the better a market works. We have, therefore, taken a number of steps to improve the flow of information about defence work. We now have a fortnightly "MOD Contracts Bulletin" and we arrange the circulation of staff targets and requirements in draft. The three systems controllerates annually make presentations to industry to help to keep industry better informed, so that it can take full advantage of the business which the MOD has to offer.

However, competition is only part of a broadly-based strategy aimed at achieving better value for money. Other

[Mr. Sainsbury]

initiatives include a revision of our practices on the interim financing of contracts. In this our objective is to give companies a greater incentive for timely and satisfactory performance by linking interim payments more closely to achievements.

We seek to allow industry more scope to produce ideas and innovations that will let our Armed Forces exploit new technology fully. The cardinal points specification, which allows suppliers to suggest their own way of meeting the requirement, is one means of giving companies the opportunity to use their knowledge and skills. As long as the Ministry of Defence retains the technical capability to be an intelligent customer and enters into an open exchange of ideas, we should benefit from this approach.

The procurement of modern defence equipment can be a highly complex business. We are making important improvements in the efficiency with which we carry it out. Against the background of our more effective and businesslike approach let me—in the short time left to me—deal with some points which hon. Members have raised in this debate.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli returned to his familiar theme when he said that the cost of Trident would preclude other expenditure on new equipment. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said on many occasions—he said it again today—that is simply not so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) reminded us of the findings of the Select Committee on Defence on years of increased spending in real terms. Of course, had we not increased spending above the inadequate level that we inherited in 1979 we would have problems now. However, we now spend a quarter as much again on equipment for every single trained service man in real terms as we spent in the late 1970s.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli and his hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South asked about amphibious shipping. The right hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear in December last year that the Government had decided to retain an amphibious capability in the longer term. We have let contracts for design studies both into extending the lives of the existing ships Fearless and Intrepid and into replacing them with new-build vessels. The timescale for the reports will give us ample time to decide which option to choose for the replacement of these important ships.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton made some important comments on research and development. He apologised to me for the fact that he cannot be in his place now. I assure him that I have carefully noted his remarks, especially those on the value of collaboration with our European allies. We, like them, attach considerable importance to the matter and much is being done under the auspices of the independent European programme group. Indeed, collaborative research was a key theme in the revitalisation of that group three years ago and the need was reiterated when IEPG defence Ministers met last June. To date, some 20 collaborative technology programmes have been initiated including two on gallium arsenide which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton mentioned. Attention is now focused on putting this important work on to a systematic basis by identifying the key areas of advanced technology on which the European nations should work together.

I was glad to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North on the Tucano. There is a few months' slippage on deliveries, but Short Bros. expect to recover the slippage later in the programme. My hon. Friend also commented on the Foxhunter radar for Tornado aircraft. The equipment does not yet meet the full requirements of the RAF and the Ministry is at present negotiating with the supplier, GEC, towards securing a firm price contract for the satisfactory completion of the programme. Meanwhile, radars to an agreed interim standard have already been delivered and are in service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) spoke eloquently on behalf of his constituents about the European fighter aircraft. He referred to his interest in the matter and the support that he receives on it from our hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). Like all major equipment projects, the EFA programme is being conducted on a stage by stage basis, as is only sensible. The project definition has been successfully completed and we are now in a definition refinement and risk reduction phase, with activities aimed at stabilising the design of the aircraft and identifying high-risk activities.

Parallel negotiations on commercial issues are progressing between the prime contractors and NEFMA—the NATO European Fighter Management Agency, which is the international management agency. Action is in hand to secure agreement from the individual national authorities to launch development. The United Kingdom aims to have completed that process by the end of the year and, subject to a satisfactory conclusion, we expect to begin development work early in 1988.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) spoke with his usual eloquence, but it was not clear to me—I do not know whether it was clear to anyone else—whether he supported the official Opposition amendment or the unofficial one. I think that his speech leant slightly towards the unofficial one. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) astonished many hon. Members—on both sides, I suspect—with his comments on that amendment and explained why he would like to see what I believe is described as a non-aligned defence and foreign policy, although at times it sounded more like a Warsaw pact-aligned foreign policy. As I believe that the economic policies of the right hon. Gentleman's wing of the Opposition would rapidly reduce the United Kingdom to Third world status, a non-aligned foreign policy might go well with that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the amendment of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is probably a more authentic expression of the voice of the present Labour party than the official viewpoint? Would it not be nice if the official spokesman would tell us whether the official view is still unilateralist or whether it is moving away from that position?

Mr. Sainsbury: There is some difficulty in determining the defence policy of the official Opposition as I believe that officially they do not have a policy and it is open to review. No doubt we shall shortly find out whether the view of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield or some alternative is to prevail. We await with interest the outcome of that review.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) referred to merchant shipping. Under prerogative powers, the Government can requisition ships on dependent territory as well as United Kingdom registers. Emergency legislation would enable the Government to requisition ships on foreign registers if beneficially owned by British operators. We continue to monitor closely the availablility of merchant shipping to support Her Majesty's forces in time of war. Despite the decline of the British merchant fleet, we are confident that defence needs can still be met.

A number of other points were raised, and I apologise if time does not allow me to answer all of them. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), in an intervention, expressed concern about the CACS4 project. Command and control systems for modern warships are very complex. They are made more difficult to develop by the fact that the weapons systems which the command system has to integrate are often still in development. Thus, for example, in a number of cases, we do not have a complete interface specification for the type 23, nor have we been able to model some aspects of the system fully. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that we have defined the requirement much better than in any previous case and this underpins the procurement stategy that we have adopted. In seeking to control time, cost and performance to meet the Navy's needs we decided to exploit new technologies such as distributed processing, the ADA language and advanced displays. It was for this reason that we needed a new start, although we had already spent some £30 million—not the much larger figure that my hon. Friend mentioned—on the previously unsatisfactory CACS4.

When I spoke earlier about the initiatives that we have taken to achieve more efficient procurement, I stressed the advantages to the Ministry of lower costs and more timely completion, but it is important to point out the benefits which our policies are having in fostering efficiency in industry, stimulating new ideas and promoting the full utilisation of resources. We all want to see British industry successful in world markets and competition is important not just because it contributes to keenness in pricing but because it stimulates innovation and enterprise, and the encouragement of new ideas for the solution of defence problems. Furthermore, the more efficient our defence industries are, the greater the opportunity they have to increase their exports and generate more jobs in the United Kingdom. With this in mind we now give proper prominence to export potential when we take decisions on procurement. We consider ways of adjusting our requirement to suit the needs of foreign customers as well as those of our armed forces so as to improve the marketability of our industries' products. Moreover, our policy of specifying equipment by the performance that we require of it—the cardinal points specification—rather than by attempting to design it ourselves gives companies greater scope to propose to us equipment with foreign sales potential.

I believe that the changes we have made, and further ones that are still in the pipeline, are a real contribution to the health of the British defence industry and to effective procurement. We know that handling the procurement budget is a great responsibility, not merely because it involves some £8·5 billion of taxpayers' money a year, but because the effectiveness of the nation's fighting forces depends upon it. In view of that, I believe that our achievements will be seen as valuable——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

Kidney Treatment (Birmingham)

10 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I wish to present to the House a humble petition from the kidney and cancer patients of the west midlands and others, who wish to draw our attention to the parlous state of kidney treatment in Birmingham, especially at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, because the appropriate authorities ordered that 100 patients on the free dialysis list should not be treated before April 1988. Consequently, considerable danger to their lives may follow. It also calls attention to the inequalities of funding between regions, which has helped to bring that about.

The petition deplores, as I do, the fact that the brilliant consultants who are treating those patients have been instructed not to do so before April 1988. They have been told that they will face disciplinary action if they continue to save lives in that way. It also draws attention to the fact that, contrary to statute and regulation in the National Health Service, the Central Birmingham community health council was not consulted, as is required, before the closures took place. Consequently the public and the patients, especially the kidney and cancer patients, did not have their views represented in the discussions.

The petitioners, the kidney and cancer patients of the west midlands and others, pray

that your honourable House: — Appoint a Select Committee or ask the Social Services committee to report urgently:—

i) On the inequalities of provision for cancer and kidney patients in different parts of the United Kingdom and how this can be improved.

ii) On why there was a 39 per cent. cut in cancer treatments at the Queen Elizabeth hospital when 10 per cent. of those on the waiting list were already dying from cancer "which could have been checked if treated earlier".

iii) On why the Queen Elizabeth's Kidney Unit was underfunded below the DHSS's minimum target or patients' needs.

iv) On why the Community Health Council was not properly consulted on these cuts and the need to improve the CHC Regulations to prevent lack of consultation.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

General Practice (Training)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I wish to raise the problems of the funding of general practice training for medical students. We all accept that primary health care is the foundation of the National Health Service, yet it is the one aspect that we need to take more seriously when medical students enter their clinical courses. It is an issue with which I came face to face when visiting the Aldermoor health centre on the edge of my constituency last summer. I wish to thank the head of that facility, Professor John Bain, for having sparked off the inquiry that led me to ask parliamentary questions on this subject and also to introduce this debate.

Everyone knows that there have been remarkable technical advances in medical care during the past three decades, and more can be expected. At the same time, there has been a matching growth in awareness of the importance of the social and psychological implications of being ill. General practice in this country must respond to both developments. Teaching medical undergraduates about medicine in the setting of the family and community and about how patients should be most sympathetically and effectively cared for outside the hospital is a special responsibility of all departments of general practice which have been created in the 31 medical schools in this country.

Such new departments face important problems. Most are understaffed and all are under-resourced. They practise, teach and research a discipline which attracts high public demand but which does not enjoy the drama of acute hospital services to catch the public eye or perhaps the public purse. Their teaching is necessarily based on small groups and clinical experience on one-doctor to one-student attachments. We accept that such methods are expensive of the time which would otherwise be given to patient care.

The shortage of university funding also puts pressure on medical school budgets. Although NHS funding may be well ahead of the rate of inflation, it is not ahead of public wants and expectations, and the ability of the NHS to supplement the shortfall in medical school budgets has been exhausted. One good way to guard against the misuse of high cost specialist services in the NHS is to promote their more sensitive use through more teaching of medicine in the setting of general practice, but this comes at a time when the NHS and medical schools are finding it difficult to fund this new and major academic discipline.

I shall say a little about the background to the debate. Just over a year ago, the Mackenzie report, which is entitled "General Practice in Medical Schools of the United Kingdom", described the achievements of the departments of general practice in the years since the first chair was established in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the first chair anywhere in the world was established in Edinburgh in 1963. The report also described the problems that are faced by the discipline in the immediate period ahead, and referred to the need for simple and relatively inexpensive measures to be taken to allow proper growth to take place.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of Professor John Howie, head of the department of general practice at Edinburgh university. As one of the main architects of the Mackenzie report, he is a leading campaigner for the implementation of its recommendations.

The interdependence of the links between the DHSS and the DES in the funding of medical education is well known. The DHSS contribution to undergraduate education, which is required under section 51 of the National Health Service Act 1977 for England and Wales and section 47 of the parallel 1978 Scottish Act, is recognised, or perhaps rationalised, in what is known as SIFT, the service increment for teaching element in the teaching hospital funding, and ACT, the additional for clinical teaching in Scotland.

It is difficult to quantify how much money this involves and what proportions represent the tertiary health care service, and the teaching and research functions of teaching hospitals, but the total sum involved is now between £20,000 and £30,000 per clinical student year, which, for 4,000 students in each of three clinical years, represents between £240 million and £360 million annually.

Alas, by a series of mischances—mainly historical—departments of general practice do not benefit from the notional budget, although their present and potential contribution to medical practice, medical thinking and medical education is considerable. Their need for service increment is as great as that of any of the hospital components of medical education. Their request for new investment to correct that anomaly is modest — £4 million a year. That is only a little more than 1 per cent. of the NHS contribution to teaching research in hospital specialties.

That raises three questions: first, is the cause a good one and does it attract widespread support; secondly, is it affordable and will it create benefit; thirdly, is there a mechanism for meeting the request or, if not, can one be found, and found quickly? On the first question, there seems no doubt that the cause of providing proper resources to allow properly supported departments of general practice to make a proper contribution to medical school and medical education is a good one. In the Green Paper on the future development of primary health care, Cmnd. 9771, the Government stated:

> "However, the undergraduate course content varies widely between medical schools, and in some general practice still forms only a relatively small part of the curriculum. There is scope for greater emphasis on the role of primary care and its interface with the hospital and specialist services. This would benefit not only those who then decide to seek entry to a general practice vocational training scheme, but also those students wishing to pursue a career in a hospital speciality since they would carry with them a greater understanding of the central role primary health care plays in the health of the nation."

No one argued with that during the consultation period on the Green Paper. When the Social Services Select Committee discussed it during the 1986-87 Session and published its report entitled "Primary Health Care", it specifically requested investment in that area. Paragraph 25 states:

> "The case for introducing all undergraduates to primary health care is surely overwhelming and we suggest that University Departments of General Practice should be expanded to become Departments of Primary Health Care, not only to allow future general practitioners to be introduced at an early stage to medicine in the community but, perhaps more importantly, to introduce doctors who will spend their careers in hospital to an area of health care responsible for the majority of episodes of illness and which, to be successful, must integrate closely with the secondary care provided in hospital."

Furthermore, the education sub-committee of the General Medical Council has now joined in calling for proper investment, which it sees as an essential prerequisite to the basic medical education of the nation's future doctors. The responses to the Green Paper from the GMSC and the Royal College of General Practitioners, which are sometimes seen as representing the "political" and "educational" wings of general practice, are also agreed that the case presented in the Mackenzie report needs to be met urgently. The medical sub-committees of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom and the University Grants Committee have been equally wholehearted in their support.

Only today I received a letter from the British Medical Association, which sent me a copy of the resolution that was passed by the Conference of Medical Academic Representatives in 1987, which states:

> "That this Conference supports the Mackenzie report and is disturbed by the low level of government funding which is available to academic departments of general practice."

Hearts and minds seem to have been won across a remarkable and probably unique width of political, medical and educational opinion.

What about the cost? Of course, the £4 million for which the departments of general practice are asking is either a lot of money or not much money, depending on how it is viewed. Compared with the £1·5 billion that was the cost of the general practice prescriptions issued in England in 1985-86, or with the sum of about £10 billion that was spent on the acute hospital services that are used when patients are referred to hospital for investigation and treatment, the sum is negligible. However, for hospital doctors and future general practitioners, attitudes to the prescribing of drugs, the investigation of patients and the use of hospital services are learnt early in medical training. A more broadly based early undergraduate teaching with greater emphasis on the role of good general practice will produce a more balanced use of services, which will be better for the patient and less expensive for the nation. The investment of £4 million, representing 1p in £50 of NHS resourcing, will be recouped many times over. It is good value for money.

On the mechanism, I am aware that active discussions are in hand involving, among others, representatives of the heads of departments of general practice and senior officials at the DHSS. Those discussions are mentioned in the recent GMC report. But similar discussions have fallen in the past because of legal advice to the DHSS that no mechanism existed to allow a payment giving the same benefits as SIFT to be paid by the NHS to ensure adequate base line funding of departments of general practice.

The purposes of the debate are, first, to hear confirmed the Government's acceptance of the merit of the case being argued by departments of general practice; secondly, to hear from the Government that they accept the need to allocate an annual figure equivalent to £4 million at current prices to be paid through DHSS channels; and, thirdly, to ask whether a mechanism has been found to allow such funds to be administered, or whether such legislation is needed and, if so, when it can be expected. To work equitably and efficiently, the mechanism will need to reflect medical student numbers and to be available through the regional health authority budgets, or their

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

equivalents in Scotland, where our 31 medical schools are sited. The distribution will need to reflect the different legal arrangements which apply and will thus need to be apportioned on the advice of the head of the department of general practice in each medical school.

My hon. Friend the Minister has a reputation for getting things done, so I should be grateful if she would reassure the House of effective progress on all three fronts. May we be told how soon the discussions, which in one form or another have occupied the time of three Administrations, can be satisfactorily completed? In short, will the DHSS and the Department of Education and Science acknowledge that they have a joint responsibility for funding medical education and get their act together rather than continuing to pass the buck to and fro?

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on his success in the ballot and on the lucid and thoughtful way in which he introduced this important subject.

Undergraduate medical education is primarily the responsibility of the universities, which means the University Grants Committee and the Department of Education and Science. However, the health departments have a close interest, first, as providers of clinical facilities through which clinical training takes place and, secondly, as customers, for most medical graduates will be employed by, or be general medical services contractors in, the National Health Service. It is also important that training, especially in primary health care, relates to NHS policies and objectives.

Section 51 of the National Health Service Act 1977 lays a duty on the Secretary of State to make available such clinical facilities in connection with medical teaching and research

> "as he considers are reasonably required"

by the universities. That provision goes back to the early days of the NHS and is the basis for the service increment for teaching — or SIFT — in the allocations of health authorities under the RAWP formula. Although the Act may require health Ministers to provide general medical services within which undergraduates can be introduced to general practice, that type of training is comparatively recent and no specific financial arrangements have been made to cover service costs. For its part, the General Medical Council has stressed the need for this part of the syllabus.

Earlier this year, the Croham report on the review of the UGC called for closer liaison between the Department of Education and Science, the UGC and the health Departments and between education and health at local level. As a result, co-operation between the DHSS and the Department of Education and Science has increased. One result was the issue in March of a note of guidance by the two Departments to health authorities and to universities about the planning and funding of undergraduate medical education.

That joint note did not refer to the general medical services and did not cover clinical training and general practice. However, for many years the health Departments have accepted the role that university departments of general practice can play in the improvement of standards of primary care.

The Mackenzie report, to which my hon. Friend for Romsey and Waterside referred, provides a new and important survey of the development of what we might call academic general practice. General practice is relatively new as an academic discipline. It is only 30 years ago that the first university department of general practice was created, sadly not in England, but in Edinburgh. It was only in 1986 that every medical school in the United Kingdom had at least one GP appointed to a university post with responsibility for teaching the discipline. The development of general practice as an academic discipline has therefore been somewhat uneven. Many of the arrangements that had been made have been reflected in local university and clinical opportunities and needs, as the Mackenzie report pointed out in chapter 1.

My hon. Friend may not be aware that last Friday I had dinner with one of the other authors of the Mackenzie report, Professor Hannay in Rotherham. In between the paté, the cream soup and the roast potatoes we discussed these issues and many others. I was grateful to him for his wise advice.

There is, however, agreement that general practice is an essential part of every undergraduate medical student's medical training. It is now required by the General Medical Council. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, the Government document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion" published last year, noted:

> "Undergraduate course content varied widely between medical schools."

It suggested that there was scope for greater emphasis on the role of primary care in undergraduate teaching. My hon. Friend is right that those proposals have had widespread support since they were published.

Only a minority of the staff of departments of general practice are full-time salaried academics. Similar to other academics, these people are clinicians who see patients as well as teach in the medical school. In fact, many are National Health Service GPs with a part-time commitment to the medical school and may be compared with hospital clinical staff who have honorary academic appointments.

The hospital-based academics appear to have substantial advantages over their GP counterparts. The professor or consultant has junior medical staff who can assist him in the provision of services to patients and often in the clinical teaching of undergraduates and research. The university GP has no subordinate medical staff and he retains a personal responsibility, as does any GP, to provide continuing cover to his patients. That is in the nature of general practice.

It is a concern of teachers of general practice that their general practice service work may take a large part of their time, leaving them little time for their research and teaching which are crucial to their intellectual development and the academic recognition that they deserve. In a recent letter to "GP" magazine Professor Metcalfe—I read that magazine every week — claims that the university GP's average list is 79 per cent. of the average GP and therefore that is bound to effect his income.

For some years Professor Howie has argued, including in the Mackenzie report, that there should be more NHS support for teaching in general practice and that specifically there should be an equivalent in the GMS to the service increment for teaching that exists in the hospital and community health service. In our view it is not as simple as that. The differences in the ways the GMS and the hospital services are funded makes the proposal of a service increment for teaching analogue difficult. In the allocations to health authorities under the RAWP formula the SIFT is identified in recognition of the fact that teaching hospitals have higher costs than other hospitals, and of the duty of the Secretary of State to provide clinical facilities in support of teaching.

In the GMS there is no comparable allocation. General practitioners are independent contractors. The target level of remuneration is determined in relation to the service workload and individual GPs are paid on the basis of the services they provide.

The Mackenzie report argues that GPs who have a student attached to their practice take longer over their consultations and over their GMS work generally. The authors estimate that this might amount to an extra two hours a day or an extra 40 hours for a typical four-week attachment. There is considerable variation between medical schools in the lengths of attachments. The health Departments do not have conclusive data on the extra hours involved, but our inquiry suggests that a GP—whether in a university practice or any other practice—who is providing suitable clinical training for a student will take significantly longer over his GMS work.

GPs who teach postgraduate trainees, known as vocational trainees, receive a training allowance. However, the NHS pays no such allowance to GPs who take undergraduates on attachment. Some GPs outside the university practices are recognised as tutors and are paid small sums by the university as part-time lecturers, but the majority of GPs who take undergraduates receive only an honorarium, if anything. They do it, therefore, out of the goodness of their hearts and because of their belief in the importance of the training for the future of their profession and for the quality of care.

As my hon. Friend said, the Mackenzie report calls for support of up to £4 million a year from the Health Service. However, the specific proposal that it makes is for a payment of GPs on the basis of the extra hours' work involved in having a student attached. At, say, £400 for an average four-week attachment for 4,000 students, which is the typical medical school intake per year at the moment, the cost would be not £4 million but £1·6 million. That only emphasises that there are administrative and financial details that would need to be worked out with great care if a scheme were to be introduced, but, as my hon. Friend realises, at present it would be illegal to make such payments and it would require primary legislation. However, with the appropriate primary legislation, it would be tolerably easy to devise methods of payment, possibly through the existing payments system — the family practitioner committees — in order to have convenience and keep administrative costs under control.

I hope that what I have said demonstrates that the value that the Government place on general practice is evidenced by the discussion document on primary care. We also have a White Paper that will be forthcoming shortly. Most patients' episodes of illness requiring medical treatment are handled by GPs. The primary care services are both the front line and the public face of the NHS. Indeed, I have seen suggestions that for a typical person in this country, the total period of in-patient service that he will require is about 10 days every 10 years, yet half a million people consult their GP every working day. That gives our view of how important general practice is.

General practice and primary care are an essential part of the training that we give to doctors and are likely to become increasingly prominent. My colleagues in the other health Departments and I are keen to improve standards in general practice. The university practices have an important role in raising standards, especially in the inner cities and in other difficult areas.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend said that there would be a White Paper, which I welcome. A White Paper normally follows a Green Paper—in this case it was a blue paper. Often White Papers are intended to outline the Government's intentions. My hon. Friend has also hinted at primary legislation being required to overcome the legal difficulties of making those payments. Do I take it, therefore, that the White Paper will contain the seeds of a Bill that might come before Parliament before long?

Mrs. Currie: The Government may propose, but the House disposes. Ultimately, it will be for this and the other place to decide. A number of the changes that are suggested in the White Paper will require primary legislation. We hope that we might be able to make progress before long, with the will of the House.

I am very glad that we have had this short and most useful debate. In recommending that my hon. Friend reads the forthcoming White Paper with the greatest of care, I hope that he realises that the Government are not at all unsympathetic to the views that he has expressed tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 28 October 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ABERDEEN HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Telecom

1. **Dr. Reid** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of British Telecom; and what matters were discussed.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have not yet met the new chairman of British Telecom. I had to cancel my appointment with him yesterday because I was engaged in proctracted Airbus negotiations. I hope that I shall meet him in the near future.

Dr. Reid: May I express regret at the difficulty that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is having in arranging a meeting? I know that he will have difficulty in getting through to the chairman on the telephone.

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets the chairman, will he reflect and admit candidly what a disaster privatisation has been for British Telecom? Will he admit to him and to the House that privatisation has meant low staff morale and low standards of efficiency and service? The only things that have not got lower are the quarterly bills. Will he express his frustration that, in the face of this disastrous performance, we have no power to intervene? Privatisation has meant a loss of millions of pounds to the taxpayer, a loss of power to the House and a loss of standards for consumers.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the director general's recent report and his comments that the standard of performance is not good enough and needs improving. I am glad that British Telecom is reintroducing standards of quality statistics at regular intervals and is setting itself targets and co-operating with the director general to see what can be done to remedy the matter. I do not accept that it is any consequence of privatisation. Our telephone service has not been perfect for many years, and there has been a decline in performance at the same time as a rise in demand and expectations that must be met. The process of privatisation, with growing competition and consumer choice, will help to improve the quality, and not work in the opposite direction.

Mr. Hanley: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of British Telecom, will he congratulate him on Telecom's decision to include postal codes in future telephone directories? Will he also pass on to the chairman the disquiet felt by many of my constituents who, for the first time, will have to pay for London telephone directories in the 01-area? They will have to pay £8 per set, and that is not a good advertisement for the efficiency of privatisation.

Mr. Clarke: I shall certainly pass on to Mr. Vallance my hon. Friend's praise and strictures, which are both matters for the commercial judgment of British Telecom.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In addition to the points raised by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), will the Chancellor ensure that he relays to British Telecom the anger that many companies feel about being charged additional costs for repair and maintenance of lines? Such lines are often vital for export businesses. That has been the case in my constituency, and I am sure that it is the case elsewhere, too. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ask British Telecom to review this aspect of its policy?

Mr. Clarke: As I understand it, companies will continue to recieve the service that they pay for in their quarterly rentals. Those who require a higher quality, shorter notice and priority fault service will now have to pay for that. It was never free. Previously it was paid for by all subscribers. Now it will be paid for by those who receive it.

I understand the concern in Scotland about the telephone service. I trust that the hon. Lady shares my pleasure that Mercury has recently introduced its services in Scotland two years ahead of schedule.

Mr. Favell: One of the difficulties that my right hon. and learned Friend had with the privatisation of British Telecom was in ensuring healthy competition. Is healthy competition also at the forefront of his mind in connection with the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian, because that one company would be 10 times as big as all its British competitors put together?

Mr. Clarke: Competition in telephones is governed by our guarantees on the duopoly which will exist until 1990 in order to give Mercury time to become established. Then we will look at the prospects of widening the field still further. I know that my hon. Friend has strong feelings about the airlines merger, but he will realise that we are awaiting a report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Stott: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is bound to be aware of the welter of criticism directed at British Telecom over the last 12 to 18 months by hon. Members, the general public, the National Communications Union and Oftel. As I spent all my working life in British Telecom, this decision is disappointing and very saddening. The Minister must be aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was absolutely right when he said that these problems and poor performance are a direct consequence of privatisation and nothing else. As the Government are major shareholders in British Telecom, will the Minister use his influence to try to get British Telcom management to improve the quality of service? We must ensure that manpower levels in the industry are raised in line with the recommendations of the telecommunications unions. If this were done, the quality of service—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question please.

Mr. Stott: If this were done, the quality of service would improve and customers would get the standard of service that they require.

Mr. Clarke: I am quite prepared to join in the criticisms of British Telecom as long as they are fair and recognise the efforts of the director general and the management to remedy matters. I have already welcomed some of the recent steps and the targets that British Telecom has set for itself. The hon. Gentleman's charge that privatisation has caused all the difficulties is quite ridiculous. Although not the only contribution, the biggest single contribution to the troubles this year came from the strike held in defence of overmanning and restrictive practices. It is obvious that if the hon. Gentleman were responsible for British Telecom he would want to reintroduce to British Telecom the old overmanning and Spanish practices.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am anxious to have more hon. Members asking questions than we have had in the past. May I ask for brief questions, leading to briefer answers?

Rural Areas (Funding)

2. **Mr. Speller** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will seek powers to offer access to European Community funding to rural areas of deprivation like north Devon which do not have assisted area status.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): North Devon is entitled to support from the European agricultural and social funds. The assisted areas must have prior claim on the regional development fund.

Mr. Speller: Does my hon. Friend accept that although agriculture is a vast and important industry in the west country it is not the only one and that many areas are desperately disappointed that, despite good ideas, they get no assistance with pump priming, which is so necessary to get outside private capital? Many of us feel that for the wrong reasons European money is not available to us. It is not right that all the money should go to inner cities or to other areas. Good ideas should be supported, wherever they come from.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware of my hon. Friend's commitment to solving the problems that he so cogently argues. As the House knows, in its proposals for the reform of EC structural funds the Commission proposes concentrating on structurally less developed and declining industrial regions. What this means in practice for particular regions has yet to be fully worked out. I shall, of course, negotiate strongly for United Kingdom interests, especially those of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister make sure that any changes in United Kingdom regional policy do not create a reason for the European Community not making available for development in rural areas that are suffering from deprivation the funds that have been coming forward? Will he give an assurance that if the Government pay more attention to inner cities that will not be at the expense of the rural areas?

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Gentleman knows, although we in the Department of Trade and Industry have ultimate responsibility for regional aid, in the first instance we accept the advice, after consultation, of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The points made by the hon. Gentleman will have to be looked at. We have said that in any review which entails asking questions and seeking answers, a number of answers may come to a number of questions. We shall have to wait to see what they are.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that drawing lines on a map in any rural area, particularly north Devon, in no way indicates the situation on either side of the map? Does he accept that frequently one finds that areas that do not require assistance receive it and that other areas that on any fair basis should receive assistance do not? Can we get away from this nonsense of drawing lines on maps?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend will be aware that there was a considerable review and that the final map, produced in 1984, incorporated representations from Members of the House and from various regions. At the moment it is not in my mind to change that map, which is based on travel-to-work areas, which, although they have their limitations, none the less are the best building block that we have available at the moment.

Life Assurance Policies

3. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he is satisfied that the revised approximations of the surrender value of life assurance policies proposed in the revised Lautro rule book will give sufficient information to allow investors to make an informed choice of policy; and what observations he has received on the above matters from the Director General of Fair Trading and the National Consumer Council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): Subject to the Secretary of State's statutory responsibilities in respect of competition, it is for the Securities and Investments Board to satisfy itself about the adequacy of Lautro's rule book. The Director General of Fair Trading is at present considering the competitive effects of Lautro's proposed rules and will report to the Secretary of State in due course. No observations on these proposals have been received.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend will no doubt recollect that the subject of surrender values has been of considerable concern to the constituents of many hon. Members and was the subject of considerable debate during the Committee proceedings on what is now the Financial Services Act 1986. Will my hon. Friend undertake to consult urgently on this matter, since it seems to me that at present the Lautro rule book is most unsatisfactory?

Mr. Maude: I hear what my hon . Friend says. I stress again that this is a matter for the SIB and for the Director General of Fair Trading. We have a statutory duty to consider the director general's report in due course and to consider the request of the Securities and Investments Board for consent to recognise Lautro. It would be wrong of me to comment in advance of receiving those representations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Do the proposals in the Lautro rule book enable investors to understand the background to those companies in which they are perhaps investing their money? Would investors in insurance policies know that it was the double-crossing Prudential that sold out 4 per cent. of its Matthew Brown holding and enabled Scottish and Newcastle Breweries to move in and threaten the future of jobs in my constituency?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman draws me into another area upon which, as he understands, legal responsibilities prevent me from commenting. The first matter he raised is one that the Securities and Investments Board will consider.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that the surrender value of a life assurance policy cannot be guaranteed and that recent events on world stock markets highlight the fact that, for many investors, a with-profits life assurance policy represents the best option, given that it provides many guarantees — unit-linked and other policies—where the direct relation between the value of funds and stock market prices can be all too difficult?

Mr. Maude: The point that my hon. Friend makes is undoubtedly one that the Securities and Investments Board will consider.

Mr. Gould: With the City now in the throes of a stock market collapse, is not the failure to bring fully into effect the Financial Services Act a gross dereliction of duty by the hon. Gentleman's Department?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman, when he has time to consider, will realise the fatuity of that observation. He knows that this is a complex structure that has to be brought into force at the right time. There is absolutely no point in having the wrong system in place earlier. It is much better to get the right system in place. It will be brought into force at the earliest opportunity. He will know, in any event, that a large number of powers under the Act are already in force and being used.

Research and Development

4. **Mr. Robertson** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what support the United Kingdom is giving to the framework programme of research and development in the European Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I made clear our support for the framework programme at the Council of Ministers on 28 September when it was adopted. Thanks in large measure to our encouragement, the programme concentrates on the priority task of improving Europe's industrial competitiveness. The British research contribution to this European research effort is second to none.

Mr. Robertson: The Minister knows that that is ludicrously complacent and that the delays and obstructionist actions of the Government since they originally put the spanner in the works of the framework programme have led to damaging delays and the break-up of new groups and has allowed the Japanese and the Americans to take advantage of the scarcity of research. Will he undertake to fight the short-sightedness of the Prime Minister on this issue and make sure that the £289 million that was taken out of the European framework research programme is put back into it right away?

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's description of our role. The main contribution that we made to the discussions was to try to make the programme focus more clearly on genuine industrial priorities. We had very much in mind the need to compete with Japanese and American business on a European scale. I believe that we were principally responsible for improved targeting on key areas, such as information technology, industrial technology and telecommunications. The withholding of £289 million, which is pending settlement of the EC's overall budgetary decisions, will be reconsidered in the light of progress at the Copenhagen summit. It is not possible to go forward with any of these European programmes without having some regard to the overall budgetary disciplines of the European Community and the budget as a whole.

Mr. Barry Field: I recognise the importance that the Government place upon research efforts, including those of the EEC. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that British industry needs to make much more effort in investing in future technology? For example, in my consituency Westland Aerospace has invested substantially in composite material technology, which has enabled it to price competitively to enter the Ariane 5 project.

Mr. Clarke: I accept my hon. Friend's basic premise. There is a case for saying that British industry as a whole should make a greater contribution to its research and development programmes. I acknowledge the excellent record of Westland.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that the consequence of Britain's opposition to the proposal in the framework programme, as originally advanced, has been that the worst features of it in the Government's eyes, such as joint research centre funding, have gone ahead, while the parts that have caught the rap are those that the Government would have liked to support, which have been the subject of delays, such as RACE and ESPRIT II?

Mr. Clarke: The joint research centres have gone ahead because they have always been there. We have arrived at an understanding in the Council that we must seriously tackle the use of resources by the JRCs and ensure that, for example, more of their work is done for customers outside so that we ensure also the relevance and quality of what they are doing. I do not accept that we have caused damaging delays to the other programmes. The key ones, such as ESPRIT and RACE, are now going ahead with greatly enhanced budgets.

Japan (Shoes and Leather)

5. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about the level of duty imposed by Japan on imported shoes and leather.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have received a number of representations about Japan's import restrictions on leather and leather footwear. We and the European Community continue to press the Japanese Government to reduce these.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my hon. Friend aware that Japan operates a tariff quota system against imported footwear and leather that restricts quota and tariff at rates between 20 and 60 per cent.? Does my hon. Friend agree that this is not a reciprocal trading arrangement and that if Japan is interested in contributing towards the correcting of present world trade imbalances it could start by moving towards freer trade in this area?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend touches upon a raw nerve. In the context of the leather industry and the United States and of reaching an agreement with Japan under the GATT; in 1985 the United States put the emphasis on raising its tariff barriers, whereas the EEC chose to press for market opening by Japan, and as a result achieved lower tariffs with an increasing quota.

Mr. John Garrett: Is the Minister aware that the Japanese market has been closed totally for a long time to imports of British footwear, in the interests of protecting an under-privileged class in that prosperous country that happens to make domestic footwear? Is it not the case that Britain has never made adequate representations to open up the Japanese market in this area, with the result that footwear manufacturers in my constituency have suffered considerably?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we take action whenever we can through the auspices of the GATT and through the European Economic Community.

Secondly, I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Atkins: We are always ready to hear any representations from any industrial sector, and we are in close touch with footwear manufacturers.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend use his best endeavours through the Uruguayan round in GATT; to ensure that effective measures are taken with the new Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Takeshita, so that we receive a serious reduction in the amount of protectionism in Japan, which is currently contributing significantly to the difficulties in the world currency crisis?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Sir.

Alnwick and Amble

6. **Mr. Beith** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans for further measures to attract industry to the Alnwick and Amble areas.

Mr. Atkins: We are always prepared to encourage industry to invest in various parts of the United Kingdom, and Alnwick and Amble is no exception.

Mr. Beith: If that is so, why does it remain an exception to the Government's development aid? Bearing in mind that the area has consistently higher levels of unemployment than many assisted areas, does the Minister realise that there will be disappointment in the area as he has nothing new to announce following the deputation that he received? Will he agree to visit the area soon to see how we are trying to help ourselves and how we are being prevented from doing that by discriminatory aids in other places?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman came to see me, and I also received a delegation from Northumberland recently, and the case was made very cogently. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I said to him, as I said to the delegation, that we are not minded at this stage to change the map, which took a long time to create and which we believe is in the interests of long-term investment and should be maintained as it is for a time. I am always delighted to receive invitations from hon. Members on both sides of the House to visit constituencies, and I was particularly delighted to receive an invitation to visit such an attractive part of the country as that represented by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Textiles (False Labels)

7. **Mr. Madden** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action is being taken about false labelling of textiles, especially the overstatement of wool content in garments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The European Commission has been investigating this matter and I understand that its findings will soon be published. Local authorities are responsible for the enforcement of fibre content regulations in the United Kingdom, and last year they were advised by my Department about the concerns expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Madden: When will the Government take some effective action to stop overseas textile producers, especially the Italians, ripping off British textile consumers in the blatant way that they have been doing for years? Does he realise that ministerial huffing and puffing, ministerial stiff notes and ministerial wrist slapping mean nothing at all to Common Market crooks who are making a fortune out of placing false labels on textile products? When will he do something to stop that racket?

Mr. Maude: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. However, we must consider how the regulations brought into force by Parliament are enforced. The West Yorkshire county council has brought a number of successful prosecutions. There have been 351 prosecutions nationwide under the regulations since 1978 and no fewer than 182 in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that by the time the procedures that we operate are carried through, the damage is done? Does he also accept that part of the problem lies with the European Community, which prevailed upon us to alter what was hitherto very adequate labelling legislation?

Mr. Maude: The change to which my hon. Friend referred has no impact on this area. People who misdescribe goods will still be subject to prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. That is the most effective way to stamp out that objectionable practice.

Afghanistan

8. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's trade with Afghanistan.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: United Kingdom exports to the market in 1986 were £11·4 million and imports £11·9 million. We neither encourage nor discourage trade with Afghanistan, and support for British exporters is confined to basic market information available from my Department on request.

Mr. Dalyell: I want to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman a question of which I gave his Department notice. Has the Department of Trade and Industry any end user certificates for the Blowpipe missiles that have found their way to Kabul?

Mr. Clarke: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his persistence. However, he knows perfectly well that it has never been the practice in the House for Ministers to answer questions of that kind or to give information on that sort of subject.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that when the Russians invaded Afghanistan in 1980 the European Community broke off negotiations with COMECON? Surely the situation has not changed, as the Russians remain in Afghanistan and our approach to trade with Afghanistan should have a similar policy.

Mr. Clarke: I described our policy on trade with Afghanistan, and obviously at the moment Afghanistan is best described as a difficult market because of the Russian occupation and the civil war that is in progress. With regard to the export of sensitive items that have been described, it is not the practice of Ministers to answer questions on those subjects in the House.

Manufacturing Industry

9. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month 14 years ago.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. However, since the trough of the recession in 1981 manufacturing output has increased by over 20 per cent. to reach a level of 111·5 in August 1987, based on 1980 equal to 100. This was about 3 per cent. lower than the level of output in August 1973.

Mr. Knox: I welcome the recent improvement in manufacturing output, but is it satisfactory that manufacturing output is still lower than it was in August 1973, 14 years ago?

Mr. Atkins: No. Of course, I would accept that that is a disappointing factor, but it reflects the poor performance of manufacturing industry in the 1970s. I should prefer to agree with the earlier part of my hon. Friend's question, which is that at the moment industrial activity in Britain is in fine fettle. If one talks to industries the length and breadth of the country, as I am now doing, one finds that they are extremely bullish about prospects and are looking forward to the future with a great deal of excitement and interest.

Mr. Hoyle: The Minister talks of confidence, but what will now happen to manufacturing industry as a result of the collapse of shares, which shows that there is no confidence in the economy under the Government?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman betrays his ignorance by the tone of his question. As he will know, coming from an industrial constituency as I do, that if he were to talk to his local companies, big and small, they would tell him that no matter what is happening on the stock market they are doing very well and want to do better.

Mr. Oppenheim: Should not Opposition Members temper their righteous indignation by bearing in mind that manufacturing output in 1979 was rather lower than it was in 1974?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. I am not even sure whether the Opposition's indignation is righteous.

Mr. Bruce: I and my colleagues disassociate ourselves from the official Opposition's apparent wish to will Britain into economic recession, but will the Minister accept that any sustained industrial recovery in Britain is dependent on international trade and confidence and industry's ability to obtain funds from the City? In those circumstances, will not pressing ahead with the BP share flotation tomorrow be likely to depress the City and make it more difficult for British industry to obtain funds to sustain its future investment?

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman, representing all his hon. Friends present today, takes a view which is at least contrary to that of the official Opposition. However, it is not for me to comment on the BP deal, which is very much a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mrs. Peacock: Does not the investment in manufacturing that is now taking place in Yorkshire suggest that many companies are confident about Britain's economic future?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. As a Lancashire Member as well, I can confirm that the north is doing exceptionally well.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does the Minister accept that manufacturing output is not only lower than it was in 1973, but lower than it was in the second quarter of 1979? That abysmal performance has been matched only by those great manufacturing powers of Barbados, Fiji, Greece, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. With that record from the years of oil opportunity, what does he expect now when industry is bring crucified by record high interest rates and a pound which has appreciated 18 per cent. in real terms since last September? Why does he not take his right hon. Friend the Chancellor by the elbow and say, "Look Nigel, enough is enough. Get interest rates down"?

Mr. Atkins: The Opposition are struggling to find bad news when the fact is that if one travels, as many hon. Members should do and have done during the recess, among British industry, talking to companies and listening to what they have to say—*[Interruption.]* The CBI said only recently that things have been going exceptionally well. Anyone who flies in the face of that information is clearly trying to knock Britain instead of talk us up.

Mr. Bowen Wells: What is my hon. Friend going to do about a part of manufacturing industry for which his Ministry is responsible, namely, Land Rover? When will Land Rover increase its production and competitiveness in the world market?

Mr. Atkins: I suspect that that is slightly outside the terms of the question. None the less, it is a matter to which the company should pay considerable attention, which it is doing. My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), who is sitting behind me but is prevented from contributing to the debate on this question, knows better than most what a success story Land Rover is and continues to be.

British Space Centre

10. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the level of financial support for the British Space Centre.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have decided not to increase public expenditure on space above the current level, which is already running at over £100 million a year.

Mr. Ross: Will the Minister bear in mind when he goes to the meeting on 9 and 10 November that the Japanese are currently considering a report from their space committee at NASA which proposes an increase in spending this year from 120 billion yen to 300 billion to 400 billion yen, with a further target of raising that spending—all on civilian space products—to 6 trillion yen by the end of the century?

The Minister will know from the reports from Japan that it is targeting that spending on civilian products because of the dramatic recovery that it expects for space activity. Does he not consider it rather silly to go to the meeting with such a low spending plan for Britain?

Mr. Clarke: I shall go to the meeting of the European Space Agency at the The Hague explaining that Britain wishes to play a constructive and useful role in the agency. However, we have argued repeatedly, and will continue to argue, that the ESA plan should be based on financial, scientific and commercial reality. We should judge carefully which targets to spend money on. I am sure that the Japanese have made a similar hard-nosed appraisal of their investment, and we believe that Europe should do the same in regard to its space effort.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept the importance of the space industry to the country's technology base, and will he take this opportunity of reconfirming the Government's commitment to the success of that industry in the future?

Mr. Clarke: Indeed I do accept the importance of the space industry. It is because we accept it that we are already spending such substantial sums on the space programme, and why we have taken part in the discussions on the European programme. I intend over the next few months to continue to hold discussions with British companies about the way in which we can obtain scientific and industrial value from our commitment to space. That is the message that I shall be taking to the ESA. It is no good arguing, however, that any money spent on any space programme is justifiable when it reaches the considerable sums arrived at by the European agency.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that, unless we invest in the European programmes, we shall not retain our scientists and engineers, who will find opportunities, if not in Europe, in America and elsewhere? Does he also agree that if we are to play a useful part in the technological advances of the 21st century we must retain those scientists now?

Mr. Clarke: We must encourage and support the scientists whom we have, and, in particular, we must maintain the undoubted lead that parts of the scientific and industrial community have here—for example, in space satellites. We are telling the ESA that, while we shall continue our membership, we wish to question the objective of programmes such as Hermes, which appear to be based on a desire to achieve a European manned presence in space by the turn of the century. But there is no real doubt in the British scientific and industrial community about either the scientific or the commercial worth of that programme.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that an essential preliminary to long-term decisions is a clear understanding between Government and industry on what our objectives should be? Is he confident that we can arrive at such an understanding in the time scale that is necessary if opportunities are not to be lost?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend asks a cogent question. It is important that we continue as rapidly as possible the discussions taking place between the BNSC, British industrialists and myself to work out a clear strategy to define our objectives. It is unlikely that we shall have completed that by the time of the meeting at The Hague. On the other hand, I think that there is a very good case for asking the agency as a whole, and its members, to make a fundamental reappraisal of where they wish to target their efforts and on which programmes they ought to concentrate.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister agree with his right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) that in refusing further support for space research the Government have taken leave of their senses? Will he explain why he is right and why his counterparts in France, Germany, Italy, the United States, Japan, Canada and even India, all of whom spend more than we do on space research, are wrong?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend the previous Minister for Information Technology took part in a Rome conference that sketched the outlines of the European Space Agency programmes. Since then the costs have more than doubled. Programmes such as Hermes, for manned space flight at the end of the century, have been added to the programme. When my right hon. Friend was in office, and since I have been in office, we have argued consistently that these plans are grandiose, not well targeted and do not provide for enough industrial and commercial participation. Simply to say that India spends more than we do on its space programme and that therefore we should spend millions more, willy-nilly, regardless of what ESA is putting forward, is not the most scientific or intellectual contribution to the debate.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Should not my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the advice of ACOST, which, as reported in the national press, has suggested that either we should give sufficient money to space or get out of it? Is it not bad for international collaboration if we cease to take a positive line on both space and reasearch?

Mr. Clarke: I have an advantage over my hon. Friend, because I have received the advice of ACOST, whereas he has to rely on newspaper reports. I shall be paying regard to the advice of ACOST. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's conclusion that we must make a positive contribution, but a positive contribution is to request the

European Space Agency seriously to reappraise its programmes and stop being led into grandiose, prestige projects that are of dubious scientific and economic value.

Research and Development

11. **Dr. Bray** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the latest figures for expenditure on research and development in British industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The most recent estimates for expenditure on research and development performed in British industry are for 1985. Between 1981 and 1985 there was an increase in real terms of 12 per cent. in research financed by industry. I welcome this rise. The main responsibility for spending more on civil research and development should continue to rest with industry, as the House of Lords Select Committee on Civil Research and Development recognised in its recent report.

Dr. Bray: I welcome the increase in research and development in chemicals, electronics and motor vehicles, in particular since 1981, but does the Minister not agree that it is a matter of concern that since 1981 overall research and development in industry as a proportion of national income has fallen? With industry funding of research and development still so far behind that of our industrial competitors, is not the Government's attitude in response to the House of Lords Select Committee report still far too complacent? Are the Government not aware of the desperate state of science and technology in this country?

Mr. Clarke: I agree in part with the hon. Gentleman's diagnosis of the problem. We should still like there to be increased investment in well-judged research and development by British industry. I am glad to say that the latest figures show that there has been a very welcome real terms increase. It may be that our figures are out of date and that we are still commenting on the position in the depths of the recession, whereas now it is very much better. We have promised to report back to the House of Lords and to the House when we have completed our review of the Government's research and development priorities.

Dr. Hampson: Is it not the case that private companies that are involved in space research and development have said that they will pay their own whack but that they expect the Government to provide proper investment so as to increase the research and development technological base. We cannot be in something like the European Space Agency — a British initiative — by simply paying our basic membership fees and then expecting to take advantage of all its facilities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that some companies have continued to contribute and have contributed even more since August towards the preparatory work on some of the optional programmes of the space agency. It is also fair to say that most of the industries concerned share our concern about the way in which the European Space Agency produces its programmes and the limited acknowledgement that that agency sometimes gives to the part that industry and commerce have to play and ought to play in guiding priorities. I want to continue discussions with British industry to make sure that we have a much clearer strategy about where UK Limited ought to be going.

European Economic Community

12. **Mr. Grocott** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current deficit in the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and the other countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the 12 months to September the deficit was £8½ billion, on the balance of payments basis.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister confirm that among the figures there is a £9 billion deficit in manufactured goods alone? Is it not the case that, especially since 1979, there has been a massive export of jobs in manufacturing industry from Britain to Europe? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give the House his latest estimate of the date when membership of the European Community will be beneficial to British manufacturing industries?

Mr. Clarke: Comments of that kind have to be set against the historical basis, whereby I think it is right to say that Britain has always imported more manufactured goods from western Europe than it has exported to western Europe — *[Interruption.]* — well, certainly since about 1870.

Our trade with the European Community has grown substantially since our membership. It now provides a market for about half our exports, whereas it provided a market for about a third of them before we joined the Community in 1970. The hon. Gentleman also ought to know that, in recent years, the balance between imports and exports between ourselves and the European Community has been improving substantially in our favour. Between 1986 and 1987, in the first nine months, exports grew by 20 per cent., while imports grew by 13 per cent. thereby improving the trade balance from our point of view.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if further progress is made towards the internal market our balance of trade will improve significantly, as we will be able to to increase our exports of financial services to other member states?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly do, and I believe that that should be our biggest single priority when we consider the advantages that we can derive from the European Community. We should decide, as urgently as possible, exactly how British industry will respond to the change from our domestic market to the much enlarged single European market, which undoubtedly will be completed by 1992.

Birmingham

14. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is satisfied with the progress made by the Handsworth task force in stimulating employment in Birmingham.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am very satisfied with the progress made by the Government's Handsworth task force in stimulating employment in the Handsworth area of Birmingham. Since it was set up in February 1986 the task force has been very successful in targeting Government programmes more effectively in Handsworth. It has also worked closely with the local community and the private sector to encourage the growth of enterprise and employment for local people. In total 45 projects have received task force top-up support amounting to some £2·4 million, which has helped to lever a further £4 million from private sector and other public sector sources.

Mr. Rooker: I thank the Minister for that answer and pay tribute to that small contribution to the Handsworth part of my constituency. Is the Minister not disappointed that the task force was unable to help more people already in work stay in work by its refusal to fund the latchkey project at the Handsworth day care centre? The day care centre was told by the task force that it fulfilled all the criteria, but that it did not have a politically high enough profile. Does the Minister accept that that is not a good enough reason for not giving away Government money?

Mr. Clarke: I very much doubt that that was the reason, and I shall inquire into it. I shall go back and look at that case again. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is constrained to give faint praise to the task force, and perhaps I should be constrained in giving faint praise to him and the Birmingham city council. There is, however, a high level of co-operation in Handsworth between the task force, the city council and on all political fronts. I shall certainly make sure that no projects are turned down for any party political or other political reason.

Manufacturing Industry

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the first nine months of 1987 there was a deficit on trade in manufactures of £4·8 billion.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister not ashamed to stand at the Dispatch Box and confess that the manufacturing trading deficit for 1987 now looks so bad that it is in danger of beating even last year's record deficit of nearly £5½ billion? As a trading nation we would be down the plughole were it not for North sea oil. Would it not be in order for the Prime Minister to sack the Secretary of State responsible for this abysmal performance — the worst deficit in Britain's manufacturing history — instead of considering giving him another sinecure as chairman of the Tory party, whose policies are responsible for this fiasco?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that this country's overall trade position so far this year is better than forecast by the Chancellor in his Budget. It reflects the extremely encouraging outlook and continuing improvement in our manufacturing performance, so clearly described by my hon. Friend the Minister earlier. As he said, it is no good scratching about for particular statistics to try to demonstrate a pessimistic outlook. The hon. Gentleman should look at the latest Confederation of British Industry industrial trends survey, which is the most encouraging for many years in describing Britain's industrial and manufacturing outlook.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that virtually every industry in the west midlands is experiencing an upturn in its export potential —and none more so than the motor car industry, where some of the tied manufacturers of European companies are re-exporting their products to mainland Europe? Is that not a testimony to the quality and productivity of the British worker?

Mr. Clarke: One of the most encouraging aspects of our present manufacturing scene is how well motor vehicles production is doing and how much, especially in the west midlands, performance is outstripping that of our European competitors. It is proving a very good investment for the multinational car industry. That is even extending to Scotland where, as my hon. Friend knows, Ford is anxious to invest in a new plant in Dundee— unless the labour and trade union movement succeed in driving away that investment with a return to the bad old industrial practices that have caused so much damage in the past.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that many ordinary people judge the wealth and prosperity of the economy of this nation by our manufacturing industries and not by the paper wealth of the City? Is he aware that many industrialists and others are concerned about the Government's apparent complacency over Britain continuing to import more manufactured goods than it exports? When will the Government take real action to improve the position in our manufacturing industries? What action do they propose to rectify the current position?

Mr. Clarke: The country needs all the earnings that it can get, both from the manufacturing and the service sectors of the economy, including our strong financial services sector. Of course, I take pleasure in the fact that manufacturing output and investment are now rising strongly. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said, for many industries the current outlook is very much better than it has been for many years.

Mr. Riddick: Will my right hon. and learned Friend do all that he can to persuade the American Government and Congress that they should not respond to the current financial crisis by erecting additional trade barriers, especially in textiles, which is of particular interest in my constituency?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Obviously, we are concerned about some of the proposals before the American Congress. We very much hope that protectionist pressures will not grow and that the Administration and Congress will reject any such pressures. I am glad to say that our trading relationship with America is not especially threatened. For example, there was a successful outcome yesterday to the talks I had, as one of the Airbus Ministers, with the President's trade representative. We successfully eased misunderstandings and paved the way to an eventual agreement that would allow fair trade in the civil aircraft sector.

Mr. Blair: Is the Minister aware that there is serious concern about the effect on international trade of the stock market collapse and the turbulence in the foreign exchange markets? Does he agree with the Chancellor's statement that the behaviour of the stock markets is absurd, and with the Prime Minister's statement that the behaviour of the foreign exchange markets is 95 per cent. speculation? If so, what are his Department's proposals to reassure those who manufacture in the real economy and to control those who speculate in the casino economy of the markets?

Mr. Clarke: Obviously, it is important that in order to return to stability in the markets we should retain the present atmosphere of business confidence both in this country and in most of the other developed countries. The fact that the real economy of Britain is so strong should reassure those investing in the markets. At a time of great concern throughout the world, it is possible to feel more confident in Britain because of our improvement in productivity and performance and the underlying strength of the economy.

Oftel and Ofgas

17. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the directors of *(a)* Oftel and *(b)* Ofgas to discuss the level of consumer satisfaction and competition in the relevant industries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I expect to meet the Director General of Telecommunications shortly and to discuss a number of subjects of current interest. Meetings with the Director General of Gas Supply are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, I am glad to say.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that the current anxieties about consumer interests and competition in both telecommunications and gas show the Government's mistake in privatising those organisations as monopolies and highlights their inability to open them up to effective competition or to regulate them? Will he comment on the fatuous remark of the Secretary of State for Scotland that it was up to British Telecom to promote competition against itself?

Mr. Clarke: With respect, I do not regard either organisation as entirely a monopoly. At present British Telecom is in competition only with Mercury, but we have also liberalised parts of its business and in the longer term I believe that we can look forward to greater competition. British Gas is, of course, in competition with the electricity industry. It is important that these organisations are properly regulated and controlled, in the interest of consumers. In my area of responsibility the Director General of Oftel has all the powers that he requires. I am glad to say that he has initiated a large number of inquiries into the recent performance of the Post Office and British Telecom, and I believe that he is taking steps to protect the consumer interest.

Mr. Sackville: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the Director General of Oftel, will he point out that I have never had any cause for complaint about the telephone service and have received no complaints from my constituents?—*[Interruption.]* Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that 99 per cent. of the criticism that we hear is both gratuitous and political?

Mr. Clark: The general view seems to be that my hon. Friend, as ever, is a lucky man in the experience of most of us. Nevertheless, he makes a valid point. We are all aware of public concern about shortcomings in British Telecom's performance. It should be remembered, however, that it has 22 million subscribers, a growing demand for services and increasing technological change in those services. It was also badly damaged by a serious strike earlier this year. Complaints should therefore be kept in proportion and refer both to the management and to the work force.

Mr. Lewis: Will the Minister tell the Director General of Oftel that it is time for a crackdown on the soft porn being peddled by British Telecom on the premium services and that the profit motive should come behind public good taste? I appreciate that the Minister is struggling to find an answer, as he did not expect this to come up today.

Mr. Clarke: I suggest that when next speaking to his constituents the hon. Gentleman should rest his sore throat by using the telephone rather than trying to communicate directly. Most services of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman referred are provided by outside companies using British Telecom facilities and not by British Telecom itself. Nevertheless, there is some cause for complaint. We have set up an independent committee to consider the complaints received and to decide what services are suitable for our telecommunications system.

Space Plan

18. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to make a statement on his space plan.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have decided not to increase public expenditure on space above the current level, which is already running at £100 million per year.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the British space industry has yet to be formally consulted on the space plan? When his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State visited the Space 87 exhibition in Brighton earlier this month, was he not impressed by the presence of the French space industry, which receives far more recognition and support from its Government than does our industry, and by the fact that it is far larger and employs more people as a result? Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear that in mind when he goes to The Hague next month?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend says that the industry has not been formally consulted, but I think that most leading industrialists in this sector are in regular contact with the British National Space Centre. I am already having discussions with many people in the industry and I intend to continue discussions in the coming months to get our strategy clear. There is certainly heavy French participation in the European Space Agency and the French are pressing particular programmes. We have to collaborate with them as essential partners in many areas, but we must make sure, with them, that we are spending our money wisely on objectives of mutual advantage.

Regional Aid

20. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was his Department's total budget for regional aid to industry in each of the English regions, Scotland and Wales in the last year for which full figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: The figures for my Department's spend on regional aid to industry in each of the English regions, Scotland and Wales in 1986-87 will be issued in the *Official Report.*

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister's Department now conducting a review of regional aid, and if so, what are the terms of reference? In view of the importance of regional aid to Wales, which aid has been slashed since 1979, during the review will the hon. Gentleman consult the Secretary of State for Wales, who is known to be a keen supporter of regional aid?

Mr. Atkins: When any new team of Ministers comes into office, it is right and proper that they should ask questions and receive answers. That is exactly what we are doing at the moment. We hope to have the answers to the questions that we posed in the not too distant future. In the meantime, of course, we always consult our right hon. Friends, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is no exception.

Following are the figures:

Department of Trade and Industry payments of regional aid to industry in 1986-87 were as follows

Area	*£ million*
North-East	108·3
North-West	132·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·0
East Midlands	10·6
West Midlands	9·9
South-West	20·6
Scotland	0·6
Wales	0·9
GB Total	320·8

1. These figures cover regional development grants and regional selective assistance industrial and training grants. All figures are gross, before deducting domestic and European Community receipts.
2. The figures exclude expenditure on the provision of land and buildings through the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the exchange risk guarantee scheme and business improvement services as it is not possible to provide a breakdown of these items by English region. The amount spent on each of the above elements in England during 1986-87 was £12·7 million, £20·3 million and £13·8 million respectively.
3. Nearly all expenditure on regional aid to industry in Scotland and Wales is the responsibility of the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively.

Mr. Adolfo Calero

Mr. Speaker: Point of order, Mr. Hoyle.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He was first.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I decide whom I call. Mr. Hoyle.

Mr. Hoyle: Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that Adolfo Calero, the well-known terrorist and military leader of the Contras, is visiting the House of Commons at the moment? Apart from the double standards shown by the Prime Minister and the Conservative party in acting as hosts to that well-known terrorist, may I contrast the treatment of that man with the treatment of Mr. Bennett, whose pass was withdrawn, although he was an innocent person? Were you aware that that terrorist was visiting the House? As it lies within your powers, will you ask that man, that monster, who has the blood of innocent people dripping from his hands, to withdraw from the House immediately?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one at a time. I have no knowledge that any regulation in regard to visitors to the House has been broken. If the hon. Gentleman has any knowledge of any regulation being broken, perhaps he will come and see me about it.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take Mr. Ashby first.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely there is a precedent, because in 1978 during the Sandinista revolution against the legitimate Government of Nicaragua, the Sandinista leader visited the House at the invitation of the Labour party.

Mr. Speaker: Precedent or not, I am not aware that any regulation has been broken.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the Opposition Front Bench spokesman.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Labour Front Bench, I should like to support my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). We know, Mr. Speaker, that at the moment you are dealing with access to the precincts of the House of Commons. I am sure that you will agree that it is important for you to be seen to be even-handed in the matter and to treat both sides and all Members of the House on an equal basis. As my hon. Friend said, I understand that Adolfo Calero, a Contra terrorist leader, known to have led that band of terrorists, killing innocent civilians in Nicaragua, has been invited into the House —[SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."]—is present in the House at the invitation of Conservative Members. All that we are asking, Mr. Speaker, is that you look into the matter, find out the facts about the invitation and the exact circumstances, and make a statement to the House about whether there has been, as my hon. Friend and I believe, a breach of the regulations.

Several Hon. Members: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can deal with the matter. I shall certainly look into it, but, as I said to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), I have no knowledge that any regulation has been broken. I cannot be responsible for anybody who is brought into the House by another hon. Member. That has never been the responsibility of Mr. Speaker, but, if any regulation has been broken, I shall gladly report to the House.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can say any more.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I should like to support your ruling, Mr. Speaker, because it is— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is terribly kind — *[Interruption.]* Order. We have a heavy day.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order? — *[Interruption.]* Order. I have said what I am going to do about the matter and I cannot say any more.

Mr. Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. It is a new point of order.

Mr. Speaker: A new point of order?

Mr. Banks: It is a new point of order, Mr. Speaker, because you have impressed upon the House the need to ensure that hon. Members of all parties are protected from the possibility of personal attack or outrage upon them as individuals. Many of my hon. Friends have attacked the policies and the attitudes of the Contra terrorists and we now hear that the leader of the Contras is here — an assassin, a man who has the blood of women and children on his hands, and who will undoubtedly be taking this opportunity to find out about Opposition Members who have defended the legitimate Sandinista Government of Nicaragua. This man should be dragged from the House. We need to be protected from him.

Mr. Bowen Wells *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I do need a bit of help.

Mr. Wells: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not in the best traditions of this House that those putting different points of view should be admitted without distinction? People representing the current Nicaraguan Government have been admitted on behalf of the Labour party, so this man, who is putting a contrary point of view, should be admitted also. I look to you, Mr. Speaker, to maintain such access to the House to the fullest of your power and ability.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that I have any more to say on this.

Mr. Grocott: It is a different point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A different point of order. Well, let me deal with them one at a time. I have already said that I shall look into this matter. If any regulations have been broken I shall, of course, report to the House but if regulations have not been broken, the matter is as the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has said. This place has always been open to visitors provided that they come in with a Member. However, I shall certainly look into it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): When you say, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Grocott: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In any inquiries that you make, may I ask you to look into the question of who is paying for this terrorist's visit to this country? As you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of all of us in the House to show some solidarity with sister legislatures and, as you know, the Congress of the United States is at the moment desperately attempting to bring the President to book for the way in which he has diverted funds to the Contras via Iranian arms sales. We owe it to the Congress of the United States to make sure that we know where the money is going.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot do as the hon. Gentleman suggests. That is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you take action if, and only if, this gentleman has applied to become a research assistant?

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you say that regulations may not have been broken, will you bear in mind that many of my hon. Friends believe that the House of Commons, this honourable House, would be contaminated by having in our presence someone who is the leader of a notorious band of murderers who have carried out countless acts of terrorism? If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to ask the Serjeant at Arms to see where this person is, and to see to it that if this person is on the premises he is turfed out now. May I also ask you whether you intend to report back to the House today, because we are concerned about this issue and find no justification whatsoever for Tory Members to invite over a notorious terrorist when they pay lip service to opposing terrorism?

Mr. Speaker: I shall need time to look into the matter.

Questions to Ministers

3.39 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): On an entirely different point of order, Mr. Speaker. In Question Time the leader of the SDP entered the Chamber just before his question, No. 13, was due to be called. One of his hon. Friends drew his attention to the fact that his question was on the Order Paper and the right hon. Gentleman fled like a frightened rabbit. That is a gross insult to this House and, at the very least, it shows a lack of leadership. Can you rule on the insult to the House?

Mr. Speaker: I really do not think that I can be responsible for why hon. Members seek to leave this Chamber.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that all hon. Members have now signed the ballot and we should get on with it.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No. Ballot for notices of motions.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook
Mr. Ken Eastham
Mr. Sydney Chapman

BILLS PRESENTED

PROTECTION OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Mr. Richard Shepherd, supported by Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn, Sir Ian Gilmour, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Teddy Taylor, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mr. Chris Smith, Dr. David Owen and Mr. Archy Kirkwood, presented a Bill to repeal section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 and to make new provision for the protection of official information and articles, for the publication of certain documents, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January and to be printed. [Bill 20].

SCOTCH WHISKY

Mr. Bill Walker, supported by Mr. Allan Stewart, Mr. John McFall, Mr. Henry McLeish, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Alex Salmond, Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Roger Sims, and Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn, presented a Bill to make provision as to the definition of Scotch Whisky and as to the manufacture and sale of whisky, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 21].

ABORTION (AMENDMENT)

Mr. David Alton, supported by Mr. A. J. Beith, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Miss Janet Fookes, Mrs. Elaine Kellett Bowman, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Cyril Smith, Rev. Martin Smyth, and Mrs. Ann Winterton, presented a Bill to limit the period within pregnancy during which an abortion may be performed, subject to certain exceptions: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 22].

CONSUMER ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS

Mr. James Pawsey, supported by Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr, Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. Gerald Bowden, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Kenneth Hind, Mr. Edward Leigh, and Mr. David Ashby, presented a Bill to extend to consumers certain rights as regards agreements to refer future differences to arbitration and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 23].

MOTOR VEHICLES (WEARING OF REAR SEAT BELTS BY CHILDREN)

Mr. Stephen Day, supported by Mr. Barry Sheerman, Mr. David Knox, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Roger Moate, Mr. George Robertson, Sir Philip Goodhart, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. David Marshall and Mr. Ronnie Fearn, presented a Bill to make provision for the wearing of rear seat belts by children; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 24].

MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Andrew Stewart, supported by Mr. David Hams, Mr. Michael Lord, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Greg Knight. Ms. Clare Short and Mr. Tim Boswell, presented a Bill to make provision for the punishment of persons who send or deliver letters or other articles for the purpose of causing distress or anxiety: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 25].

SUNDAY SPORTS (NO. 2)

Mr. Nicholas Soames, supported by Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. George Robertson, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Sir Eldon Griffiths, Mr. Charles Morrison, Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. John Carlisle and Mr. Andrew MacKay, presented a Bill to exempt races, athletic sports and other sporting events from the entertainments and amusements to which the Sunday Observance Act 1780 applies and to allow betting to take place on Sunday afternoons on tracks and on certain Sunday afternoons in betting offices: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 26].

SLAUGHTER OF DEER

Miss Emma Nicholson, supported by Sir Richard Body, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Gerard Neale and Mr. Tony Speller, presented a Bill to regulate slaughterhouses and knackers' yards in connection with the slaughter of deer; to make provision for the welfare of deer at slaughter; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 27].

ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY INFORMATION

Mr. Chris Smith, supported by Mr. John Battle, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Norman Miscampbell, Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas and Joan Walley, presented a Bill to establish public registers of certain notices served concerning health, safety and environmental protection; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 28].

ACCESS TO MEDICAL REPORTS

Mr. Archy Kirkwood, supported by Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Robin Squire and Mr. Dafydd Wigley, presented a Bill to establish a right of access by individuals to reports relating to themselves provided by medical practitioners for employment or insurance purposes and to make provision for related matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 29].

OPTICAL APPLIANCES (BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PERSONS)

Mr. James Lamond, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Jack Ashley, Sir John Farr, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and Mr. Ernie Ross, presented a Bill to amend Schedule 12 to the National Health Service Act 1977 and sections 70 and 105 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 to enable registered blind or partially sighted persons to obtain optical devices provided under the National Health Service free of charge: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 30].

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. John Browne, supported by Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. A. J. Beith, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Churchill, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. Eric Forth, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Emma Nicholson and Mr. Hugh Dykes, presented a Bill to enable a court to disqualify a person from having custody of an animal on a first conviction of cruelty; and to increase the penalties for offences relating to animal fights in England and Wales and to penalise attendance at such fights in Scotland: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 31].

LICENSING (RETAIL SALES)

Mr. Andrew MacKay, supported by Mr. George Gardiner, Mr John Cartwright, Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. Michael Colvin, Mr. James Couchman, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. John M. Taylor and Mr. Nicholas Baker, presented a Bill to amend the definition of 'sale by retail' in section 201 of the Licensing Act 1964; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 32].

HOUSING (HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION)

Mr. Brian Wilson, supported by Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Charles Irving, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr Ron Leighton, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. Tom Cox, presented a Bill to update, strengthen and simplify the law and procedures relating to houses and buildings occupied by persons who do not form a single household; to define categories of such houses and provide standards to apply to them; to clarify the duty of owners of such houses to maintain those standards; to confer duties on local housing authorities to enforce the standards and assist improvements by grants; to extend and simplify local housing authorities' powers to make control orders

[Mr. Speaker]

and compulsory purchase orders on the ground of harassment; to increase occupiers' rights to initiate improvements and to be rehoused in certain circumstances; to repeal existing provisions relating to such houses; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 33].

UNFAIR REPORTING AND RIGHT OF REPLY

Mrs. Ann Clwyd, supported by Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Norman Buchan, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. Geraint Howells, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris and Mr. Roger Gale presented a Bill to give members of the public the right of reply to allegations made against them or to misreporting or misrepresentations about them in the Press or in broadcasts; to establish a Media Complaints Commission; to extend legal aid to actions for defamation; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 34].

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN)

Mr. Edward Leigh, supported by Sir John Biggs-Davison, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. Julian Brazier, Mr. David Evennett and Mr. John Watts, presented a Bill to require, subject to certain exceptions, a medical practitioner treating a woman not resident in the United Kingdom for the termination of pregnancy to give notice of such treatment to a medical practitioner in the country in which she is ordinarily resident: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 35].

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION)

Mr. Kenneth Hind, supported by Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Dame Jill Knight, Sir Bernard Braine, Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Mr. James Pawsey, Mrs. Ann Winterton, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Robert Hayward and Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to human embryos produced by *in vitro* fertilisation, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 36].

HOUSING (WAITING LIST RESTRICTIONS)

Mr. Donald Anderson, supported by Mr. Charles Irving, Mr. Tom Cox, Mr. David Knox, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Robin Squire and Mr. Ron Leighton presented a Bill to limit restrictions that can be imposed on access to and allocation from local authority housing lists; and to establish priority for certain persons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 37].

COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION)

Mr. Andrew Faulds presented a Bill to provide for access by the public to meetings of, and to certain documents and information relating to, Community Health Councils and committees of those Councils and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January and to be printed. [Bill 38].

ABORTION (FINANCIAL BENEFIT)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Gordon Oakes, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Cyril Smith, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Mr. David Amess, Rev. Martin Smyth and Mrs. Ann Winterton presented a Bill to amend section 2 of the Abortion Act 1967: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 39].

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Companies (Mergers and Divisions) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Defence

[Relevant reports from the Select Committee on Defence:

First Report: Expenditure on Major Defence Projects: Accountability to the House of Commons, House of Commons Paper 340; Third Report: The Progress of Trident Programme, House of Commons Paper 356; Fourth Report: Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign, House of Commons Paper 345-I, and the Government Response thereto, Cm. 228; and Fifth Report: Defence Commitments in the South Atlantic, House of Commons Paper 408.]

[SECOND DAY'S DEBATE]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [27 October]:

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987 contained in Cm. 101.

Which amendment was to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987, Cm. 101, and in particular the Government's plans for Trident, are leading to damaging cuts in the United Kingdom's conventional defences, in our contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and in our defence industrial base; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to cancel Trident, which clearly will neither be British nor independent, thereby avoiding a run-down in our non-nuclear defences; welcomes the progress made by the governments of the United States and Soviet Union towards concluding an agreement eliminating all longer range and shorter range intermediate nuclear missiles, including Cruise missiles, from Europe; further believes that the obstacles created by the Strategic Defence Initiative can be resolved and that a further agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union for a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic ballistic missiles can be successfully pursued; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to press, within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, for the speedy commencement of further negotiations to reduce and eliminate all battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe, such negotiations to take place simultaneously with the proposed negotiations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact on the reduction of conventional forces." — *[Mr. Denzil Davies.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Front Bench, may I say to the House that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to take part in the second day of this important debate. It would be helpful if contributions could be brief. I have at the moment no authority to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

3.46 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): This is the first occasion on which I have taken part in a defence debate from the Dispatch Box for more than four years. During that time, much has changed. Two things in particular struck me about yesterday's debate. The first was that the unilateralists on the Labour Benches, having lost the argument, are now desperately trying to rewrite history in order to align themselves with current developments in arms control. But we all know that if their antics had succeeded there would be no prospect of a worthwhile INF agreement to-day.

The second thing that emerged so clearly yesterday was the absolutely chaotic state of defence policy on the Opposition Benches. What we might call the revisionist tendency on the Opposition Front Bench is reduced to grumbling about our conventional forces. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) spoiled an entertaining contribution on his first occasion at the Dispatch Box by going on to claim that our armed forces were ill-equipped and demoralised. That was certainly true eight years ago, after they had been savaged by a Labour Government, but to-day it is a travesty of the truth.

But even the hon. Gentleman's comments were put in the shade by the amazing call from the fundamentalist wing of the Labour Party for Britain to become a non-aligned power on the ground that the military threat to western Europe was a figment of imagination. I suggest that we should bring the debate back to reality.

Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave a general account of our defence policy, and later my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) commented on procurement. I do not want to go over again the ground that they have already covered, and I therefore propose to devote most of my time this afternoon to the activities of the armed forces. Much of what I have to say will be concerned with activities outside the NATO area or within the United Kingdom, but that does not mean that we should overlook the fundamental importance of our membership of NATO, even though much of our contribution to it is relatively routine.

Alone of the 16 members of the Alliance, the United Kingdom contributes forces to the whole range of deterrent capabilities, from strategic nuclear to conventional forces, and at the same time commits forces to all three of NATO's major commands, in Europe, the Channel and the Atlantic. Contrary to the gloomy predictions made yesterday by the hon. Member for Knowsley, South, we have every intention of keeping things that way. In Germany, we maintain the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany. In the eastern Atlantic and Channel, the Royal Navy contributes nearly 70 per cent. of NATO's available maritime forces. Finally, we provide for the air and ground defence of the United Kingdom base, which in time of war would be an essential base for operating in the rear, and for reinforcements.

I am convinced that the effectiveness of NATO depends equally on the cohesion of its European members and on the fundamental commitment of the United States to our common defence effort. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) argued yesterday that our reason for having our own strategic deterrent was the fear that the United States might become detached from the defence of Europe. But that is not the point. Deterrence is a matter of perception, and the British strategic deterrent is an insurance policy against any aggressor making such a miscalculation. In fact, the United States has recently reaffirmed its central role in the Alliance through Exercise Reforger. During that exercise, the United States moved no fewer than 35,000 men and 4,800 vehicles across the Atlantic to participate alongside European forces in Exercise Certain Strike. There could be no clearer expression of the continuing and vital commitment of America to European defence.

When I visited allied forces taking part in Certain Strike last month I was struck by the progress being made in improving the effectiveness, the readiness and the interoperability between the services of all the nations taking part. The same was true of exercise Central Enterprise, an annual, major, live flying exercise to practice interoperability of central region air forces, to

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

which the United Kingdom also made a substantial contribution. Since we last debated defence issues in February, the Royal Navy has been in the public eye a great deal.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the Minister answer the question that I asked yesterday? On 25 May, representatives of all NATO Governments agreed to reinstate the 3 per cent. real growth in defence expenditure and commitment to NATO. Will the Minister tell us whether the Government still subscribe to that 3 per cent. real growth commitment and, if they do, where will they get the money?

Mr. Stewart: That is an aspiration which remains to be fulfilled. This Government at least fulfilled a major increase in defence expenditure during the first half of the 1980s when we increased expenditure by 3 per cent. a year. The right hon. Gentleman will have to possess his soul in patience about our figures for future defence expenditure until the proper time for their announcement.

Events in the Gulf area, which have attracted most of the attention to the Navy and on which I shall comment further in a moment, should not obscure the fact that a great deal of the Navy's activity takes place within the NATO area. This involves not only our regular commitment to the standing NATO squadrons in the channel and the eastern Atlantic, but participation in NATO exercises.

More than 20 Royal Navy ships and Royal fleet auxiliaries took part last month in the NATO exercise Ocean Safari in the north Atlantic. This is the major maritime NATO exercise of the year, involving on this occasion ships from nine nations exercising deployment, training and integrated operations under NATO command. Among many other naval activities, I should mention the surfacing with two American submarines of HMS Superb at the north pole in May as part of a course of experiments and trials in the Arctic ocean. This was the first occasion at the pole on which a British submarine has surfaced in company with others in this way.

As ever, the Royal Navy has been quick to give assistance when needed, notably in the rescue operation following the Zeebrugge ferry disaster in March. Royal Navy ships and helicopters were quickly on the scene and later, the fleet clearance diving team helped in the harrowing task of recovering bodies. The team earned praise from all sides for its professionalism, stamina and humanity, and I am sure that the House will join me in endorsing that praise. I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Belgians for the way in which they conducted the rescue operation.

The Royal Navy's fishery protection squadron continues to patrol our fisheries limits and our offshore oil and gas fields. The value of this can be seen from the fact that in the case of fisheries, more than 1,400 boardings were conducted in the 12 months to last March and over 100 infringements were recorded. In the same period there were 268 search and rescue sorties by Royal Navy helicopters and clearance diving teams disposed of about 200 items of unexploded ordnance.

Friendly relations with many countries have been fostered by ship visits. In particular, I welcome the contribution that the Royal Navy made to the restoration of closer relations between the United Kingdom and Malta. Last year's visit by HMS Brazen gained her the Wilkinson sword of peace, and HMS Broadsword also recently made a highly successful visit to Valetta, both visits coinciding with the anniversary of the arrival of the Santa Maria convoy and the relief of Malta on 15 August 1942. HMS Brazen visited Mauritius last month. She welcomed many islanders on board and received the Prime Minister of Mauritius and their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York.

Recently, the eyes of the world have increasingly been turned towards events in the Persian Gulf. The Armilla patrol has been operating in this area since 1980, much longer than any other European navy. During this whole time, only six British merchant vessels have been attacked, and to date none has been attacked while an Armilla ship has been in its vicinity. This is a record of which the Navy can be proud.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Could the Minister enlighten us in respect of a report in the *Sunday Times* on 1 May by Mr. John Connell that Britain had pledged herself to maintain the Armilla patrol permanently in the Gulf as a condition of the Trident agreement in 1982? Can the Minister tell us whether that is true?

Mr. Stewart: The right hon. Gentleman will know that that fell before my time, but it sounds a very implausible suggestion.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli asked yesterday about its task. I can tell him that we have no plans to alter the current basis or area of operations of the Armilla patrol. I visited the ships of the patrol earlier this month and was greatly impressed by the skill and courage of our men. The possibility of attack is every present. To maintain a state of alert for extended periods, with the discomfort of wearing anti-flash gear, in the high temperatures and humidity of the Gulf, imposes a severe strain on the fittest of men. We will continue to try to find ways to reduce the discomfort of the task for those taking part, within the limits that the operation itself imposes. It was represented to me strongly by those on board HMS Abdiel that the air-conditioning systems on board were not designed for the demanding climate of the area. In response to these justified concerns, I am glad to be able to tell the House today that seven more air-conditioning units were despatched to the ship last weekend, and that 16 further units will be sent as soon as they become available.

While recognising the inevitable risk in an operation of this kind, we view the Armilla patrol as a source of reassurance and a contribution to the stability of the area. The same applies to the deployment of the four Hunt class mine counter-measures vessels, operating in support of the Armilla ships, which have successfully disposed of five mines in the waters off Fujayrah. The purpose of their presence is entirely defensive and fully in accordance with the non-provocative objectives of our mission. In protecting the right to freedom of navigation through international waters, we are operating in the interests of all seafaring nations, and in that context we welcome the decisions of the Dutch, Belgian, French and Italian Governments to deploy naval vessels to the Gulf area. We exchange information with our allies on a routine basis and, while each nation properly retains autonomy in the control of its own ships, we are developing increased co-operation with the other western navies in the area. This is the first occasion on which the navies of a number of European allies will be operating together outside the NATO area, and it offers new opportunities of co-ordinating our activities in the face of a common threat.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): When my hon. Friend says "co-ordinating opportunities", is he assuming that perhaps the Western European Union, which comprises all those nations, will become reactivated to the point of co-operating in some of those far-distant places outside the NATO area?

Mr. Stewart: It is important that the Western European Union has expressed support for what is now being done by the navies of member states, but I cannot see that the Western European Union is a suitable body to exercise any sort of operational control of that kind.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Minister any anxieties about the use of end-user certificates and the possible way in which British arms, either through third parties or other routes, could find their way to the Gulf? In particular, does he have concerns about the reported activites of Mr. Ben Banerjee and other arms middlemen?

Mr. Stewart: The Ministry of Defence has long been concerned to ensure that the end-user certificate procedure is not abused. I remember answering similar questions four years ago when I was a procurement Minister. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hove is fully alert to the problems in that area. We endeavour to ensure that that does not happen.

Another continuing commitment of our armed forces is that of Northern Ireland. While all three services are involved, here it is the Army, including of course the UDR and the Royal Marines, which plays the leading role in supporting the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. Currently there are about 11,500 regular service personnel and some 6,500 UDR personnel in the Province. This includes the two additional battalions provided in 1986. The need for them, and indeed the level of service support as a whole, is kept under constant review, and, of course, we retain the ability to reinforce at short notice if need be. I am glad to be able to tell the House that, since the beginning of this month, we have been able to increase the operational flexibility available to the GOC by providing additional helicopter hours.

I hope that the whole House will join me in expressing our appreciation of the courageous and skilful way in which our service men and women carry out their difficult and dangerous task in Northern Ireland. So far this year, 231 weapons and about 5,800 kg of explosive have been found. Bomb disposal teams have been called out to more than 1,100 incidents, and about 2,300 kg of explosive have been neutralised.

I should like to draw the attention of hon. Members to three incidents in the past month which illustrate the skill and bravery of our soldiers. On 28 September, the alertness of military patrols in Londonderry led to the discovery of a van bomb containing nearly 800 kg of explosive, which was close to final assembly and could have caused severe damage to the city. On 16 October, Army explosives experts defused a van bomb containing over 250 kg of explosive, which was parked outside a police station in Belfast city centre, and was clearly set to explode within minutes. On the following day, they made safe a device containing 1,500 kg of explosive, packed in a slurry tanker near Newtownsaville. This was the largest single bomb ever found in Northern Ireland, and within a built-up area it could have caused destruction up to a radius of 200 yards.

In each of these cases, bravery and speed of reaction prevented possible loss of life and destruction of property on a substantial scale. But, sadly, these many successes have been achieved at great cost. Eleven soldiers have been killed and 85 wounded or injured in attacks this year. Eight of those killed and 10 of those wounded were members of the UDR, and I cannot speak too highly of the courage of members of the regiment who continue to serve their country in the face of a relentless threat to their lives both on and off duty.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I am sure that my hon. Friend will carry the entire House with him in paying tribute to the Ulster Defence Regiment. I hope that similarly we shall pay tribute to our armed forces, who have sustained an enormous burden over so many years. They have exhibited enormous self-restraint, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with me that probably no armed forces in the world could have sustained such a burden with the self-restraint that they have shown over such a prolonged period.

Mr. Stewart: I endorse what my hon. and learned Friend has said, and especially his final remark. This speaks well for the professionalism and dedication of our armed forces.

The recent storms in southern England have demonstrated the value of military aid to the civil community in an entirely different context. Over the weekend of 16 to 19 October, about 1,000 service men, most of them soldiers, assisted in dealing with the emergencies arising from damage caused by the high winds in the early hours of 16 October. They have undertaken a wide variety of tasks, including the clearance of fallen trees from main roads and rail links in Kent and Sussex, and from power cables in Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Kent, and assisting the electricity board to restore supply to areas cut off by damaged power lines. Generators have been provided to hospitals, nursing homes and old peoples' homes across the area, and in some cases to farms, water authorities and sewage works. Soldiers have delivered meals to people whose mobile homes were destroyed in Folkestone, and they are continuing to provide help to water and electricity boards in the task of clearing up the damage. Since the emergency began, the military have responded to over 500 requests for assistance and we have done our best to ensure that all available resources of equipment and manpower have been put at the disposal of the civil authorities when needed.

We should not forget, however, the frequent calls that we receive in connection with disaster relief operations around the world. Overseas units of the Royal Engineers were deployed from Belize to assist in El Salvador, and Queen's Gurkha engineers from Hong Kong assisted in Vanuatu, the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands. The Royal Air Force has also received many calls for assistance. A Hercules aircraft transported clothing to Harare in March for onward transmission by Oxfam to victims of fighting and famine in Mozambique. Closer to home, RAF search and rescue helicopters ferried firemen to fight a blaze on board, when a Liberian supertanker and a Polish cargo vessel collided in the Channel in May, while

[Mr. Stewart]

a Nimrod provided on-scene command and control. Up to the end of last month, RAF search and rescue responded to more than 900 calls for assistance in the United Kingdom this year, resulting in the rescue of 675 people.

Last week, I visited Royal Air Force Germany, which provided me with an admirable opportunity to see at first hand the very high standards of operational efficiency and readiness that are maintained by the RAF.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I join the Minister in paying tribute to the duties that are carried out by members of the armed forces. I do not wish to discuss matters that are sub judice, but is the Minister aware that there is a worry that bullying, initiation rites and the rest seem to be on the increase in the Army? Would it be possible, if it has not already been done, for a strongly worded circular to be issued to units on this issue? At the end of the day, the amount of bullying would be minor, but if it exists to anywhere near the level alleged, it is extremely disturbing and should stop immediately.

Mr. Stewart: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the adjutant-general has done exactly what he has suggested. The Army, as we do, deplores all forms of bullying. All allegations are thoroughly investigated and, if substantiated, appropriate charges are brought against culprits. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we take a serious view of bullying.

Mr. Winnick: When was the circular issued?

Mr. Stewart: I cannot remember the day on which that was done, but it was in the fairly recent past.

Mr. Winnick: Is a copy of the circular in the Library?

Mr. Stewart: I shall have to refer that question to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, who deals with personnel matters.

I was saying that I visited Royal Air Force Germany last week. A total of seven Tornado squadrons are now fully operational in Germany and these represent a significant enhancement of NATO's deterrent strength.

The ability of our front-line airfields in RAF Germany to continue to operate during wartime will be considerably enhanced with the redeployment from the United Kingdom of 52 Field Squadron (Construction) Royal Engineers, planned for 1989. The squadron, of about 200 men, will be tasked to carry out airfield damage repair and will be based at RAF Bruggen in West Germany. The deployment of this unit to an area where it is most required constitutes a positive and cost-effective improvement to our defence contribution to NATO. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom the first squadron of the air defence variant of Tornado, No. 29 squadron, will be declared to NATO on 1 November.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Have any altered or improved instructions been given to staunch the loss of aircraft on low-flying exercises? Since 1979, we have lost well in excess of half a billion pounds-worth of aircraft, including 11 Tornados, which, at £17 million each, seems rather excessive. Will the Government try to staunch this massive loss?

Mr. Stewart: The Government and the Royal Air Force take the greatest care to minimise accidents that are involved in low flying. This is a matter with which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is dealing. He and I are well aware of public concern about low flying. This form of flying is carried out solely for essential training purposes and not, as some have suggested, as a form of aeronautical bravado. The Ministry of Defence is currently reviewing procedures for the notification and regulation of low flying, including aspects of safety. We remain committed to keeping environmental effects to the minimum. However, the high standards of our air crew come only firm intensive training, and in today's environment that means that pilots must train frequently at low levels to enable them to escape detection by hostile radar or, if detected, to make them less vulnerable to attack.

Finally, I should say that planning is now almost complete for Exercise Purple Warrior, the major joint force exercise due to take place in south-west Scotland between 4 and 19 November. Consultation with local residents and environmental and conservation groups has been extensive, and we shall do everything possible to keep inconvenience and the risk of damage to local interests to a minimum. The exercise is designed to practise joint force operations outside the NATO area, but holding it in the United Kingdom will greatly reduce the cost of deployment and logistics. It will also make this the first exercise in the United Kingdom to fall within the terms of the agreement of the Stockholm conference on security and co-operation in Europe, and on the evening of 9 November I shall accordingly be acting as host to observers from the Warsaw pact and other member countries.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): What is the status of the observers? How many will there be? In view of the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill currently before the House, what accreditation will the observers be given by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with regard to diplomatic immunity?

Mr. Stewart: I will have to refer that last point to my colleagues in the Foreign Office. The arrangements will be as laid down in the Stockholm agreement and will be virtually the exact counterpart of arrangements made for our observers when attending exercises in Warsaw pact countries, and such visits were made in the summer.

Mr. Douglas: How many observers?

Mr. Stewart: I have not yet seen the exact number. The hon. Gentleman perhaps does not realise the way in which the arrangements are made. However, the number will be determined at the time and there will be no secret about that information when it is available.

I very much hope that implementation of the observer provisions of the Stockholm agreement in this way will contribute to improving confidence and understanding between East and West. Before we can achieve progress on conventional arms control, each side will need to have accurate information about the other's manpower and equipment and the means of verifying such information and keeping it up to date. Unfortunately, we are a long way from that position just now. Lack of agreement on verification has been a major factor in the stagnation over many years of the talks on mutual and balanced force reductions. We are also discussing in Vienna a mandate for new talks on conventional stability from the Atlantic to the Urals, but if such talks are to be fruitful, the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw pact will have to change their policy of secrecy about their own force levels and armaments. I do not see how serious negotiations could take place unless they do that.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Is the Minister not being somewhat churlish? There is an opportunity in the initiative for a fresh page to be opened. Is it not unhelpful at this stage to make criticisms which I accept, in the context of the mutual and balanced force reductions, were valid, but which are unhelpful now when we are trying to enter a new era? Why must the Ministry of Defence always insist on rubbishing every opportunity before we get it started and very often leave the burden to the inadequate hands of the American President and all the difficulties that he has?

Mr. Stewart: I was not aware that I was rubbishing anything. I was only calling for more information on which we could make progress with negotiations for arms control.

The Warsaw pact also has a lot of explaining to do. It needs to explain why it has built up such a degree of superiority in the central region of Europe. No one doubts that it has an advantage of 3:1 in artillery pieces, and of 2:1 in tanks and tactical aircraft. Not only that, but it needs to explain why its military procurement policy is designed not merely to maintain that superiority, but to enhance it. For example, in the three years from 1984 to 1986, NATO countries produced fewer than 5,000 tanks. During the same period, the Soviet Union alone produced more than 9,000. In the case of towed field artillery, the comparable figures are between 1,200 and 1,300 pieces by NATO and over 5,000 by the Soviet Union. Perhaps the peaceful intentions which the Soviets profess are genuine, but if so it is very difficult to see how such an aggressive build-up of armament can be consistent with them.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Do the figures that the Minister has cited include figures for French armaments?

Mr. Stewart: The figures do not relate to any countries in the Warsaw pact other than the Soviet Union or to countries outside the integrated military structure in NATO.

Mr. Mullin: Do they include French armaments?

Mr. Stewart: I have explained exactly what the figures consist of. They consist of one country on the Eastern side and a large number of countries on the Western side.

One thing is for sure. If the West is to make satisfactory progress in negotiations for arms control, and reach agreements which do not undermine our security, we shall do so only if we make sure that we are not caught off our guard. The Labour party fought the last election on the unbelievable policy that we should negotiate from weakness. That is a policy that flies in the face of all the lessons of history. We must all be thankful that the British people had the good sense to elect a Conservative Government, since we are not only the one party to have a credible defence policy, but, as this debate has shown, we are the only party which can agree on its defence policy at all.

4.15 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): In welcoming the Minister of State for the Armed Forces back to the Ministry of Defence I am not very clear whether he is back to act as a Treasury Minister or as a defence retread. Whatever the capacity, it is encouraging to note that the MOD word processor is operating in the same way and the old lines are coming out.

In his brief resumé of last night's debate, the Minister referred to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) as gloomy. That must be the last thing that we could ever accuse my hon. Friend of being, and certainly no one was gloomy as a result of his remarks last night.

Opening the second day of a two-day debate is rather like finally reaching the front of a long queue in a self-service restaurant. One knows what is on the menu as one has seen what those in front have chosen to eat. One knows what one wants, but one is not sure whether there is anything left. That went through my mind as I listened to the Minister. He did not have a great deal to say about some of the issues that concern us, and he dismissed many of the remarks made by my hon. Friends last night as grumbling about conventional procurement. I am sorry to disappoint the Minister, but we will have to grumble rather more about that this afternoon because there are many questions that we want answered.

I do not propose to touch on the Marconi raid. I was less than satisfied with the response last night of the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement. It is clear that the MOD is keeping out of the issue, but the issue will not go away, and the MOD is often accused— I believe rightly — of being excessively secretive. The Ministry will come to regret not being more clear and forthcoming in its consideration of that point as events develop.

Comments were made last night, and they have been made again this afternoon, about the amendments that have been tabled. I want to deal with the official Opposition amendment and spend some time on the implications of the Government's policy on the effectiveness of conventional defences, and particularly on the fleet and the morale of naval personnel. The amendment in the names of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and some Labour Members is an expression of their opinions. It bears little relation to Labour party policy—certainly to the policy on which we fought the election and the policy that was endorsed almost unanimously at the recent Labour party conference.

The official Opposition amendment considers British membership of NATO as one of the cornerstones of our defence. We are linked, politically, historically and geographically, to the continent of Europe and we share many burdens and responsibilities with our near neighbours across the North sea and the Channel. We must recognise the important naval contribution that the country must make to the Alliance, and we must have regard to our relationship with the northern members of the Alliance. It is our objective to seek to reduce tension and explore possibilities offered by some of the recent statements made by Mr. Gorbachev on arms reductions in the Kola peninsula and northern Norway.

In particular, we are encouraged by the responses from the Norwegian Government, which have been particularly

[Mr. Martin J. O'Neill]

constructive. The fact that they are a Labour Government of the same political persuasion as ourselves does not preclude some support being given to their position by the Danes, but it is significant that the other major northern European member of NATO—the United Kingdom—has been extremely cool on that matter. Indeed, Britain's record over the past two to three years has been moving closer and closer to the bellicose maritime strategy promulgated by the United States—a strategy which we consider to be destabilising and dangerous for that part of Europe.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House. He is not correct in saying that on this matter the Norwegian Government are of the same political persuasion as the Labour party. The Norwegian Government believe in and support the NATO policy of deterrence based on nuclear weapons. As I understand it, the official Opposition, as we apparently have to call them, do not believe in that now, so there is a major difference between the two.

Mr. O'Neill: Whether consciously or unconsciously, the Secretary of State is seeking to confuse two issues. I am talking about the Norwegian Government's response to the Gorbachev remarks. I freely admit that there are often cascades of initiatives and proposals from the Soviet Union, few of which eventually appear on paper, but at least on this occasion the proposal for the denuclearisation of northern Europe has struck a chord with the Norwegian Labour Government and the Conservative and Liberal —for want of a better expression—Danish Government. On that we would have to agree, but the right hon. Gentleman's other interpretation is not accurate.

Today I want to talk primarily about the continuing significance of the fleet's convoy support role and the slippage in our frigate ordering programme and its implications for the 50-warship Navy, for which there has been a consensus in the House as a desirable aspect of our defence policy.

There is probably no more sensitive area of defence procurement than that of the link between our NATO responsibilities and the sustaining of the 50-warship Navy and the employment problems that are generated by those responsibilities in warship building. In the past few months a succession of reports have made gloomy forecasts about the future of our warship building. Indeed, last month Kleinwort Grieveson said:

> "A decade hence could see only one yard building surface ships and another building submarines."

Last night the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement gave us an outline of the Government's thinking on procurement and extolled the virtues of value for money and the value of competition in areas which previously suffered from the inefficiencies that flow from negotiating with only one supplier. The problems facing the Tyne and the Clyde illustrate the consequences of the Government's ordering programme.

In every defence debate since the abandonment of the Nott review, successive Secretaries of State have promised that we would have a 50-warship Navy. To maintain that figure, three warships per year would have to be ordered. We are now told that the only thing that has altered since 1982 is the cycle. There is a new excuse now—that the cycle of ordering and refitting has altered. That is a slightly different interpretation from the one that was placed on it by the editor of *Jane's Fighting Ships*. He concluded:

> "At the present rate of ordering and deletion, the fleet in 1990 will have 34 frigates and destroyers of reasonable age, plus five Leander class approaching their twentieth birthday and however many of the same class which have by then escaped the knacker's yard but will be in their third decade."

Even more disturbing is the fact that the capability of our new frigates and destroyers is not what it could be. The type 22 will no longer be retrofitted with new towed array sonars and cuts have been made in the air defence systems for frigates and destroyers in much the same way as they were before the Falklands. In the week surrounding the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on the lessons of the Falklands it seems that, like the Bourbons, the Government have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

The new type 23, HMS Norfolk, which was launched on the Clyde in July, will not be able to shoot down Exocets if the Sea Wolf missile system fails. Indeed, the experience of HMS London, which was fitted with the mark 3 Sea Wolf, suggests that all is not well even with the type 9-11. Without guns as backup, the type 22 and 23 frigates are vulnerable. That has been recognised by Yarrows, the lead yard, because it is providing its export customers with type 23s fitted with Phalanx rapid-firing guns as the last line of defence. However, from what we can understand, the Navy is not prepared to pay the extra £4 million to £5 million to afford our service men the best protection available. It is all right for foreign navies, but it is too good for the British Navy.

Last night we had a linguistic debate about when a cut is not a cut. When financial constraints prevent the purchase of the best available kit for our sailors, that is serious for our defence. Whether or not it is called a cut, it is undercutting the defence of our service men and undermining the morale that is necessary in a volunteer force such as we have in Britain.

It is little wonder that the combination of a slower rate of ordering and the longer refitting of manpower-intensive craft is causing a reduction in service morale. We now have the vicious circle of more and more trained personnel leaving because of the strain of long separations from their wives and families. They know that the Navy is about 10 per cent. short of officers in all branches—in particular, pilots, observers and engineers — and that that is reaching almost critical proportions in the Fleet Air Arm.

The 1987 edition of "British Warships and Auxiliaries" said:

> "Many sailors might just as well be serving off the Falklands or off the Gulf for all the extra time they get with their families."

When ships are refitting in home ports, service men must be at least 200 miles from either their base or the fitting yard to qualify for extra travel warrants home. As a result, many cannot afford more than an occasional weekend trip home, although their ships may be refitting for six months or more. With all those problems, the Navy is becoming a less attractive career for school leavers and graduates.

So far I have spoken in the main about frigates, but the Navy requires a variety of craft, and some of my hon. Friends will want to discuss the products of the yards in their constituencies. Certainly we should be interested to discover, at some stage in the debate, what is happening about the auxiliary oiler replenishment 2 vessel and when the order will be announced, because we were led to believe that it will be some time before the end of October or early November.

It is significant that there has been some slippage in the ordering of minesweepers. If the ordering of minesweepers is not accelerated, more than 20 of the minesweepers and hunters will soon be more than 40 years old.

What will happen about the amphibious and aviation support vessels in the event of hostilities in the northern region of NATO? The Norwegians would depend on the speedy arrival of the United Kingdom and Netherlands amphibious force, consisting of 7,500 Royal Marines and nearly 3,000 Royal Netherlands marines. They will require amphibious vessels and adequate aviation support. The amphibious ships, Fearless and Intrepid, need replacement.

In February 1984 we were told that the future of an amphibious capability was being studied. In December 1986 we were told that there would be a £250,000 feasibility study. The ships are old and wasteful of manpower. The conversion of merchant ships is not acceptable. We have seen, in the Zeebrugge tragedy, the difficulties that can arise with some commercial ships if they are under particular strain. They may not be the best contenders for such work. I do not wish to appear alarmist, but an option, at which many of us have looked with some sympathy, is becoming less attractive. I imagine that that point will have to be considered in the feasibility study, although I hope that it will not be an excuse for the further extension of the feasibility study and that we shall be given a report as quickly as possible on that.

We believe that the Navy requires and deserves two purpose-built amphibious vessels capable of offloading a heavy tonnage of equipment in as short a time as possible. Those ships will have to reinforce an area of Norway some 80 miles from the Soviet bases around Murmansk, and they will be vulnerable to air attack if they take too long to get rid of their stores. We also need new aviation support ships to replace Hermes and Bulwark. As the Royal Marines director of operations said recently, those are the critical ships of the amphibious fleet.

There is a cynical view of the financial constraints under which the Ministry of Defence has to operate, described by the Secretary of State yesterday as:

> "the normal process of taking some items out of the programme and putting in others that are considered to be a higher priority."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 214.]

We now have a rather convoluted and protracted process of ordering and re-ordering. We start with the announcement of an internal examination, followed by a feasibility study—provided that it does not cost more than about a quarter of a million pounds, and provided that it takes at least two years. Then an announcement of a change in the cycle of refits is likely. Perhaps half the original ships will not be built, or will no longer be required in the form originally considered.

There will then be another delay, followed by an invitation to tender. Once the tenders are called in, the contract will be awarded or not awarded, as the case may be. The MOD will probably recall the contract to see whether it can be revised downwards. All the time that that pantomime is going on, sailors are having to spend longer periods at sea, shipyard workers see lay-offs, redundancies and closures coming nearer and nearer, and the naval dockyards have interruptions to their refit cycles. That is the record of the Government's ordering strategy.

Many of us were pessimistic about the privatisation of the dockyards, but we had hoped that there would be a minimum of redundancies, or at least that the contractors had overestimated the likely job losses. We thought it possible that, following vesting day, the contractors would come along and say that they had overestimated the redundancies, and that it might be possible to operate with more people than they had anticipated. However, the announcement that 3,500 jobs at Devonport would go by next April is devastating news for the whole of the south-west. It can be little consolation to the workers from British Rail Engineering Ltd. who have been sacked that their work may now go to the dockyard at Devonport. As Mike Leece, the managing director of the private contractors, told the *Daily Telegraph* on 12 October:

> "The history of the yard is against us. For 300 years we have put the Royal Navy first and it is an uphill struggle to persuade a customer his work will be carried out even if a warship comes in for emergency repairs."

Those of us who spent some time last winter debating the Dockyards Services Bill remember addressing day after day and week after week, a completely indifferent team of Defence Ministers. They were confident that the new yards would be able to get business without any difficulty, and guaranteed that the work available would be sufficient to minimise redundancies and keep everyone happy. However, the Government are ignoring the service that has been rendered to this country by the naval dockyards and the warship building yards. Not only are the Government failing the Navy and our seamen by their inability to order and re-equip our fleet adequately; they are betraying the people who have built and maintained the ships that have protected our shores, our shipping lanes and those of our allies.

The stockbroking firms, the academics and the journalists have written off this great industry. It is often forgotten that the amount of work directly involved in the building of warships bears little relation to the number of jobs far beyond the shipbuilding yards and the contractors and subcontractors who produce the electronics and avionics for the ships. Job losses for the next 10 years are quoted at about 100,000, yet it is likely that in 10 years' time we shall have only one shipbuilding yard and only one yard for the construction of submarines.

The Government are doing nothing about the problem. They are turning their backs on our allies. Answering one of the few points on which he did not pass the buck to the Under-Secretary of State, the Minister once again donned his Treasury hat and told us that there was little possibility of a 3 per cent. increase in conventional expenditure along the lines promised in the pre-election spree commitment of 25 May.

A more worrying question, and one on which we must have an answer tonight, is what happened at the meeting of national armaments directors on 21 October. Our warship building industry has most to gain from the NFR 90 programme and the Euro-frigate going ahead. Our yards would receive orders for about 12 vessels to replace the type 24 destroyers. We should be losing a tremendous opportunity if, because of Government financial constraints — the business of taking one plan out of the budget and putting another in—we turned our backs on such an exciting project, which will guarantee employment

[Mr. O'Neill]

into the first decade of the next century. But that is the kind of thing that the Government have been forced to do by their total preoccupation with the funding and construction of Trident.

If only a Defence Minister had the guts to stand up and say, "You cannot have all your defence commitments. The strain on the Navy, the Air Force and the Army is too great to bear the cost of Trident. We cannot get any more out of our defence industries." We have heard the saga of how Scott Lithgow has virtually been bled dry by being continually required by the Government to pare down its costs, to a point where it is likely to fail altogether. I hope that I am wrong, but the general feeling seems to be that the Secretary of State—who, in his days as Secretary of State for Scotland, was a strong supporter of Scott Lithgow—is now using every opportunity to trample it into the mud of the Clyde.

That is a source of regret to the Opposition, because, at the last election, most of the shipbuilding areas returned Labour Members, and it is to us that they look for support and confidence. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps that is not true of Barrow and Furness. However, other parts of the shipbuilding industry look to us for support, because they know that they can get nothing from the Government. It is a national disgrace that generations of skill, talent and expertise are being thrown away for the sake of the Government's nuclear fixation.

We are asking for a statement from the Under-Secretary, who seems to be doing all the sweeping up today, that the Government have decided—during the next five and a half hours—to change their priorities. I suspect that will not be forthcoming, for I do not think that this Government will change. They will sacrifice our armed forces in Europe as they are sacrificing most of the Navy, and will seek to prevent any form of effective nuclear disarmament involving Britain, because their commitment to nuclear weaponry is such that we cannot meet our conventional commitments and responsibilities.

The standard argument is that nuclear weapons are cheaper than conventional weapons. The truth is that expenditure on nuclear weapons is beggaring our armed forces. Our soldiers, sailors and airmen are being denied the support that they require. Therefore, I have no doubt that my right hon. and hon. Friends will join me this evening in supporting the amendment that stands in the name of the official Opposition and in rejecting out of hand the White Paper and all that it stands for.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. A large number of right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to take part in the debate, some of whom have sat for many hours awaiting their opportunity. Brief speeches would be much appreciated.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak in the debate. I intend to make a few brief and specific points on the motion to approve the statement on the Defence Estimates. Before doing so, however, I have to admit that, after listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), I am no clearer about the real thrust of the Opposition's defence policy than I was before. I note with interest that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) is in his place. I doubt whether he is here to listen to my words. I suspect that we shall hear from him later in the debate. I look forward with fascination to the latest views that he will put forward on defence policy.

Yesterday's debate reminded me of the general election campaign. The majority of the people whom I met on the doorsteps favoured the basic concept of deterrence. They were worried about the Opposition's policy. No matter which part of the constituency I visited or to which category of people I spoke, that message came over loud and clear. The Conservative party and Government's firm stance on defence has to be compared with the total disarray of the Opposition.

Before the start of the general election campaign, many people supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In Norwich and elsewhere they flirted with CND, but during the general election campaign they looked for other policies that they could support, which helped the Conservative party during the campaign. In this debate, the CND's stance is most closely identified with the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence referred.

What worries me about the CND campaign—I say this in the presence of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who no doubt will listen with interest to what I am about to say—is not that it does not deploy a rational argument; it makes many interesting points in the serious debate about arms control, defence and international relations. My main criticism of the CND is that in pressing its case it has continually deployed emotion and fear, particularly among our young people. That was a mistake, because it has rebounded on the CND. I hope that it will take my criticism seriously. Attention ought to be drawn more often to such criticisms.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I think that it is perfectly rational and understandable for people who are concerned about nuclear disarmament to draw to the attention of the public the tremendous cost in death and destruction in this country if there were to be a nuclear exchange. The Government calculate that there would be tens of millions of dead and injured and that this country would be completely devastated. I believe that that is an emotional matter and that it is reasonable to say so.

Mr. Thompson: The point that I am trying to make is that it is equally valid for those on the other side of the argument to point to the even greater risk of destruction and loss of life through a nuclear holocaust that could be brought about if those policies were ever put into effect. I am not debating which side of the argument would lead to the greatest destruction. I am criticising the unscrupulous use of fear and emotion. It is fair enough to draw attention to the destruction that would be caused if there were a nuclear holocaust, but I do not accept the unscrupulous and irrational way in which that is being done.

The NATO Alliance would be destroyed if the views of the majority of Opposition Members were to be translated into action. It is worth reminding hon. Members that 160 Labour-led local authorities have declared nuclear-free zones and peace parks. The true policy of the Opposition is therefore most closely identified with the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman castigates Labour-led local authorities for declaring nuclear-free zones. However, in the last Parliament the Chief Whip wanted his area to be declared a nuclear-free zone. He led a campaign to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste in his area. What is wrong with the Labour party and Labour local authorities wanting nuclear-free zones when the Chief Whip on the Front Bench of the Tory party also wants them, especially in his backyard?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that there is no connection between my point and the disposal of nuclear waste. I do not intend to be drawn down that path. My first point about the White Paper will not be debated a great deal during the next few hours. The White Paper refers to service personnel leaving the Army, the Navy and the Royal Air Force because of family problems. The White Paper refers to changes in society and attitudes and to the fact that that is causing problems. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is to reply to the debate to take on board the fact that I would support a close examination of this point.

The White Paper refers to the reserves. It is good news to me that we are to continue to expand the Territorial Army, the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Air Force Reserve. However, I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his colleagues to recognise further the value of the reserves, to provide greater resources for the reserves and to highlight the relationship between the reserves and the general public. The profile of the reserves is too low. I should like greater priority to be given to drawing the attention of the public to the excellent work that they do.

Furthermore, there should be a close link between the reserves and the concept of civil defence and planning. I am a strong supporter of civil defence. I have asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his colleagues many questions on that subject. In the past there has been greater co-operation between the reserves and civil defence. There should be just as much co-operation now.

The White Paper does not refer to the excellent work of the cadet forces. They do a great deal for our young people, and their work should be given greater priority. More attention should be paid to the work of the combined cadet forces in the schools, the Army cadet force and the other cadet forces that help and do so much for young people. I simply ask for a positive response on that aspect when the Minister replies to the debate.

Finally, I return to the opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He referred to the question of chemical weapons and the stockpile that is being built up by the Soviets. Of course, our unilateral gesture in the 1950s was not followed by the Soviet Union. To return to the opening theme of my speech, that gesture presents yet another lesson for CND. We made a unilateral gesture that was not followed. Now however — as was made clear in the White Paper—we are progressing towards a ban on the production, stockpiling and deployment of chemical weapons. That is good news. I support the steps towards such multilateral disarmament. We all want a reduction in those stockpiles. I wished to refer to chemical weapons because they were mentioned by my right hon. Friend yesterday and they offer a lesson for those who are somehow in favour of unilateral gestures.

It is Conservative policy to keep up the strength of our defences, to maintain the independent deterrent, to maintain the strength of our conventional forces and, as I have specifically pointed out, to maintain our reserves and cadet forces. That must be infinitely preferable to the total disarray of Opposition policies. It is therefore quite clear why there was so much support for us in the recent general election.

4.51 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Much of the debate until now has centred on whether Trident inflicts, as we on this side of the House believe, crippling damage on the equipment and efficiency of our conventional forces. I want to consider briefly the effect of the Trident programme on our defence and foreign policy.

Most Ministers, in common with the Minister who opened the debate this afternoon, have been somewhat ambiguous and mealy-mouthed about the reasons why the Government support the Trident programme. They have sought to disguise the Prime Minister's motivation by the kinds of phrases that have been used by the Minister this afternoon. Fortunately, the right hon. Lady has been quite unequivocal about it.

I think that the clearest statement that the Prime Minister gave of her views was the one that she made on Moscow television earlier this year to the people of the Soviet Union, when she justified our acquisition of what she called an independent strategic nuclear force on the grounds that

> "Nuclear weapons are the only means allowing a small country to stand up to a big one".

There is no doubt that that is the right hon. Lady's view and, to be fair, many ordinary people in the country feel that that may well be the case. That is one reason why they support her.

Of course, if one took seriously what the Prime Minister said, the implications for nuclear proliferation and for an increase in the danger of a nuclear holocaust would be horrifying. Fortunately, hardly any other small countries — I can think of only one — have taken the route to which the Prime Minister has pointed. She has been inspired by that belief. The irony is that because of her conviction that

> "Nuclear weapons are the only means allowing a small country to stand up to a big one"

the course on which she has led Britain has had bizarre and

Because the Prime Minister has now made Britain totally dependent on the United States for the supply and maintenance of its strategic nuclear missiles and for the testing of its warheads, Britain is totally incapable of standing up to that great power on any major issue of defence or foreign policy. I suggest that that is something that should disturb Conservative Members as much as it disturbs us.

The long period during which this dependency on the United States will last is rarely recognised. According to the Government, the initial supply of Trident missiles will not be completed until the next century. Under the rent-a-rocket arrangement, we have to swap those Moss Bros missiles every seven or eight years for other missiles from the American stockpile. That will be so as long as the Trident force is operational, which I trust will be some 30 years from the launch of the first submarines.

[Mr. Denis Healey]

At any time in the next 40 years the United States has the physical ability to cease supplying our Trident forces with missiles or to refuse to replace them. Many Members may say, "Yes, it may have the ability, but it would never refuse to supply the missiles or to replace them, because it is committed by treaty to continue to supply them." Such people have short memories. Indeed, the Minister has a shorter memory than most. He cannot even remember what happened in 1982, under his Government's Administration, when the Trident agreement was signed. I should have thought that it was his duty to inform himself on that point as soon as he took office.

The fact is that, under President Truman, the American Administration broke the wartime agreement on nuclear co-operation with Britain as soon as the war ended. In the early 1960s, the Americans broke the agreement to supply Britain with the Skybolt missile because they decided not to go ahead with the production of the Skybolt missile for themselves. I know that that was before the Minister's time, but——

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will remember that when he was Secretary of State for Defence he relied much more heavily on American armaments for the defence of this country. Does he not remember the Polaris programme that he commissioned relied on American rockets? Does he not remember the F111s? Does he not remember the Phantom aircraft? All of them could have been withdrawn by the Americans if they so wished. What is this sudden change of heart?

Mr. Healey: What is the parliamentary word for tripe? There must be something suitable.

We did, in common with the present Government, buy a fair amount of equipment from the United States. Only the other day the present Government ditched the Nimrod project and decided instead to buy the American AWACS. Everything from the United States, including the Polaris missile, was our property from the moment the transfer took place. That is not the case with the Trident D5 missile, which must be returned to the United States and replaced every seven years. The Government finally had to admit that last night.

We have precedents for the Americans breaking nuclear agreements with Britain when it is in their interests to do so. There are many signs, of which the Government are well aware, that the present American Administration are considering policies—indeed, they are adopting policies—that would make it necessary for Americans to deny Britain the D5 missile.

At Reykjavik last year, President Reagan agreed with Mr. Gorbachev—he reported to Congress accordingly a week later—that their first objective was to eliminate all ballistic missiles from the armouries of both super-powers. That would mean that there would be no D5s to give to Britain. Secondly, in recent weeks it has become clear that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev are hoping to reach agreement on a 50 per cent. cut in strategic nuclear missiles during the first half of next year—an agreement to be signed at the second summit in Moscow towards the middle of next year following the hoped-for Washington summit.

That agreement, if it is reached—and we would all agree it is highly desirable—will involve a very heavy reduction on both sides of submarine-launched missiles. When Mr. Shevardnadze and Mr. Shultz met last week in Moscow, the Russians offered to limit the number of submarine-launched warheads—not missiles—to 1,500 or 2,000 a side. That offer was welcomed by the Americans as a great step forward.

Do the Government really believe that, after such an agreement, the United States would provide us with missiles that are capable of carrying at least 640 warheads and, if the full complement were placed, 900 warheads? Do the Government really believe that the Americans would continue with the present agreement if they were restricting their own submarine-launched warheads to 1,500 or 2,000? Would they allow us to have 640 to 900, a third or a half of their forces— indeed, a third or a half of the Soviet forces? Does anybody think it conceivable that the Russians would agree to a 50 per cent. cut if the United States was immediately providing Britain with half as many missiles as the Russians and Americans were destroying? I suggest that it is absolutely inconceivable.

The Minister says that he is keen on glasnost. I am also keen on glasnost. Indeed, the Secretary of State came out for glasnost yesterday, but he still will not tell us the most elementary fact about the existing British nuclear force. The American and British experts on the subject think that there are now only two warheads carried in every Polaris missile, yet the Minister refuses to tell us. He keeps talking about the number of warheads carried when Polaris was introduced in 1964, which was three. The Russians claim that Polaris carries six warheads.

What about a little bit of glasnost from the Minister? This is an important fact and he is giving away nothing which the Russians do not claim to know, although what the Russians claim to know differs from what the experts in Britain and the United States claim that they know. Why does the Minister not finally come clean and tell us how many warheads he plans to put in the nose cone of the D5 missiles that he is planning to buy from the United States, because that is of major importance to the prospects for disarmament agreement in the strategic field?

From the Government's point of view, the risk of the Americans breaking their agreement to supply us with D5 missiles is a very real one. If the Minister is not aware of that, the Prime Minister certainly is. That is why, immediately after Reykjavik she scurried off to Camp David, and she went there again this year. She seems to have a season ticket to Camp David because she feels that it is her duty and in our national interest to go at least once every six months to Washington to declare what she calls "implicit confidence in the President's integrity". The last time that the right hon. Lady did that was during the first week of the Irangate disaster.

It is clear that the type of strategic force that the Government have contracted to buy from the United States makes us totally dependent on the decisions of the American Government, who may decide to interrupt the agreement. To discourage the Americans from taking such a step we are now toeing the American line on issue after issue — on disarmament, on defence and, indeed, on foreign policy. It was a Conservative Government, formed by Harold Macmillan, who started a process that was intended to lead to a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests.

The Government have now excluded the possibility of such a ban, and the Secretary of State said that the reason for that is that we cannot go ahead with our own nuclear programme unless we can test the missiles. Although the Government had intelligence information showing that the Krasnoyarsk installation was not a battle command station for a Soviet star wars system, they refused to admit that they had that information. However, since then a group of American congressmen, together with photographers and defence experts, have been to look at Krasnoyarsk on the ground and have verified the information collected by intelligence sources.

Another, and particularly disturbing, example is that only last Thursday the Foreign Secretary described the ABM treaty as an unacceptable constraint on the strategic defence initiative. That was a disturbing remark, which appeared to pass without notice at the time. The plain fact is that all that the Russians are asking for as a condition of proceeding to a 50 per cent. cut in strategic weapons is that the United States Administration should stick to the narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty, which was accepted by every American Administration — Republican and Democrat — until the Reagan Administration, and which is endorsed by every one of our European allies, but about which the British Government do not have the guts to tell the truth.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am grateful to my Leeds neighbour for giving way — he was a distinguished Secretary of State for Defence. Will he follow the logic of what he is saying? He has spelt out what he thinks is an unhealthy relationship with America. Years ago I heard him explain why he was concerned that American interests would be switched to the Pacific and that there would be problems in keeping them in Europe. Therefore, is there not some logic in saying that as the right hon. Gentleman, when Secretary of State for Defence, used to believe that Europe needed a fallback on some nuclear deterrent—I have not yet heard him say this—he favours this country's collaboration with France to have a proper European nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Healey: No, and I explained that during my swan song — well, not really my swan song, because I am singing again today. During my last speech from the Labour Front Bench in July, I explained why I had changed my position on this matter. The hon. Gentleman has let the Government's cat out of the bag. The case for a British independent deterrent is the belief that the American deterrent is not reliable. Obviously, the Prime Minister clearly believes that. That is why she said what she did to the viewers of Moscow television. However, the Government are going, not for an independent deterrent, but for one that is bought from the United States over a 20-year period and must be in service for 30 years, during which period the missiles must be returned to the United States once every seven years, and the warheads of which, although they are British, have to be tested on American test sites.

If we take the Prime Minister's view, there is a case for following the French — and I suspect that that is what the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the ex-leader of the SDP, would like to do. However, that is not what the Government are doing, and it is not even what the SDP is openly proposing today—I mean the ex-SDP. Indeed, I am not aware of anyone in this country in any political area who is proposing that, with the possible exception of my noble Friend on the Front Bench—I refer to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), and I use the term "noble" not in the class sense but as an expression of personal esteem — who is about the only chap who will move at a rate of knots towards the Gaullist position on nuclear weapons.

As I was saying before I was so pleasantly interrupted, we have become wholly dependent on the vagaries of American policy. Of course, sometimes it has good effects. The Prime Minister was clearly deeply suspicious — indeed, hostile—to the INF agreement when it was first put forward, and she made that clear in some unguarded remarks. However, once she became aware that the American Administration were determined to pursue it, she fell into line. The Secretary of State for Defence told us in July that he thought that he would have to consider putting cruise missiles on submarines and having more B52 bombers in Britain to replace the capability given up by NATO in the INF agreement. I shall make a prediction: it is now clear that the Americans do not want to follow that route, so we will not hear a peep out of the right hon. Gentleman along those lines from now on.

However, in some ways more serious, because it is a continuing process, is the extent to which the Government's dependence on the United States for a strategic nuclear force is corrupting areas of our foreign policy to which it is not strictly relevant in any way. We were the only ally of the United States to give it facilities for the raiding of Tripoli last year. The reason, obviously, was the nuclear dependency. We have had pusillanimous pussy-footing from the British Government about Nicaragua, El Salvador and the possibility of a settlement in Latin America. Why? It is because they are frightened of offending the American President in case it backfires on his readiness to supply us with Trident.

There is also the inexplicable behaviour of the Government towards the crisis in the Gulf. A few moments ago I asked the Minister about Mr. John Connell's report in *The Sunday Times* on 1 May that the continuation of the Armilla patrol in the Gulf was a condition of the Trident agreement in 1982. He did not know, but perhaps when he——

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Healey: Oh, so the Minister has found out, has he?

Mr. Stewart: When the right hon. Gentleman intervened during my speech I had not seen the article. However, I thought it highly implausible. I was right—it

Mr. Healey: I am surprised to hear that, because Mr. Connell is one of the most highly regarded of all British defence correspondents. He was writing, not in the *Morning Star* or even *Marxism Today*, but in *The Sunday Times*—an organ—if that is the right word, and I am sure that it is — of Mr. Rupert Murdoch and which cannot be accused of truckling to the Soviet Union or even to the Labour party or the CND. There have been other reports about conditions attached to the Trident agreement; for example, those relating to Diego Garcia. I have no doubt that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will pursue these matters during Question Time, as I shall be doing, in the coming months.

Whatever the reason for our forces being in the Gulf, during Question Time last week the Foreign Secretary told us that our policy in the Gulf is fundamentally different from that of the United States. Perhaps the Minister can tell us how it is different. Indeed, he would be doing a

[Mr. Healey]

service to the world if he could explain American policy in the Gulf, because the Americans appear to be very uncertain about it. There is common ground in the House, which emerged during Question Time last week, that the greatest danger to Britain's interests and to world peace would be for members of the Western alliance to express partiality in favour of either Iraq or Iran.

The Americans have expressed partiality, and it is a bit thick for the Minister to say again today that we have ships in the Gulf to guarantee freedom of passage through international waters, when two thirds of the attacks on foreign shipping in the Gulf have been carried out by Iraq, not Iran, and when every attack carried out by American forces has been against Iran. In one case it was because Iran had attacked a ship, not in international waters, but in Kuwaiti territorial waters, which a week earlier had been explicitly excluded from the area of American concern by no less a person than General Vernon Walters, the American ambassador to the United Nations. Every time that the Americans have taken military action against Iran they have been congratulated, usually by the Prime Minister, and sometimes by the Foreign Secretary. I have no doubt that the Secretary of State has added his ounce —or milligram—from time to time.

Most disturbing of all is the Government's reason for rejecting a United Nations force in the Gulf. The Russians have offered to contribute to such a force or to withdraw their ships in favour of such a force if the Americans will do the same. The Government say that they favour working with the Russians for a peaceful solution to the conflict and that they want to work with the Russians for an arms embargo against Iran. Why then will they not agree to the setting up of a United Nations force?

We were given the most extraordinary collection of reasons last week, the most striking being the claim that it was not possible to have an international force if the people on the different ships spoke different languages. Come off it! I do not mean you, Mr. Deputy Speakser, but the Secretary of State and the Minister. NATO has several international maritime forces. I have made a note of the languages spoken by the members of those forces. They speak English, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Turkish and Greek. I dare say that none of the captains of those vessels speaks Turkish much better than the Secretary of State. Yet, as we are constantly told, that international force, speaking all those languages, has kept the peace for the past 40 years in NATO.

The United Nations had international forces in Cyprus and the Lebanon with the same mix of languages, to which Finnish was added. The Secretary of State's familiarity with that language is, of course, legend in all the bars of Helsinki. If the Government have no better argument than that for opposing a United Nations force in the Gulf, they should stop opposing it and support it. It is by far the best hope of keeping the peace in that area and the only way to ensure that Britain and the West maintain their influence in that part of the world both during the war and after the war is over.

I ask the Government to think again about their Trident programme. It is clear from what the Secretary of State said yesterday that there are very difficult choices on the way. Having faced the same problems 20 years ago, I can tell the Secretary of State that there is no answer to be found in candle ends or salami cuts. That is the way to overstretched services, plummeting morale and operational inefficiency. The only way to make the cuts that the Government have decided as a quantum, with a further 5 per cent. to come in the next few years, is to drop some of the commitments—and Trident should be the first to go.

I conclude with this thought, and I hope that the Minister will give us his observations on it. We need Trident only if we cannot rely on the United States in a crisis, but if we cannot rely on the United States in a crisis, can we rely on the United States to provide us with Trident? There is a clear contradiction there which deserves to be explored. If we continue with the Trident programme, we risk crippling our expenditure on conventional forces for no real military advantage and with serious political disadvantage, which can be summed up as a period of prolonged and humiliating dependence on the United States that will corrupt the whole of our foreign and defence policies.

5.18 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my first speech in the House in this important debate. In doing so, I pay tribute to my distinguished predecessor, Sir John Wells, who served the constituency with dedication and distinction for 28 years. His period of service will be remembered by his former constituents with respect and affection, as I am sure it will also be remembered by Members of the House. He earned respect for his exemplary chairmanship of many important parliamentary Committees and affection for the colourful way in which he sometimes drew attention to the needs of his constituents. On one occasion, he arrived for the day's business on a horse. On another, he enlivened proceedings in the Chamber by eating an apple—a Kentish apple, of course—during the debate. I hope to follow his example in dedicating myself to the service of my constituents, but I shall not be eating any apples in the Chamber, as history attests rather strongly to the unfortunate results of ladies eating apples where they should not.

My constituency has suffered badly from the recent wind storms. As a horticulturist, Sir John Wells would have understood all too well the misery and devastation suffered by many farmers, expecially the fruit farmers whose industry takes up such a large part of the constituency that I have the honour to serve. I hope that the Government will see fit to provide some compensation, in however cautious and measured a way, to those who have lost their livelihood not just in the immediate term but for years to come, because it will be some time before replanted trees can be expected to produce crops which will generate income.

Leaving the country areas for the town of Maidstone, I am proud to have in that town concrete and tangible evidence of the Government's firm commitment to the National Health Service in the shape of a large new modern hospital. I regret to tell the House, however, that, due to inequitable distribution of funds by the South East Thames regional health authority, that hospital is not being used as fully or as beneficially as it should be. On an appropriate future occasion, I hope to draw attention to the difficulties experienced by my constituents as a result of that inequitable distribution of funds.

I address myself to the debate and to the Opposition amendments in the sure knowledge that I address myself to a subject of the utmost importance and interest to my constituents. I begin by congratulating the Government on the Defence Estimates and particularly on the sound basis on which they have drawn up plans for the nation's security. I believe that the people of Britain will draw great comfort and reassurance from the fact that they are governed by a party which is wholly committed to an effective nuclear deterrent.

I spent many hours yesterday and some today listening to Opposition Members decrying the Trident programme. I thought that they had been sufficiently effectively answered yesterday, but today we have heard the same tired arguments, based on the same flawed logic. Both in their amendments and in the many distinguished speeches that we have heard, the Opposition have claimed that the Trident programme is undesirable because it eats into conventional defence expenditure. There is a severe absence of logic in that statement. It is true that if we did not spend the money on Trident we could use it to purchase conventional weapons or, indeed, anything we liked — sacks of potatoes, biros, pounds of butter, or whatever. If we are to spend Trident money on something other than Trident, we must ask ourselves whether the optional thing that we are purchasing is capable of doing the job of Trident. If it is not capable of doing that job and fulfilling the aims of Trident, it does not matter that we could buy it with Trident money. It is totally irrelevant.

The sole objective of Trident is to deter a potentially hostile force from launching a nuclear attack on this country, or to deter a hostile force with overwhelmingly superior conventional forces from attempting to use that superiority to launch a conventional attack. Therefore, if we are to give up Trident to buy conventional weapons, we must demand that those weapons are an equally effective deterrent.

The statement on the Defence Estimates suggests that, if we devote all the Trident money to conventional weapons, we might be able to buy and maintain 300 tanks for an armoured division. I am sure that it is very laudable and worthy to buy 300 tanks for an armoured division but, when the Warsaw pact countries have a superiority of 30,000 tanks, it will not be a very effective deterrent. We can do the same arithmetical exercise for artillery, where we are outnumbered by 3:1, and in anti-tank guided weapons by 1·6:1. We can continue that exercise, but we shall not end up with a replacement that serves the same aim as Trident. We shall simply replace something designed to do one job with something designed to do a totally different job.

Opposition Members were not terribly kind to the Government last night when summing up. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) said that he would not award a CSE pass to the Government for the reasoning behind their Defence Estimates but, after listening yesterday and for several hours today to the Opposition, I do not believe that they have reached a standard of elementary logic which would get them through the 11-plus. Perhaps that is why they have such an antipathy towards that examination. My nephews and nieces at the age of eight or nine, let alone 11, could have told Opposition Members that, if they are given the bus fare to get home and they spend it on a taxi ride, they will not get the same value because the bus will take them only a few yards.

If we spend the Trident money on 300 tanks or whatever — frigates are much beloved of the Opposition — we shall find that we have gone not even a few yards or feet but only a few inches towards an effective deterrent, whereas Trident would do the entire job, so the logic is flawed. If we all took to the hills — as the Opposition came perilously close to suggesting not long ago — and invested our Trident money in bows and arrows, those bows and arrows might outnumber those of the Warsaw pact countries and would be about as useful as some of the arguments put forward by the Opposition.

Opposition Members are trying to have it all ways when they argue that, if we are to have an independent deterrent, it must be truly independent. I am not quite sure what Opposition Members stand for. The distinguished and right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said that we do not have a truly independent deterrent because the Americans will do the servicing. We said very clearly—I am sorry that the Opposition did not understand the point — that we shall always have control over some of the missiles. Does the right hon. Gentleman seriously believe that, when he sends a suit to the cleaners, he has no clothes at all and must come into the Chamber in a state of sartorial dilapidation because he has no suit?

Finally, in desperation, Opposition Members decided to try to claim that the conventional imbalance was a figment of the Government's imagination, that it did not exist, and in support of that they triumphantly produced a document brought out by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and quoted it with the reverence normally reserved for Holy Writ. They said, "Look, this says something entirely different." I have read that document and I find that within its figures there is ample evidence, which is clearly set out and not at all disguised, that the Warsaw pact enjoys an overwhelming numerical superiority of conventional weapons. I commend page 226 to the Opposition for further study. They may not have got that far.

The amendment submitted in the name of the Leader of the Opposition is serious, because it exhorts the Government to take a headlong flight to abandon and abolish all battlefield nuclear weapons simultaneously with reductions on the conventional side. That is simply and solely the wrong timing. There must be no further reductions beyond the INF treaty agreements. There must be no further reductions in nuclear weapons until such time as the conventional imbalance — whether one believes the Government's document or the IISS document—is eliminated.

In that context, I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister for reassurance later. It is said that the statement on the Defence Estimates was drawn up at a time when the finer ramifications of the INF proposals, particularly the inclusion of shorter-range intermediate missiles, had not been fully understood. Such are the massive implications for our conventional spending, not only for Britain, which already spends the third highest percentage of gross domestic product in NATO on defence, but for all our NATO partners, that we should be assured that not only will there be no simultaneous negotiations for the reduction of battlefield nuclear weapons, but that there will be a good long cool gap before any agreement that we may reach on conventional weapons while we assess the implications.

So desperate were the anti-Trident Opposition that they said that there was supposed to be an escalation of the arms race. One sees such words in the amendments. That is interesting. An arms race implies that each side is trying

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

to keep up with the other, but as I read it, the number of warheads on Trident is a lower proportion of Warsaw pact warheads than Polaris was when we first had it. So that is not an escalation.

The Opposition used the worn-out argument that because the warheads were independently targeted, we had increased our numbers. However, if one is talking about an arms race, one must also look at what the other side is doing. Surely it is only prudent, when designing a system, to say that if one ever reached the highly undesirable state when one needed to increase one's warheads, one should have the system to make that possible. The cost of the Chevaline operation that was forced upon the Labour Government can be interpreted as the cost of not having sufficient forward defence planning at the time of procurement.

I regret that in this, my first speech in the House, I have had to devote so much time to the wild and woolly arguments of the Opposition. I am also rather surprised that they are still putting forward in the House the Alice-in-Wonderland reasoning that lost them the June election. I say to them: Come back from Wonderland. Do not go through the looking glass with Alice. Instead, stay in front of the looking glass and take a good long look. Do the Opposition's policies reflect public opinion? No. But more importantly, do their policies have any bearing on the real world? Surely the answer must still be no. Thus the Opposition should stand at that looking glass and look in. But my belief is that the general public, as exhibited in poll after poll, have reason to be thankful and grateful to the Government who have drawn up their plans on a sound and effective deterrent rather than being able to offer no strategy and no alternative.

5.34 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I briefly opposed the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) in the 1983 general election when she was contesting Plymouth, Devonport, and I was campaigning in the city and the dockyard as Labour's defence spokesman, but now I hasten to congratulate her on an outstanding maiden speech, delivered appealingly, with great confidence and with the authority that befits someone who, through her family and education as well as her political campaigning, has close links with the armed services, especially the Navy. But the hon. Lady also spoke provocatively, and I know that many of my hon. Friends will genuinely look forward to her next speech and to her being called in the Navy debate. However, all of us will join in congratulating her on her speech, which was made without notes, without so much as a hesitation or a diminution of verve, or command of her subject, although some of us ached to challenge her.

Britain is to spend more than £19 billion on defence in the year ending next April. In cash terms that is a tiny increase over last year, but in real terms it is a decrease, yet according to the defence White Paper, the Secretary of State for Defence in introducing it yesterday, and all the Conservative Members who followed him, with the exception of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), everything is all right with Britain's defences. It is not.

The reality is that the Navy is not getting the ships that it needs to fulfil its assigned roles in NATO, and the British Army remains the worst equipped of the main armies of NATO Europe. The White Paper gives no hope for much improvement—on the contrary. The results of the past three lean years have not yet begun to be felt.

New orders for type 23 frigates have been delayed. Just six ships have been ordered in the past three years. The Navy is becoming overstretched. Participation in NATO exercises has dropped by one third. Maintenance and training are suffering. Ultimately, the Navy may be unable to meet NATO force goals and other national commitments.

Little more than half the 50 minesweeper and hunter orders planned under a £1 billion modernisation scheme will be completed by the 1995 deadline. Ironically, the mine warfare forces were the one part of the Navy that was boosted under the 1982 defence review, which otherwise hit the Navy hard. Six AWACS aircraft have been ordered to replace the abandoned Nimrod, where eight is really the minimum that the RAF needs to keep a constant watch.

The Army does not have enough helicopters, anti-aircraft weapons, artillery or missiles, nor really enough men. New orders are being delayed. The Army's Chieftain tanks are obsolescent and need replacing in the early 1990s. No serious money has been allocated to build or buy a successor model in good time. The Army badly needs a multiple-launch rocket system to replace outdated artillery. Spending on all those conventional items should rise if all the lessons of the Falklands war are to be implemented, according to a report on the 1982 campaign published recently by the Select Committee on Defence.

The main question raised by the White Paper is how long the Government will keep the lid on defence spending. The costs of equipment and the cost of men are both rising, yet defence outlays have been virtually flat in cash terms since 1985-86. That gap is nothing like the chasm that is likely to open up between commitment and resources in the next few years. Some analysts believe that funds for new equipment must be cut by more than a third during the next five years. Others calculate that a gap of £8 billion is opening up between what is willed and what is likely to be available to pay for it. However, if one searches for that in the Defence Estimates, one will search in vain.

The hon. Member for Hampshire, East, who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, put his finger on the button yesterday afternoon when he said:

> "What concerns me is that there is no sign that the Government, not the Ministry, have taken a strategic view on what must be put into our defence resources in the next four or five years."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 241.]

The European fighter aircraft project, which could cost Britain more than £6 billion, has not been included in the latest long-term costings. How can the Government proceed with their full development without cutting another important defence commitment to pay for it? The Secretary of State presumably believes that a cash crisis can be averted by deferring projects and spreading their cost over a longer period. That may well be over-optimistic. The cost of Trident, now moving towards its peak, and the decline of defence spending by 8 per cent. in real terms over the next five years, will squeeze the budget hard.

Nor will cutting some marginal commitments outside the NATO area or the more efficient management of procurement be enough. Equipment costs will continue to escalate, so that the country will either have to pay more proportionately for defence than it does now, or adjust its commitments. Whatever the commitments, the House may depend upon it that it will be conventional arms, not nuclear arms, that will suffer. If past form is a guide, the likeliest conventional area is sustainability.

Page 17 of the White Paper properly draws attention to the need for conventional defence improvement and claims:

> "considerable progress had been made towards a more effective conventional posture".

Will the Minister state what the United Kingdom has contributed towards that "considerable progress"? Ammunition stocks are the only item to which one can find a reassuring reference in the White Paper. What of operational reserves, stocks of vital equipment, intelligence, C^3 and early warning? On page 17 the White Paper properly justifies the improvement of NATO's conventional defence posture so as

> "to avoid being put in a position of undue reliance on the early use of nuclear weapons".

It is becoming increasingly urgent that we should do so to redress the imbalance of forces favouring the Warsaw pact. In so far as that conventional imbalance exists, it is considered throughout the Alliance to be an obstacle in the way of nuclear disarmament.

There can be no question about responding to Mr. Gorbachev and his arms control challenge. Indeed, there seems little doubt that the movement in arms control would not have come about without far-reaching Soviet concessions. To be sure, many of Mr. Gorbachev's proposals and declared concessions have had a rich pay-off in enhancing the Soviet image. However, we cannot allow the NATO-Warsaw pact military balance to be held up as an obstacle to nuclear disarmament. Ascertaining an accurate picture of the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw pact is not easy, because it involves a detailed comparison of many quantitative factors. The task is rendered extraordinarily difficult and complex by the asymmetrical nature of the armed forces of the two sides. Therefore, from the outset it is important to keep in mind that no single measurement can possibly give a comprehensive and accurate representation of the military balance between the two alliances.

How does the Soviet Union view the conventional balance? Until recently we have had to rely in the public arena on statements made and proposals tabled at arms control negotiations to build a picture of its assessment of the NATO-Warsaw pact balance. However, during 1987 the Soviet Union has issued for the first time two volumes of a year book "Disarmament and Security 1986". Although the year book has a number of obvious limitations, the significance of its publication and its dissemination in the West should not be underestimated.

Whether we like it or not, and whether or not we acknowledge it—the Government do not acknowledge it on page 4 of the White Paper, or, as it was described by some of my hon. Friends last night, the "potted history of the Soviet Union over 60 years"—the initiative in arms control is being taken by Mr. Gorbachev. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Western Alliance to determine what it actually wants from arms control and to explore every avenue with the Soviet Union on how to get there. There are, for example, increasing signs that the Soviet Union is ready for cautious questioning of its military doctrine and strategy. In May the Warsaw pact proposed military-to-military discussions with the objective of ensuring that the doctrines of both sides rest on defensive principles. Such an overture should not immediately be eschewed.

In conclusion, the decisive test for the future phase of arms control is not yet upon us, but for the first time in post-war history a qualitative change in the military relationship between East and West seems possible. In the next decisive phase of arms control negotiations, both sides will need to demonstrate conclusively that sufficient political will exists to ensure that a serious disarmament process is here to stay. Our Alliance should seize the initiative and test Soviet will to achieve equitable and verifiable solutions.

5.48 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): When you took the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you appealed to hon. Members to be brief. I intend to assist you and other hon. Members by doing so and by restricting my remarks to Northern Ireland.

I wish to join in the fulsome tribute paid to the soldiers of the Regular Army and to the members of the Ulster Defence Regiment who, together with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, courageously face the Provisional IRA, which is a well-trained and ruthless terrorist organisation. The decent and law-abiding people of Northern Ireland fully support the members of the security forces in the battle to rid the Province and the kingdom of those callous and criminal elements and, indeed, to rid the Province of all terrorists, regardless of their political tag. No one in Ulster is safe from the murderous activities of the Provisional IRA. My heart goes out in sympathy to people who live in lonely areas in the Province, such as farmers who serve in the Ulster Defence Regiment and in the police force, because they are easy soft targets for the terrorists.

At the start of today's debate, the Minister gave the numbers of those serving in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Regular Army who have been murdered this year. Eleven soldiers—eight of them members of the UDR—have been murdered this year. That is a heavy price and it does not conjure up the tremendous agony suffered by their relatives. Our sympathy goes out to all those who have been bereaved or who have suffered as a result of terrorist atrocities.

The continuing violence is a sad reflection on the forecasts that the Anglo-Eire agreement would produce peace, stability and reconciliation. I fear that the agreement has encouraged the Provisional IRA to further atrocities, believing that it needs only one more push to destroy Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Yet, despite the casualties to which the Minister referred in his opening speech, and despite the atrocities which have been visited upon the security forces and, indeed, the ordinary people of Northern Ireland, the morale of the UDR and the Regular Army is excellent, just as the morale of the Ulster people is high. They will not be defeated by terrorists. That is the message that goes out from me and should go out from this House.

A few months ago when I was on an all-party delegation I met soldiers who had recently served in Ulster and I was impressed by their spirit, keenness and efficiency. They all felt that they had been doing a worthwhile job in Northern Ireland, albeit a dangerous one. Their only complaint was the unfairness of the contest there. In any ordinary battle, they face the enemy dressed

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in enemy uniform and fight on equal terms, but in Northern Ireland it is a different contest on different terms. At any moment, whether on or off duty, British soldiers or RUC officers could be murdered by the Provisional IRA, shot in the back by a cowardly sniper or blown apart by a car bomb detonated by remote control after they or the police had been enticed into the danger zone as a result of a spurious call.

British soldiers must act within certain strict restrictions, and they always operate under the sanction of being charged with murder if in the heat and fear of the moment they act too quickly. Inevitably, Republican claims are made after every incident when British soldiers shoot an IRA terrorist that the dead terrorist was an innocent bystander or that the IRA man was not given a chance to surrender. Obviously, to me that is nauseating propaganda, bearing in mind that Provisional IRA terrorists torture and kill in cold blood, without the slightest grain of mercy and giving no chance to the soldier, policeman or civilian to surrender. No, they destroy ruthlessly. That is why people in Northern Ireland, like me, are proud of British soldiers.

As the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), who served with distinction in the Ministry of Defence, said, British soldiers exercise remarkable restraint. That is something for which they should be credited. Whenever attacks are made on British soldiers, whether on members of the UDR or on regular soldiers, we in this House should always remember the atmosphere in Northern Ireland and the real danger of death to every soldier and citizen. We should thank them for what they are doing in the Province to help bring about the conditions which may lead to reconciliation and political progress. I cannot talk about political progress in this debate, but I know that, whenever there is an atrocity by the IRA, it sets back the day of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Sir Antony Buck: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning that yesterday I paid tribute to our armed forces and the burdens that they bear. Perhaps I can now pay a tribute of equal strength to those who serve in the UDR and the services of law and order who live in communities which contain terrorists who seek to maintain local discipline by putting a Black and Decker drill through a man's kneecap and by blowing people up haphazardly. Perhaps those people bear an even greater burden than our armed forces.

Mr. Kilfedder: I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman. I said at the beginning of my speech that I would be brief, so I shall now close my remarks.

As I have seen so much death and destruction from terrorists' bombs and bullets in Northern Ireland for over 18 years, and as I have lived in that state where the shadow of death hangs over everyone, I am committed to peace and reconciliation there. I hope that we can have progress before long and before many others die. But equally, I should like to see rapprochement between nations. Therefore, I welcome the present climate of detente and I hope that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev can get together so that we can rid this world of nuclear weapons.

5.55 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I hope that the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) will forgive me if I do not take up his points; I want to speak about bullying and brutality in the Army. I do not know what the financial cost of that is, but I know that the human costs are heavy.

We all want tough, well-trained soldiers, but that is entirely different from brutalised young recruits. Already, cruel and indecent conduct has been proved at courts martial. Young men have been kicked and beaten, and physically and mentally broken; they have been transformed from balanced youths into nervous wrecks. They have been subjected to vicious, humiliating and degrading initiation rites which included some forms of enforced nakedness and buggery.

Last night, a woman telephoned me at home about her son who had run away from the Army in fear. She said that he had left the Army and his family. He now has no base, no job and no future. Officially, he is a deserter. In fact he is a petrified youngster. One man wrote to me that he was so threatened in the Army that he tried to take his own life. He is still absent without leave. The House will know about the tragic case of Jeffry Singh who hanged himself at Shorncliffe barracks. His father alleged that he was bullied and brutalised into committing suicide.

It is amazing that we have no idea about the extent of this disturbing problem. The Under-Secretary of State told me that this information was

"not held centrally and could only be collected with disproportionate cost and effort."

However, I know that the Minister is taking bullying and brutality seriously and I welcome the efforts that he and General Mostyn, the Army's adjutant-general, are making.

Both the Minister and the general have listened to the views of a deputation of hon. Members and have taken vigorous action, which I also welcome. Both have described bullying and brutality as "abhorrent" and General Mostyn has told all commanding officers to deal with it.

My views, however, differ from those of both the Minister and the general in a number of respects. They think that the numbers of those who are subjected to bullying and brutality are low. I say that we only see the tip of the iceberg. That is partly because some of the letters that I have received from frightened soldiers and worried parents are anonymous. The writers apologise for not giving their names, but say that I will understand why they cannot. The identical thread running through those letters if fear of bullying, reprisals, the Official Secrets Act and threats from officers and NCOs. It is significant that before the current court martial took place—I cannot comment on it, of course — it was reported that witnesses were temporarily removed from their battalions for their own safety. Why? Because of fear.

Such an atmosphere of intimidation means that few soldiers are willing to complain and even fewer to give evidence. They really are frightened and living in fear. However, without witnesses there can be no convictions, so the actual number of convictions for bullying and brutality is misleading. That number is a gross under-estimation of the size of the problem. That is why I say that we only see the tip of the iceberg and why I believe that the problem is far larger than it appears to be at present.

The Minister is happy with the existing arrangements for dealing with these cases. Recently, in a televised debate with me, he said that there is now an independent system under which commanding officers are obliged to investigate every incident, and if it is serious enough they call in the Special Investigation Branch. The Minister may be happy with those arrangements, but he lives in a world far removed from that of petrified young recruits. How are terrified young men to complain to one corporal about the behaviour of another, if that corporal is a friend of the first? All of us who served in the Army know that colleagues and pals had a drink together; so if someone complains to one corporal, his complaint may concern that corporal's friend, which is causing the young recruit to be frightened of both of them. So it is unlikely that a recruit will do that.

Will the young man who has been brutalised really go to the commanding officer's door and say, "Excuse me sir, I have a problem"? It just does not happen. When I was in the Army, the commanding officer was like the Speaker of the House of Commons—he was elevated to a high pedestal. We were afraid of him, we respected him and would not dream of approaching him. No raw recruit will stroll up to a commanding officer and complain. So the Minister is wrong in assuming that the present methods of complaining about brutality and bullying are OK. They are far from that.

On the rare occasions when a commanding officer has received a complaint, it is his decision as to whether to call in the Special Investigation Branch. Where is the independence in that? If the commanding officer decides, that is not independent. I am not saying that the CO would not perform his duty. Often, the commanding officer will do his duty, but he may be blinkered. He may, and does, instinctively side with the officers—senior and junior. Commanding officers, naturally, do not want bad publicity for their regiments. So the present system is not independent, and terrified young soldiers certainly do not see it as such. It is wholly inadequate, as is the system of relying on education inspectors and other types of formal monitoring.

The Army is recruiting young lads of 16 and 17. Many of them will benefit from the physical fitness and disciplined community life, but when the sadists infiltrate, young lives can be destroyed. They are being destroyed now in the Army by brutal and sadistic treatment. That has been proved by courts martial in the past. I cannot comment on current courts martial and those yet to come, but past ones have proved that this offensive brutalisation of young men is going on. It must be stopped. The police do not recruit young men of 16 or 17 and the armed forces did not do so during war. If it is necessary to recruit them —I do not think it is, but if the Minister does—it is essential that there should be a fully effective, independent system of investigating allegations and monitoring the treatment of recruits.

We have a fine Army, but it is tarnished by the cruelty of some vicious thugs. No Minister or general can defend a system that permits that.

I conclude by putting the following proposals to the Minister, I hope he will take them into account, and reply to them later. First, I suggest that there should be a general amnesty for young recruits who have gone absent without leave from regiments in which there has been proven bullying. For example, if a young recruit has found the sadistic, sexual initiaton rites of the King's Own Scottish Borderers intolerable—as has been proved in previous courts martial—he should not be further punished. All such deserters should be reprimanded and then allowed to leave, for their benefit and for that of the Army.

Secondly, a new system of centrally collating all complaints and allegations of bullying and brutality should be set up, so that the Minister knows the nature and size of the problem—or at least more about it—so that he is not just guessing, and probably overlooking, the serious difficulties of young recruits.

Thirdly, a special Army ombudsman should be appointed. Soldiers, or even parents, with allegations of mistreatment or violence should report to him with complete confidence in his impartiality and independence. The ombudsman would have no regimental ties. He should have no friends in high or not so high places and no advantage in urging silence. He could be the one genuinely independent instrument that could rescue the Army's good name. He could change the ethos of bullying and put an end to current malpractices.

Then the Army can get on with its task of producing tough, well-trained, disciplined soldiers, without brutalising recruits. I suggest that the proposed Army Ombudsman look at future problems and be concerned with the long term. This proposal would not invalidate the need for an immediate independent inquiry into the serious allegations that have already been made about bullying and brutality in the British Army. This is a serious problem in the Army. I am glad to know that the Minister is taking action and I know that he will do what he can in good faith. We differ in our analysis. My proposals are a radical departure but I hope that the Minister will consider my suggestions and will let me have his answer in his own good time.

6.10 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): It is always a great pleasure to follow a speech by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). He makes his case with great clarity and sincerity and I am sure that in winding up the Minister will comment on what the right hon. Gentleman said. The right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not follow him down the same road. I have two or three points to make, but before doing so I pay fulsome tribute to the eloquent maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). This is the second occasion on which I have been able to pay tribute to a new Kent colleague and it gives me great pleasure to do so.

About 20 years ago, when I was very young and callow, I was a junior officer in the Maidstone Conservative association, and at that time I became an admirer of the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone. When I entered the House in 1983 Sir John Wells was a great friend to me and to this day we remain firm friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone is very welcome as his successor and has shown that she will give us much to think about in the coming months.

I am delighted at the mention on page 31 of Cm. 101 about the Royal Engineers. This year is the 200th anniversary of the granting of the royal charter to the Royal Engineers, and the sappers have their spiritual home in my constituency where the Royal School of Military Engineering and the depot regiment are located at Brompton barracks. Since the sad demise of my predecessor, Sir Frederick Burden, in July, only the Royal

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Engineers are extant as members holding the freedom of the borough of Gillingham. Since the closure of the naval dockyard at Chatham, the Royal Engineers have maintained the very strong military ties in my constituency. We all enjoy and admire those ties.

We salute the excellence of the skills of the Royal Engineers and the prodigious support that they have provided for the British Army over their 200 years. We salute the courage of the Sappers responsible for the hazardous task of explosive ordnance disposal. Paragraph 425 sets out in detail the continuing level of such disposal that the Sappers share with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and with units from the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. The Corps of Royal Engineers undertakes construction in remote parts of the world and relief work in worldwide disaster situations. In its long history, the corps has produced many notable soldiers and the Royal Engineers truly live up to their motto which is, I believe, "Ubique"—everywhere. I hope that the Royal Engineers will continue to prosper for the next 200 years. I shall certainly continue to pay my tribute to the Royal Engineers throughout my tenure in the House.

My second point is about arms control. During the past week our hopes have been raised and then dashed. We thought that the obstacles to a treaty on intermediate nuclear forces had been finally overcome. The visit to Moscow last week by George Shultz should have been the precursor to a truly historic treaty that would have represented a turning point — a lowering of the high water mark of nuclear armament. To some extent our hopes were dashed by a seemingly incomprehensible slowing of progress by the Soviet leader, Mr. Gorbachev. Just today, the pace has again quickened and we must pray for a successful conclusion to this phase of arms control.

Does anyone seriously believe that we would have achieved that breakthrough if NATO had not taken its twin-track decision in 1979 and, more importantly, had not followed it through by the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles? Does anyone seriously believe that the Soviet Union would now be willing to withdraw the SS20 and shorter range missiles if NATO had been deterred from the deployment of missiles by the unilateralist peace campaigners?

Why are the Opposition so blind to the lack of credibility of their unilateralist policy? Our lead in abjuring chemical weapons is a bleak and dispiriting warning to those who would lead us down the yellow road of unilateralism. Perhaps I should say it is a warning to those who would have led us down that road had they not received a third bloody nose at the polls on 11 June. In no small way that was due to the incredibility of the Opposition's defence policy. Those same one-sided disarmers would now compound their appeasement by giving up our independent nuclear deterrent, probably with no commensurate reduction in Soviet weaponry or, at best, in return for the Soviets reducing by just 3 per cent. their nuclear stockpile. That would be a reduction of 3 per cent. in return for our giving up 100 per cent. of our independent deterrent. When will the Opposition learn that appeasement only ever whetted the appetite of an imperialistic hegemony?

We all hope that the current INF agreement will lead to reductions in chemical, conventional and strategic nuclear arsenals. However, we must ensure at all times that we are not gulled by Soviet presentation to the world's press and onlookers into giving away an unbalanced proportion of our defensive capability. It would be easy to become fired with enthusiasm for the present agreement and push on to further treaties which would leave us in a position of vulnerability or even jeopardy. We would do well to follow the caution of our German allies. In particular, the class of battlefield nuclear weapons must not be negotiated away without major political developments between the Soviet Union and its Warsaw pact satellites and between the Warsaw pact and the West.

No one who has stood on either side of the Berlin wall could believe that the time has come for us to lower our guard. We are at a turning point. There is a slight easing in relations from the grimmest days of Brezhnev, Chernenko and Andropov. Any small step is welcome, but we are a very long way from becoming once again allies with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's willingness to treat on the INF class of nuclear weapons is borne more out of economic pragmatism than from any real desire to ratchet down the arms race or, indeed, to reduce its offensive and defensive forces.

My third point is a tribute to another defence interest of immense importance in my constituency. In this case, it is a weapons system supplier rather than a unit of the armed forces. I recognise that GEC Avionics Limited is a name that evokes some concern among some hon. Members, mostly because of the dismal Nimrod-AEW saga. GEC Avionics has a major factory in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame Peggy Fenner). It employs about 6,000 highly skilled people from in and around the Medway towns, including my own constituency. GEC Avionics of Rochester has been successful in gaining lucrative export orders for state-of-the-art, high-technology aids for pilots of advanced planes. In the past five years more than £1 billion of exports have been earned from head-up displays, air data computers and, most recently, night vision goggles for the pilots of the United States AV8B advanced Harriers. Sadly and ironically, GEC Avionics has sold very few of these items to the Royal Air Force.

The avionics side of GEC is not the only arm of this great company recently to achieve a major export order from the United States. Earlier this month, in partnership with the American company Rockwell, Marconi Communications achieved an order from the Pentagon worth £1·8 billion for high-frequency, anti-jam radios for most of the United States navy ships, and there is a hope of further orders for other NATO navies. This success contrasts with our disappointment over Plessey's frustrated endeavours to win a contract for Ptarmigan two years ago. These successes by GEC reassure those of us who have argued for the Atlantic two-way street in defence procurement. Our sales to our premier ally are profitable in themselves, but, perhaps more importantly, they cement the very special relationship that Conservative Members value and cherish but which the Opposition, and notably today the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), take every opportunity to undermine and derogate.

The extraordinary amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) finally nails to the mast the Labour party's true defence colours—white tinged with yellow. The Opposition want a neutralised and de-equipped Britain that is out of NATO. That is not what the people want and they showed us that on 11 June. That is not what Conservative Members want. We have pride in our troops, such as the Royal Engineers that I mentioned earlier. We support our allies from a position of strength, and that is why we must retain our independent nuclear deterrent. We must encourage weapons systems suppliers, such as GEC, in their endeavours to develop and sell systems on our behalf. That is why we have devoted and continue to devote so much of our national resources on the defence of our realm.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I take a somewhat more optimistic view of the international arms control environment than the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). We are debating these important defence issues against a markedly different background from the one that we have been accustomed to in the recent past, and that is because of the impending agreement on intermediate nuclear weapons. It is important to say at the outset that the impending INF agreement involves a number of important precedents. It will be the first time that modern, sophisticated and accurate weapons systems will be not just withdrawn, but destroyed. It will be the first time that we have intrusive verification procedures involved in an arms control deal. It is also the first arms control agreement that involves deep cuts favouring NATO.

It is worth placing it on record that the Soviets will give up something approaching 1,600 warheads, while NATO will lose 348 out of a total of 572. That must be a good deal in anybody's language. In view of some of the muttered criticisms that we have heard on both sides of the Atlantic, it is also worth saying that the deal does not decouple the United States from the nuclear defence of Europe, it does not undermine the ability to have a flexible response and it does not herald some unstoppable slide towards a denuclearised Europe. There are ample nuclear assets in Europe to do the job.

I am therefore somewhat suspicious of talks about plugging the gap that will be left by the removal of the cruise and Pershing missiles. Such talk is extremely dangerous. It makes little sense to negotiate away ground-launched cruise missiles only to bring them back again in an air or submarine-launched form. Having said that, I think there is a strong case for improving the striking power of NATO's manned aircraft by providing them with a stand-off weapon with a range of something like 400 km that could be nuclear or conventionally armed. That is not introducing a new class of nuclear weapons into Europe; it is simply the sensible improvement of existing assets. I very much welcome reports that the Governments of the United Kingdom and France are examining the possibilities of that sort of approach.

One of the possible fallouts from the INF deal is the danger of unjustified euphoria about the progress of arms control negotiations. Certainly, among some in this country, there is a sense of what one might call nuclear Micawberism—the idea that we do not have to take any difficult decisions about the future of Britain's nuclear weapons because something is certain to turn up at Geneva that will prevent us from having to go through that unpleasant business. I think that all of us want to see arms control negotiations progressing. We all hope that they will succeed, but we cannot base the defence policy of this country on hope. Nor am I impressed by the proposition that Britain should retain nuclear weapons simply as a ticket of admission to super-power negotiations and that Britain's nuclear weapons should be solemnly laid on the table at those negotiations as some sort of bargaining counter.

If arms control negotiations do continue to proceed successfully, then obviously a time will come when Britain's nuclear weapons must be included in that process. However, we have to be clear about the objective of such negotiations. As other hon. Members have said in the debate, it simply cannot be a straightforward missile-for-missile reduction deal with the Soviet Union. The logic of that would be to leave the United Kingdom with no strategic nuclear capacity, while the Soviet Union would have quite enough to destroy us many times over. That sort of negotiation would simply be back-door unilateral nuclear disarmament dressed up to look like some sort of negotiated balanced disarmament proposal.

The majority of the British people are quite right when they take the simple straightforward view that, while other nations have nuclear weapons that can and do threaten this country, Britain is entitled to retain a minimum nuclear deterrent of its own that is sufficiently effective to deter any nuclear threat.

It is in that sense that I look now at the issue of the Trident programme. I think it is well known that I have argued since 1979 that Trident was unsuitable as a minimum deterrent for this country because of its cost, its excessive firepower and its over-dependence on the United States. I have argued, as have other alliance Members, that other nuclear systems were more appropriate to Britain's needs. I did not accept that it was a simple choice between Trident or nothing. However, I have to recognise that the situation has now changed.

However eloquent or witty the appeals from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), I do not believe that the Government are going to scrap the Trident programme before the next general election. When we get to that point in 1991 or 1992, we have to face the fact that cancelling Trident would involve throwing away vast sums of public money already spent or contractually committed to the Trident programme. Any attempt to find a replacement for Trident would simply add more to that bill and, worse still, would involve a damaging delay at a crucial period.

I cannot believe that, if in 1991 we took a decision to find some other nuclear deterrent to replace Trident, we could have that alternative deployed and operational by the time that the first Polaris submarine has to be phased out in the mid-1990s. Therefore, I accept that, at the next election, the choice will be the simple one that it was not in 1987. It will be a choice of either having the Trident system or having no nuclear deterrent at all. In that situation, I have to bite the bullet and say that it has to be Trident rather than no nuclear deterrent, even though I would be happier if the firepower of Trident was reduced to bring it back to the striking power of the existing Polaris system.

I am glad to see that, in the discussion of Britain's nuclear deterrent, there is now a wider acceptance of the idea that we should see Britain's nuclear weapons in a much more European setting and that in particular we should be exploring the possibilities of practical co-operation with the French on nuclear issues. When the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), other hon. Members and I proposed this in the summer of 1986, there were concerted attempts to rubbish it. I notice that the Government are now quietly getting on with the

[Mr. John Cartwright]

job of studying just what can be done on a co-operative basis with the French on nuclear issues, and I very much welcome that development.

There is an improved atmosphere in terms of arms control, and there are now much greater possibilities for progress than we have seen for some time. There have been substantial signs of progress in the strategic nuclear weapons negotiations. To an extent, they are held in hostage because of the problems over the SDI system and the negotiations on space and defensive weapons, but even there we are beginning to see a greater willingness by the Russians and the Americans to accept that both sides are deeply committed to research in the field and that both sides therefore have a sense of common interest in trying to work out what sort of research or testing is acceptable to each of them. More important, both sides have a common interest in trying to establish a regime in terms of anti-ballistic missile systems that prevents any sudden break by one side putting the other at risk. I am hopeful still that we can get some sense out of that negotiation.

The Secretary of State was quite right yesterday to draw attention to the problem of chemical weapons. I was sad that he did not refer to the progress in the negotiations at Geneva under the umbrella of the UN disarmament conference. It is the British Government and the British delegation which have played an important part in trying to solve the difficult problems of verification, and I pay tribute to the delegation for its efforts. Even here we have seen a shift in Soviet attitudes that may well indicate a greater willingness to accept a form of challenge-verification of chemical weapons. There are signs of improvement even in that difficult area.

I have always taken the view that short-range battlefield nuclear weapons are the most dangerous of nuclear systems because they are based so far forward, are designed for war fighting and are thus weapons that inevitably lower the nuclear threshold. The NATO military commanders argue that these systems have a deterrent value because they prevent the masssing of Soviet armour on the central front, which is essential to any conventional Soviet attack. In my view there is therefore a powerful argument for saying that we should negotiate about these short-range nuclear systems at the same time as we undertake conventional arms negotiations. In that way, progress in one area can, to some extent, be taken into account in the other. That seems to be a sensible approach.

It is important that, with the greater sense of optimism about progress in other arms control forums, we do not overlook the risks that flow from Soviet superiority in conventional defence in Europe. It was our concerns about the conventional imbalance in the first place that caused us to deploy nuclear weapons to the extent that we did.

As the Minister reminded us, the MBFR talks are winding down to a predictable end after 17 years of not terribly productive discussions. We have the prospect of new discussions involving 23 nations covering the entire area from the Atlantic to the Urals, which will operate within the framework of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

We should be realistic about the scale of the problem that faces us in trying to secure the conventional defence progress that we desire. If we are to achieve what we want, we shall have to look for deep and unequal cuts. If we get anything that is less asymmetric than the INF deal, for example, we shall weaken security in Europe, not improve it, and by so doing we shall weaken NATO's defence capability in the conventional area. That underlines all our experience of recent negotiations, which is that arms control alone cannot guarantee stability and security. Control must be accompanied by sensible conventional defence improvements. We know that pressure on defence budgets will not make that easy, and nor will the demographic changes in key NATO nations.

I have drawn attention in previous defence debates to some of the problems that will accompany demographic changes. I have seen recent calculations that suggest that the number of young men in the 15 to 24 age group in the United Kingdom will decline by about 24 per cent. between 1985 and the year 2000. In the Netherlands, the fall will be 31 per cent. and in the Federal Republic of Germany the fall will be a staggering 40 per cent. The same trend will be seen in all NATO nations except Turkey. On the other hand, there is likely to be an increase in potential manpower within the Warsaw pact, with the sole exception of East Germany.

The impact of these demographic changes for British forces is clear. It is evident that the armed services will have to compete in an even tougher market for potential recruits. Account must be taken of the cost of attracting them, and especially the cost of retaining experienced, trained personnel, which will increase dramatically as a result. I am surprised that the Estimates contain only the barest mention of the problem. Paragraph 612 states:

> "the recruiting of other ranks may become more difficult as the population in relevant age groups falls."

That seems to be something of an underestimate of the problem that will face us over the next few years.

I think that there would be a measure of support in the House for the idea that, for as long as we can judge, deterrence will rest on a mix of nuclear and conventional defence. Our aim must be to achieve a stable, secure and verifiable balance of forces at much lower levels than those that now prevail, and that desirable objective cannot be secured by arms control alone. Sensible and prudent modernisation and improvement of our forces will be just as important. That underlines the need for us not to regard arms control and effective defence as alternatives that are in conflict with each other. They must go hand in hand if we are to achieve the secure and lasting peace that we all want.

6.36 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I welcome the Estimates and I wish to deal with certain personnel issues that arise from them. Before doing so, however, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on a most eloquent maiden speech, which was made without notes, on a subject that everyone in the Chamber will agree is a complicated one.

I congratulate also the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on coming out finally in favour of Trident. It is a pity that so few of his former colleagues in the Liberal party were in the Chamber to hear what he had to say. Much of what he said could well have been said by a Conservative Member. Perhaps that is an omen for the future.

I shall comment briefly on the most amusing speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), a distinguished Member of this place. To put it mildly, he was rather critical of the Trident missile programme. This is interesting. He was critical largely because he felt that it was not an independent nuclear deterrent, but one that relied upon the United States. It is clear that the only essential difference between the purchasing of these missiles and the Polaris missiles lies in the servicing arrangements. However, the right hon. Gentleman maintains that because of this one difference the Trident deterrent is not independent and is entirely reliant on the United States. This is despite the fact that these missiles are to be serviced only every eight years, which gives the Government, or any future Government, a reasonable time to produce other methods of servicing should circumstances change in the United States, and I hasten to add that I consider that to be a most unlikely event.

I welcome the belated recognition by many Opposition Members of the importance of conventional defences as part of a balanced deterrent. During the late 1960s and late 1970s a succession of defence reviews, promulgated by Labour Governments, concentrated solely on the reduction of our conventional defences. Review followed review and missile and aircraft programmes were cut.

I shall take up one or two of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, who during his tenure of office as Secretary of State for Defence relied much more fully than any of his predecessors or successors on purchasing from the United States for our defence needs.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does my hon. Friend recall that in 1977 the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), voted in favour of a 1·5 per cent. cut in conventional forces and a 3·5 per cent. cut the following year, although he criticised those cuts as inadequate? How can we believe him now when he says that he wants to see more conventional forces?

Mr. Mans: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. During the 1960s and 1970s—more specifically the 1970s—the then Labour Government increased expenditure on our nuclear defence programme by proceeding in a most secretive manner with the Chevaline warhead enhancement programme. It is clear from reports and diaries that even part of the Cabinet of that Government did not know what was going on. It is rather extraordinary that the Labour party is now criticising the Government for not cutting nuclear weapons instead of conventional weapons, when the history of the matter shows that again and again the Labour party cut conventional weapons first.

I want to consider the personnel policy within the Defence Estimates, and more specifically I urge the Minister to review the conditions of service of all service men continually to ensure that retention rates—to which the hon. Member for Woolwich referred—are sufficient to justify the high cost of training our service men. Despite the present level of unemployment, the armed services have in the past suffered a steady drain of skilled personnel to civilian occupations. That trend is particularly evident among those specialisations where training costs are highest—especially in the training of aircrew. With the rapid reduction of unemployment that has taken place over the past year, combined with the demographic changes that will take place in future, there are certain to be shortfalls in skill levels across the board. It is clear that this trend will get worse.

Unfortunately, the recent report by Air Marshal Robson, which attempted to address the problem of aircrew, focused on the terms of service rather than on the conditions of service of service men. Even so, the proposals were accepted only reluctantly and not implemented in full. I suspect that that was the response because certain departments in the armed services still believe that personnel policies can be drawn up and implemented with little regard to the labour market outside the armed services.

The armed services must compete for the same people as outside occupations, whereas the training costs in the armed services are much higher. As a result, it is of paramount importance that the services keep trained personnel for as long as they need them. At the moment, that is achieved through direct or indirect financial sanctions when various service personnel want to leave, or it is achieved through a simple refusal to allow them to leave if they go above the level permitted under the premature voluntary retirement conditions of service.

I believe that that is the wrong way to approach the problem. For instance, the refusal of promotion unless an officer waives his option to leave the service only leads to a feeling of disillusionment about the service in general and about its ability to retain its best and brightest personnel in particular. It is odd that someone who is deemed to have the right qualities to be promoted, based on his record, should be forced to sign away those rights before being promoted.

I suggest a more positive approach towards the armed services retaining the personnel that they want to retain. Because of the high cost of training, that will result in a net gain to the defence budget rather than cost more. Let me state a basic example. It is a well-known fact that it costs about £3 million to train a Tornado pilot to operational readiness standard. It is also true to say that the maximum number of years of front-line service that the RAF can expect from one pilot is 16 years. If we can persuade more people to stay on, for example eight pilots for two years, that would save the cost of training one additional pilot. I realise that that is a reasonably simplistic example, but it shows the relationship between encouraging aircrew to stay on and the huge costs of training new pilots, which is bound to rise year by year.

The first and most obvious step to facilitate that is to remove an anomaly that has caused resentment among a great many service men for a long time. In future, specialist pay should be counted into a service man's salary for pension and gratuity purposes when he leaves the service. That would reward those who have taken on the specialisations and result in a higher retention rate specifically in those areas where skills are in short supply. Also, service men could be paid to stay in the service when they reach an option date, rather than pay them only if they leave and then, perhaps, as has happened in the past, invite them back afterwards when there are not enough personnel left with a particular trade or qualification. That has caused — and would still cause if it were reintroduced — a great resentment among those who decided to stay in the first place.

Following on from that, I understand that there are moves afoot to reduce pension commutation rights of service men. I strongly urge the Minister not to continue with those proposals, as once again they will act as a disincentive for people deciding whether to stay on or leave the service.

Finally, a most irksome aspect of a service man's life involves the petty bureaucratic regulations over

[Mr. Mans]

allowances, which cause much distress and annoyance, particularly when it is known that enforcement results in an increase rather than a decrease in defence expenditure. Those regulations are many and varied and I shall mention only one tonight. Service men have the costs of storing their belongings when they go abroad paid for by the Ministry of Defence. However, if they wish to take their belongings with them they must pay the removal costs. It is clear that, on average, it is cheaper to allow people to take their belongings with them than to store them. There would be a net gain to the defence budget by taking a clearer view on that matter and allowing service men going on tour to Germany to take their belongings with them. I hope that the Minister will look closely at those regulations and alter them to meet the genuine needs of service men, and at the same time I suggest that no extra cost would be imposed on the defence budget.

I have said that I welcome the Defence Estimates. However, if we are to maintain our defences at their present high state of readiness and retain — and I emphasise this point — the highly qualified service men upon whom that readiness depends, we need to look closely at service men's conditions, and not terms of service, and take more positive moves to ensure the retention of those people, and specifically to retain the best of those service men.

6.47 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): When I opened this dark blue shiny brochure that passes for a White Paper on the Defence Estimates, I was reminded of a similar Government publication that I received in 1980. I received that as a resident of the district of Newbury where cruise missiles were due to be deployed. That glossy Newbury brochure contained similarly propagandist pink and blue force level reduction diagrams and pictures of nuclear hardware in scenic locations. That brochure also claimed:

> "Cruise missiles are a vital part of the West's life insurance policy."

It went on to argue that the aim of using them would be to persuade the Russian leadership, even at the eleventh hour, to draw back.

Cruise missiles are going. In my view, neither the White Paper nor yesterday's debate have thrown any light on how the British Government are reassessing NATO's defence strategy post INF. Yesterday the Secretary of State for Defence talked mysteriously of adjustments. There is no mystery. We all know that sea-launched cruise, air-launched cruise and new tactical missiles are being considered. I believe that that is the response of children who have had their toys taken away. That response fails to examine the vital questions, "Why were the missiles deployed?" and "Will the reasons for their deployment disappear with their removal?"

Why were the missiles deployed? I am sure that the House would be interested in the views of Les Aspin, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee in Washington. He said recently that the INF decision

> "was intended to address these doubts by putting some visible strength and credibility back into nuclear linkage."

If his opinion is valid, those European doubts, which I understand the British Government shared, would presumably reappear with the disappearance of that linkage. Aspin calls this the conceptual flaw in the pending INF agreement. He further admits that the United States Administration never expected the Soviets to accept the zero option and that it began solely as

> "a masterful public relations stroke".

No wonder the Government are discomfited. No wonder they will not come clean on what they mean by adjustments post an INF agreement. They told us that SS20s were the threat. Now General John Galvin, head of NATO's forces in Europe, is saying that the risk of nuclear war will be greater post an INF agreement and the removal of those self-same SS20s.

General Galvin is asking for buttressing. We may not know what the Secretary of State means by adjustments, but I understand that General Galvin is asking for longer-range Lance missiles and air-launched stand-off nuclear missiles such as might be carried in the British Tornado.

Where do the Government stand? Will they now not only oppose the multilateral nuclear disarmament of tactical short-range missiles, but support the addition of new battlefield nuclear weapons? I trust that the Minister will tell the House when he replies. But whatever the Government's posture, it is unlikely to please our German allies, who are desperate to remove the threat of battlefield nuclear war on their territory.

The truth is that no war can be fought in Europe with any hope of gain for anyone. The Soviets know that, and we know that if we are being honest. The potential of an INF deal offers the West an opportunity that the Government have singularly failed to grasp. It obliges Conservative Members to stop whingeing about conventional imbalance and to ask how it can be addressed rationally and constructively, not only in the interests of Western security, but in the wider interest of ending the cold war and developing mature relationships with the countries of Eastern Europe.

The denuclearisation of Europe is possible. Conventional force reductions by the Soviet Union are a possibility. Why did not the White Paper at least analyse the merit of strategies related to such possibilities? I can tell the House why. It is because the Government are committed to a massively expensive useless virility symbol called Trident.

Yesterday the Secretary of State declined to answer my question on the circumstances in which Trident would be used. He does not want it on the public record, because a nuclear exchange involving Trident would result in the deaths of 40 million British citizens and the destruction of Britain. There are no circumstances in which that weapon system could be used in the defence of the British people.

Nuclear deterrence has become incredible. Until Conservative Members are prepared to admit it, they cannot offer Britain a secure defence.

6.53 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I hope that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will forgive me if I do not follow her arguments. In her maiden speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) made the clearest case that I have ever heard for saying that Britain's defences must continue to rest, as they have done for almost 40 years, on a nuclear foundation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) rightly said that the Government were most courageous in the difficult economic years of the early

1980s in maintaining and increasing our defence spending. I agree that, having now had a slight pause in the growth of spending, many Conservative Back Benchers would wish more power to the elbow of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in his coming discussions with the Treasury.

Most of the debate so far has focused on the amount of resources allocated to defence. I want to focus on the narrower issue of the management of those resources. Part of the reason for the significant outflow of junior officers among the high flyers is disillusionment with the present organisational structure within the Ministry of Defence. As we are just coming up to the third anniversary of its reorganisation in January 1985, this may be a good time to review that.

G. K. Chesterton once said that if one generation chooses to defend the indefensible, the next will dispense with the indispensible. I believe that happened in the reorganisation three years ago. Many desirable things took place, not least the bringing together of the Army, Navy and Air Force staffs into a unified group. But at the same time a number of elementary mistakes were made in the management structure which are doing real harm to the future of our armed forces.

The Ministry of Defence's structure is not always obvious to those outside. Let me briefly explain what the central staffs do. Their main roles are to examine intelligence estimates of the threat, to formulate operational requirements on which the Procurement Executive buys equipment, to examine longer-term policy, to determine overall military priorities and fit them into the long-term costings and to provide the command structure for operations.

One point of distinction is often missed, particularly when looking at procurement. The central staffs are involved in looking at the total fabric of defence. They have to take a view on the overall chess board, looking at the chess pieces of both sides. In contrast, the Procurement Executive is involved only with individual pieces. The importance of that arm's-length relationship can be brought out by taking the case of the Luftwaffe in 1939. That had an effective procurement function which produced large numbers of first-class equipments in a short time. Unfortunately for it, but fortunately for Britain, it did not have a proper central staff set-up with an operational requirements group. The result was that it produced good equipment, but that did not form a balanced and coherent air force, the most famous example being that the Luftwaffe's fighters and bombers could not achieve radio communication with each other during the battle of Britain.

The central staffs were reorganised in 1985, and I want to consider four features of that reorganisation. The first concerns the intelligence staffs. They are obviously critical. We must get the threat right if we are to plan correctly. Astonishingly, the critical position of Director General (Intelligence), the man with overall responsibility not only for briefing the Secretary of State for Defence but for sitting on the Cabinet's Joint Intelligence Committee, the man who took a dispassionate view of intelligence matters, independent of the day-to-day running of the intelligence set-up, was abolished. Instead, the busy Chief of Defence Intelligence, as he now is, has been asked to take on all those extra commitments, without formal access to the Secretary of State. I am sure that in the case of the present Secretary of State that is not a problem, but it illustrates the way in which intelligence was downgraded three years ago.

The second change is more complicated. I mentioned earlier the formulation of operational requirements. It is an advantage for that to be done on a defencewide basis. If one is considering helicopters, for example, there is a lot to be said for looking at them with Army, Navy and Air Force teams together.

Unfortunately, instead of combining three staffs into one, three years ago we decided to combine three staffs into two. We now have a defence staff that carries all the responsibility for formulating those operational requirements and, in another department, for formulating overall military priorities within our programmes. That staff sits side by side with the organisation of management and budget, which has most of the authority for voting money. All the military staffs are in the defence staffs; all the financial staffs are in the Organisation for Management and the Budget. As a result, no submission to the equipment policy committee, where these central staffs meet the Procurement Executive — or, indeed, to Ministers — can be made within one department. Everything, even the most minor items, must start in one department and move on to another.

I shall illustrate in a moment why I think that the present Secretary of State and his team are doing an excellent job. However, that should not blind us to the fact that they have inherited a system with weaknesses from the previous incumbent, and a good deal can be done to improve it.

Let me quote my favourite business writer, Peter Drucker, describing what happens if a large organisation is split up so that different professional groups are in separate departments. This book was borrowed from the Treasury library, so what it says must be true!

> "As soon as it"—

such an organisation—

> "approaches even a modest degree of size or complexity, 'friction' builds up. It rapidly becomes an organisation of misunderstandings, feuds, empires and Berlin-Wall building. It soon requires elaborate, expensive, and clumsy management crutches—coordinators, committees, meetings, trouble shooters, special dispatchers — which waste everybody's time without, as a rule, solving much."

Mr. Drucker goes on to point out that, in such a set-up, innovation tends to die, because no radical solution will survive the long travel down the corridors of power through all the various committees.

I do not believe that that is now the position in the Ministry of Defence, because of the present Secretary of State's light touch on the tiller. However, I see a danger that we are beginning to move in that direction. We hear from those who have served — and, in some cases, are serving — in military staffs that they would welcome constructive criticism from another department; but, because the Organisation for Management and Budget has no uniform personnel, they feel that all that they get is financial carping.

Conversely—there are no goodies and badies in this regard — people on the financial side feel that the military people have lost all touch with financial reality. I know something about that, because I worked in a finance department for four years. The position is worsened by the fact that we now have seven tiers of checking up. Besides the Organisation of Management and Budget, which first scrutinises the defence staff's

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proposals, the equipment policy committee, which brings them together with the Procurement Executive and the Ministers, there are sometimes four more tiers. There is the MOD's internal audit team, the Treasury, the Comptroller and Auditor-General's staff—who are becoming more and more active—and the Select Committee on Defence. As a result, there is very little time for the defence staffs to get on with creative work.

The solution is to bring those staffs together under one roof. We must take from the Organisation of Management and Budget the critical staffs involved with operational requirements and with resources and programming, and move them into the defence staff, so that the requirements and overall programmes are put together in one place, under one boss, and can be delegated down the line. The equipment policy committee and, in more substantial cases, Ministers, will then receive recommendations put together through the brainstorming of one unified group.

General Sir Frank Kitson has pointed out that for many years there has been little scope for bright young officers to reach senior positions of power and influence in the MOD. That has always happened in peacetime. There is no tri-service staff college that a junior officer can attend in order to make the best possible contribution to the present centralised defence staff—a staff which, as I have said, I strongly support. Promotion of such an officer is still controlled from his own individual service. He is encouraged — indeed, in some instances, coerced — to continue to play the old-fashioned inter-service rivalry game.

If we want to obtain real value from the excellent step forward of bringing the three services together, we must do it by creating a fast stream of bright young officers who go through a unified instead of a single-service staff college training, and who are answerable for their promotion prospects on the staff side to a unified defence promotion board instead of a single-service one. Most important of all, to prevent such officers from becoming "military yuppies", they should have current field experience. I believe that General Kitson is right, although I would go further than him.

Finally, there is a shortage of numbers in key departments. The reorganisation of 1985 rightly cut out enormous amounts of waste, not only in the MOD but in other headquarters. Because, in two pamphlets, I suggested that that should be done, I feel — from the lowest of worm's-eye views—partly responsible for the unfortunate fact that, in the process of eliminating waste, two or three critical departments within the central staff were cut below the level needed for effective operation. That applies especially to the intelligence and operational requirements staffs. But I am delighted that, under the present Secretary of State, some rebuilding is beginning.

Let me summarise by pulling the four points together. First, I think that we should reinstate the crucial post of Director General (Intelligence). As before, he should be a retired uniformed officer, outside the cut and thrust, and he should report directly to the Secretary of State for Defence. Secondly, I think that we should create a fast stream of bright young officers with the tri-service staff college and promotion board. Thirdly, we should ensure that, within the operational requirements, intelligence and resources and programming staffs, we have enough people to define the requirements and the threat correctly. We shall be able to save hundreds of millions of pounds later if we get the requirement right now. Fourthly, and most important, I believe that we should move the critical financial staffs involved with requirements and programming from the Organisation for Management and Budget into the defence staff, so that the formulation of requirements and priorities can be done under one roof.

I firmly believe that I am pushing on an open door, because that is exactly what the present defence team has just done in the Procurement Executive. Ten or 15 years ago, the Procurement Executive suffered from the terrible Chinese wall syndrome that we now have in the central staff. The financial staffs were in one department; the quality staffs were in another; the contract staff were in a third. One by one, those groups have come in from the cold, and have been unified into the directorates and project teams. The decision by the present Secretary of State to bring the crucial contracts staff into the directorates means that we have a fully unified Procurement Executive, and that is what I should like to see in our central staffs.

For reasons that have already been set out in some detail during the debate, I believe that we have today the strongest armed forces that we have had for a generation, because of the extra resources that the Government have chosen to devote to defence. I ask the Secretary of State and his staff to consider those four recommendations to ensure that that is still the case in the 21st century.

7.9 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on an outstanding maiden speech. One might not agree with everything that she said, but she delivered her speech with great confidence and without notes. It is a great pleasure to welcome another of the far too few female Members of Parliament. Her speech showed that she will have a great future in this House.

We are debating the Defence Estimates against the background of progress in talks on disarmament. For decades there has been immobility. Now it seems that the log-jam is to be broken and that there is to be movement. The conferences at Reykjavik and Geneva have given us hope. We can realistically expect an agreement on intermediate nuclear forces.

A couple of months ago I was able to discuss this matter with the State Department in Washington, and I came away with the view that the State Department is firmly committed to such an agreement. A whole class of weapons will now be removed. Cruise and Pershing will go. Greenham Common will be able once again to revert to being a pleasant part of the English countryside. The super-powers are now talking of a 50 per cent. cut in strategic weapons. We want to move on to progressive cuts in, and the elimination of, strategic nuclear weapons, with effective verification. There should also be international on-site inspection of chemical disarmament, the inspection of space research laboratories and permanent verification posts to monitor the movement of conventional forces. None of this should be jeopardised by moving the arms race into space.

Britain should be giving a lead to and supporting all this. We should welcome the first rays of the sun, the first beacons to illuminate and dispel the funereal gloom with which we have been surrounded. But what is the reaction of the British Prime Minister? It is one of violent opposition. So obsessed is she with the worship of nuclear weapons that, despite previous lip service to the zero-zero option, she immediately scurried to Camp David to oppose and obstruct the whole process. She is opposed to the denuclearisation of Europe. So Conservative policy —the policy of this Government—is out of step with world trends.

The Prime Minister went to Moscow. That is always a good ploy before a general election. We saw it used before, when Macmillan donned his white hat and went to Moscow. There was a sort of love-in with Gorbachev, but that did not extend to removing nuclear weapons. When the Prime Minister had the opportunity to make a broadcast on Moscow television, we heard an astonishing hymn in praise of nuclear weapons. She told us that the only defence of small countries was to have nuclear weapons.

Let us think about that. If that is true, we should give nuclear weapons to all small countries, then everybody could deter everybody else. That is the logic of the present Prime Minister's point of view, but it is absolutely insane. If these awesome weapons were to proliferate and spread in that way, inevitably someone, somewhere, at some time —whether by accident or design—would initiate their use, with cataclysmic results.

Because of that fundamental truth, previous British Governments worked for the establishment of a non-proliferation treaty. Under that treaty we are obliged to work for nuclear disarmament. Article VI of the treaty says:

> "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

That is what we are committed to under the treaty. Why should other countries abstain if we are not prepared to do so? We undertook to strive to give up our nuclear weapons, but this Government are reneging on that undertaking with Trident, which is a big advance on our nuclear capacity. That is dangerous and deplorable. There is no sensible, respectable or justifiable reason for this country to have nuclear weapons.

It is very instructive to look at the history of British nuclear weapons. During the second world war the research and manufacturing project was a joint British-American effort. That project was transferred to the United States. At the end of the war the Americans refused to give these secrets to us, or to share them with us. The British Government were very miffed. As a result, they decided to build one for themselves.

It is very instructive to ask why. The Cabinet papers reveal why they decided to do so. Was it to frighten or to deter the Russians? No, it was nothing to do with that; it was to impress the Americans. We were told that otherwise they would not treat us seriously or as an equal; that we would no longer be one of the big three. The bomb was therefore seen as our entrance ticket to the conference chamber. It was a status symbol; it was the way to reserve our seat at the top table.

The reason for Britain possessing nuclear weapons is vanity, which is the least reputable of motives. It has not worked. We do not have a seat at the top table; we are not at Geneva; we are not at any of the super-power summits; we are just a spectator; we are informed afterwards by the American Secretary of State when he is on his way back to the United States. Nevertheless, the nuclear arms race has marched on as a form of madness.

At the end of the last war there were three nuclear weapons. Now there are over 60,000 — an incredible overkill. Those warheads have the destructive power of over 1 million Hiroshimas. In other words, we have the power to blow up the world umpteen times. We must ask ourselves whether that is a rational activity for human beings. The world is spending over £1 million a minute on arms. That is insane and obscene, alongside so much hunger, poverty and disease.

Another effect of this huge expenditure in the United States, especially alongside President Reagan's tax cuts, is that it has caused the United States' budget deficit. That deficit has led to the stock exchange crash, which has caused more damage to capitalism than the threat of Communism. The high interest rates that are needed to finance that deficit are ruining the Third world and are leading it to default. They are a threat to the world's banking system.

The huge vested interest in this stupendous arms expenditure—Eisenhower called it the military-industrial complex—has to have an alleged justification. That is what is called "the threat." What is the threat? It is, of course, the Soviet Union. Were it not for the hydrogen bomb, we are expected to believe, the Soviet Union would immediately roll its armies over western Europe, somehow get across the Channel and then roll all over Britain. That is the justification for this huge arms expenditure.

I have always had great difficulty with that notion. It is convenient for those who profit from the arms race, but it is not very convincing to suggest that the Russians want to act in so irrational and insane a way. I watched Peter Ustinov's recent television programmes, especially the last one, in which he referred to the fact that Russia has been invaded many times. It was invaded by Napoleon; it was invaded during the Crimean war; it was invaded during the first world war; and it was invaded during the wars of intervention after the revolution. It was also invaded during the second world war, during which 20 million Russians perished. Peter Ustinov said that the Russian attitude was defensive. I find that to be a much more realistic and convincing appraisal.

Those who live by the bomb say that no major war in Europe has taken place for 40 years because we have the bomb—that the bomb has kept the peace and deterred the Russians. That is rather like saying that on the way to the debate today I saw a black cat and that therefore all cats are black.

There is another explanation for there being no war in Europe for 40 years. It is that the Russians never intended to attack us in the first place, first because that would have been insane and the height of stupidity—and I do not believe that the Russians are insane — and, secondly, because they know that to do so would cause a third world war—in which America would inevitably be involved, as it was in 1917 and 1942—and that they could not expect to win.

The fact that we have had no war in Europe for 40 years has nothing to do with the bomb. Within a generation, France and Germany went twice to war. They will not go to war again, but is that because of the hydrogen bomb? Of course it is not. It is for other reasons. The human race must get away from the notion that the preservation of peace is dependent upon the horror of a nuclear holocaust.

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

Chernobyl has shown us that whoever uses nuclear weapons will poison themselves as well as any enemy, that they will pollute the planet and contaminate the very environment that gives rise to life. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has explained on many occasions that those who use nuclear weapons will inflict upon us a nuclear winter. It is dubious whether any life will survive after the use of such weapons, but certainly this country would be finished. Six large hydrogen bombs dropped down the spine of this country would render it a devastated, uninhabitable and radioactive ruin. The use of nuclear weapons is not militarily credible and we can only commit suicide by their use.

It is impossible to conceive of any circumstances that would justify the use of such weapons. When the Secretary of State was asked to specify the circumstances in which he would use such weapons, he was lost for words, and quite so. There is no sense in using such weapons.

The sensible and realistic course for Britain is to divest itself of nuclear weapons and have an effective non-nuclear defence. Some say that if we did not have nuclear weapons we would be naked and be open to blackmail. However, the vast majority of nations do not have nuclear weapons. What example is there in history of a country being subjected to nuclear blackmail? Sweden does not have nuclear weapons, nor does Japan. Have those countries been invaded or subjected to blackmail? It is much easier to get to Japan from Russia than to Britain. We are told that the removal of nuclear weapons from Britain would strain the British-American Alliance. However, Japan has no nuclear weapons, and no foreign bases on its soil, but has that put a strain on the Pacific Alliance? Why should anyone claim that a British non-nuclear policy would destroy or destabilise the Western Alliance?

Let us consider some examples. In 1956 France withdrew from the NATO military arrangements altogether and asked for the removal of all United States bases. In other words, France went far further than Labour party policy. Did that decision lead to the fragmentation of NATO or the United States decoupling from Europe? In 1974 Greece withdrew from NATO. Between 1969 and 1972 Canada took decisions to relinquish its nuclear role in NATO. In fact, seven out of 16 NATO countries—roughly half—do not have nuclear weapons or allow nuclear weapons on their soil. Therefore, we are not talking about something that is unprecedented. New Zealand has just adopted the same policy.

If we followed such a policy, we should join those nations marching away from the holocaust and away from the exaggerated fantasies and careless rhetoric of the cold war. We should bear in mind that Milton said:

> "Let not England forget her precedence of teaching nations how to live."

The removal of nuclear weapons more than anything else is the area in which we should participate and give a lead. If we divested ourselves of those weapons it would be good sense, morally and militarily.

7.23 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I declare an interest as a standing member of the Territorial Army and also a potential interest in the SDI programme.

Before I start my speech I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on her outstanding maiden speech. I join many of my hon. Friends in saying that I am absolutely certain that she is a valuable addition to the House and that we shall have many interesting and exciting speeches from her.

I welcome this debate because it is one of great importance to everyone because we all want peace—not peace at any price, but peace with freedom. We realise that we must pay for that freedom.

I would like to restrict myself to three items—first, recruitment, secondly, the SDI programme and finally the arms reduction talks.

On the matter of recruitment I will cut out a lot of what I would have said because of the excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Maidstone and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). They said many interesting things and they have my support. However, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to consider carefully the problems of recruitment in the armed forces and especially the disincentive of overstretch. That problem exists in many ranks and in particular within key ranks of officers and non-commissioned officers. Those people achieve certain skills and are being especially over-stretched. That has an effect on married families and can lead to enticing people to leave the armed forces prematurely. That is an especially great problem when it is combined with the adverse outlook for demographic recruitment potential. We should seek creative ways of bringing people into the armed forces and keeping them in the forces for a length of time commensurate with the skills and teaching that they receive.

I should also like to urge the increased use of the Territorial Army. I do not think that my hon. Friends mentioned this. The Territorial Army is a relatively cheap option if it is correctly used. I know that the Ministry of Defence is using the Territorial Army, but I would urge the Ministry to give greater consideration to its extended use to try to make up and reduce the over-stretch on the regular armed forces. In particular, I wish to refer to what happens when emergencies occur and the problems that we have with Queen's Order No. 2 — the general mobilisation order. I believe that it would be much more reasonable if we could have a graduated mobilisation of people in the Territorials so that that order would not automatically be seen as a general mobilisation.

If members of the Territorials and the reserve forces could be used in conjunction with the regular forces—even in contingencies that would be popularly considered as "bush fires"—that would be helpful. For example, if we had volunteers on the Royal Navy ships in the Gulf that would help. The operation in the Gulf—the long patrols and long periods away—is putting a tremendous strain upon the families of the sailors of the Royal Navy. The use of volunteer reserves in such circumstances might be an interesting proposition.

With regard to SDI participation, I believe that the Estimates reflect our pleasure at the fact that we have regained parts of that programme. The sum of £34 million has been mentioned in the Estimates. However, if that figure is judged in comparison with some of our NATO allies, for example, Germany, that sum appears to look small. If that sum is judged in terms of the sums awarded to some of the states of the United States—the most notable is California—it looks almost infinitesimal.

We must be much more aggressive in pursuing and obtaining participation in the SDI programme. We must seek to equal, let alone better, some of our NATO allies. We have fantastic skills in this country that could be marketed better than the skills of many of our NATO allies, yet we are nowhere near the leading position with regard to SDI participation. In fact, Britain is not in a good position at the moment and I urge the Government to be much more aggressive in pursuing and obtaining this business. Of course this is not easy. It was not until nine years ago that Britain became more aggressive in marketing its products. Now we have a much more difficult thing to market—skills. We have the skills in such high technology areas and we must be much more professional in marketing them.

The Americans make much use of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It is probably the greatest centre of technical excellence in the world. That institute is being used by the American Administration as a conduit for obtaining SDI participation for American corporations. I believe that we must concentrate on our centres of excellence in technology. We must market their skills and abilities and ensure that they are used as conduits to enable British corporations to participate in the SDI programme.

With regard to arms reduction, I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). I have great respect for his views. I was pleased to hear his adoption, even if only by force majeure, of the view that we are correct in pursuing the Trident option. I noticed that at the beginning of his speech, he said we have to deter a potential aggressor from contemplating a nuclear attack upon us. I urge that we think more widely than only a nuclear attack and include chemical, biological and conventional forces. That is the reason for Trident—its hitting power, and its increased range, which makes it more difficult to detect. I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman's speech in any way; I respect it and was pleased to hear it.

Most hon. Members would agree that the arms race is not merely a matter of weapons, but one of mutual distrust. Weapons are merely the symptom of mutual distrust; therefore, to achieve disarmament we have to reduce the existing mutual distrust. The critical element of reducing this mutual distrust is to seek good will on both sides, and to have satisfactory verification, particularly challenge verification. That is the critical element in achieving mutual trust which will lead eventually to mutual and balanced force reductions.

We must think of arms reductions as both balanced and integrated. We must look at nuclear defence not on its own, but as part of an integrated defence system, including chemical, biological and conventional forces. We must not be tempted into thinking that we have achieved something marvellous by banning only nuclear weapons, or one part of the nuclear defence system; we must look at the whole integrated system of defence forces.

We are now on the threshold of a balanced, integrated disarmament era, a thing that was totally undreamed of even five years ago. We are entering an era of movement in arms control and arms negotiation. Indeed, the years 1987 and 1988 are as different from 1984 and 1985 as the blitzkrieg was from static trench warfare. We are moving from a static slugging match, where everyone threw more and more resources into defence, to an era of movement. We have to take advantage of that, and at the same time beware that we are not outflanked. We are on a threshold which involves not only great risks, but great opportunities. We are here not from a strategy of weakness or popular retreat, but as the result of a strategy of strength, good will and the diligent and prudent pursuit of peace with freedom.

It would not be right at this stage to fail to congratulate my hon. Friends and members of the Government responsible for defence and foreign affairs on this outstanding achievement. It is tremendous, and we should be grateful for it, and I should like to offer my personal congratulations to the Government and to the other Governments who helped to achieve this situation.

Some people have urged that we take an easier option — one of unilateral disarmament — but we should consider the Punic wars. Even in those ancient times, when Rome and Carthage were the two super-powers and Carthage decided upon unilateral disarmament in favour of trade, it was vanquished to such an extent that today historians argue about the precise location of Carthage. And that was in the days before gunpowder, and the Romans did a real number on them. I urge people to talk in terms of unilateral disarmament to read that history.

Today, as we look to an era of balance and integrated disarmament, which has now become a realistic option, one name, above all others, stands out on the world stage — that of Mr. Gorbachev. As part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation in December 1984, I had the honour to meet Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev in varied situations over a number of hours. Much has been written about Mr. Gorbachev, and I shall not repeat the many assessments of his character. However, I wish to share two basic impressions. One is what I feel to be the key position of the Soviets in the arms talks, and the other is what I believe to be two important characteristics of Mr. Gorbachev.

The key Soviet position in the arms control talks is focused on the strategic defence initiative. I gained the overwhelming impression in 1984 that the Soviets were desperate—but desperate—to negotiate even a halt to, but if possible a cancellation of, the SDI programme. The Soviets know the awesome power of an SDI programme. They should know better than anyone because they are the only people with even a rudimentary form of SDI in position. They also know that the key to an effective programme is computer power. The programme does not have to be 100 per cent. effective—even a 60 or 40 per cent. SDI programme would have a great effect on the strategic balance in the world, and even upon the downside of nuclear proliferation. They know that the minimum computer power is the ability to make 40 million calculations a second, and they also know that they will not catch the United States on computer power for years, if ever. They are ahead at the moment, but once the United States invests in an SDI programme it will soon lead the Soviets.

That is a powerful influence in the Soviet's decision-making. They realise that even a semi-effective SDI programme—perhaps only 50 per cent. effective—means that the more that nuclear strategic missiles are reduced, the more that plays into the hands of a relatively ineffective SDI programme, especially if only one side has it. If the Soviets have an SDI programme that is only 10 or 20 per cent. effective, a strategic reduction plays more

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into their hands than into the hands of the West, which currently does not have an SDI programme in place. If a country is only 20 per cent. effective with today's arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and there is a reduction of 50 per cent., that country becomes 40 per cent. effective at the new level. That is something that we must watch carefully when pursuing arms negotiations.

The Soviets are desperate to negotiate the SDI programme. That was shown at Reykjavik and again this week when they were ready to discuss INF, and then suddenly threw in the SDI card. They hope that the West, through popular pressure in democracies, will yield. Therefore, the SDI has dealt an ace card to the hands of the West in arms negotiations.

There are two characteristics of Mr. Gorbachev on which our negotiators would do well to concentrate. First is his charisma—Western-style charisma—which he has not only the ability but the apparent willingness to exploit through our media directly into our homes. Hardly a day passes without that man, who was unknown in 1984, being on the front page of every serious newspaper. Almost every day of the week he is a major headline on television and radio. We must take that into account, because we could easily underestimate the change that he could achieve in the Soviet Union in motivating management and workers. Combined with the natural patriotism of the Russian people, we could easily be surprised by the rate of change achieved in the Soviet Union, just as many people have been surprised by the rate of change in Communist China.

Mr. Gorbachev's charisma is also exercised in his ability to talk directly over the heads of our negotiators and leaders to grass roots throughout the western world. By using our news media, he could become a world leader for any group in the world that suits his purpose. I venture to guess that he is already one of the most popular leaders, if not the most popular, in the world. How many people in the western world do not know of Mr. Gorbachev? If, during polls, people are asked about world leaders, many appear never to have heard of their own leaders. Mr. Gorbachev, however, is well known in the West and, in a way, he is popular. He has the ability to lull populations into a false sense of security and to talk unbalanced billions of dollars off our defence budgets. He can also split alliances.

Mr. Gorbachev's second characteristic is tremendous self-confidence based on track record and an open-mindedness that has proved successful. His self-confidence has two interesting points — first, the ability to be flexible and, secondly, the ability to be creative. Indeed, he has already been creative. At Reykjavik he wrong-footed the West with his amazing creativity and panache. The Soviets won the public relations battle. If President Reagan had not been such a great communicator he could have been tarred as a warmonger when he returned from Reykjavik.

Mr. Gorbachev can use that tremendous creativity to change the balance of public perceptions in the West. It is now easy for our Western leaders to return from talks with Soviet leaders looking like warmongers because we did not give away everything. That has never happened before. Since 1945, the stone-faced Soviets have said, "Niet, niet, niet", and have always appeared to be the spoilsports. Now, it could easily be a Western leader who is accused of that.

It is important to remember that, because we are in an era of movement on arms talks — one that demands enhanced integrity from Western leaders because they now have to judge what they give away at arms negotiations in the real interests of the West against what will look good and avoid them being branded warmongers. We must constantly remember that our leaders must be careful not to sell out simply because to do otherwise would risk them being called warmongers.

Mr. Gorbachev has heralded a new era of public relations and public perception. Out has gone the brutal Russian bear and in has come a reasonable, responsible and even reassuring Russia. However, the Soviets' long-term goals may not have changed a great deal—if at all —but their methods and style have changed. The West must be alert to that and, above all, be united. The Estimates show that the British Government, for one, are determined to adopt those three criteria. I wish them good fortune in these difficult, challenging but exciting negotiations and in their judgment of the options available to us.

7.44 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): A week or so ago a Harrier jet went out of control and flew, pilotless, some 200 miles before crashing into the ocean. The Government's defence policy is in a similar state—out of control and heading for disaster. Despite vast increases in spending, adding 5 per cent. per annum since the Government came to office to an already very large budget, it is acknowledged that the armed forces are probably in a worse state, relatively speaking, than they were before the second world war.

The Navy is a good example. On 22 February this year the *Sunday Telegraph* reported:

> "By the summer, the strength of the Navy will be less than the level planned by Sir John Nott, when he was Defence Secretary in 1981."

On 10 July *The Independent* carried the headline:

> "Navy sending sitting-ducks to sea".

A headline in *The Times* on 10 April stated:

> "The Fleet's Up the Creek".

Despite all that, there are to be cuts totalling hundreds of millions of pounds. That money will not be redistributed to the social sector — to education and housing — as I would wish. The cuts are due to financial crisis and mismanagement, and the money is needed particularly to pay for the Government's nuclear obsession—a topic to which I shall return in due course. The cuts will mean more job losses, but there will be no Government action to provide replacement jobs.

The excessive waste in the Defence Estimates is caused by a combination of muddle, mismanagement and inadequate control by the Ministry of Defence, and excessive profiteering by racketeers in the defence industry monopolies cushioned by the Ministry of Defence. There are plenty of examples. In the light of all the talk about glasnost, I hope that the Minister will bring some glasnost to this country and comment on the examples that I shall give.

For instance, the programme to replace the self-propelled howitzer artillery guns with the SP70 ended in disaster, with £88 million of taxpayers' money down the drain. The Army's artillery command computer — the

Bates system—is reported to have doubled in cost to some £200 million so far, with further costs to come, as the project has been delayed at least four years and will in any event not achieve what it set out to achieve. The Secretary of State had the nerve to talk about improved contract performance, but where is the improved performance in that instance?

Marconi and its subsidiaries have been accused of fraud, non-payment of royalties and making excessive profits, not to mention the unexplained deaths of three of its employees. The House should have answers to all those points. I congratulate the MOD police on having at long last taken action, but it should have been monitoring those contracts long ago so that such waste and fraud could not take place. More than £1 billion was wasted on the Nimrod early warning system. It is all very well for Conservative Members to say that that began under a Labour Government, but the Tory Government have seven and a half years of waste to answer for.

The AWACS to replace the Nimrod system cost £860 million for six. Another two will push the total over £1 billion, excluding spares. Yet a press report of 5 October stated that a senior Pentagon scientist, Dr. Tom Amlie, had said that the system

> "would 'not last 30 minutes' in a war".

According to Dr. Amlie:

> "the unarmed aircraft could be shot down with great ease once hostilities had started . . .
>
> The system's powerful radar, designed to detect low-flying enemy aircraft between 200 and 300 miles away, will act as a beacon to Warsaw Pact fighters carrying missiles which home in on radar signals".

It was further reported:

> "AWACS aircraft in Saudia Arabia have twice failed to spot aircraft being flown into the country by defecting Iranian pilots."

That is the kind of programme on which we are wasting £1 billion.

We saw pictures of the Tornados in the press today. The Foxhunter fire control radar which enables them to operate does not work, although it has cost £650 million so far. It is already 60 per cent. over budget and the MOD has given it another four years to work, at an extra cost of at least £100 million—so far as we can ascertain, as the figure has been deleted from the major project list in volume two of the Defence Estimates on the ground that it is "confidential." In fact, it has been deleted to cover up the enormous waste of public money.

UKADGE, the United Kingdom air defence ground environment — defence radar operation centres, computers, communication systems and control systems — was expected to cost £400 million, but is already to cost £1 billion or more. Moreover, it is alleged, the system will be vulnerable to electronic magnetic pulses. The RAF's friend or foe identification system does not work either and is still shooting down our own and other NATO aircraft in trials. The waste is immense.

Then there is land use. There are more than 3,000 bases in this country, with a replacement value of £50 billion at 1982 prices. That figure must be much higher now. According to the Ministry's own study, those sites are being significantly underused. In 1986 the Ministry had 14,000 empty homes and 4,000 had been empty for more than a year, despite the severe homelessness problem in this country. What a waste.

Millions of pounds are wasted every time one of the low-flying aircraft crashes. At least £70 million was wasted on the Zircon project.

Mr. Cryer: The Ministry of Defence makes much play of glasnost, but so far it has refused to reveal the total cost of aircraft lost in routine flying accidents since 1979. Is my hon. Friend aware that the cost is almost certainly £1 billion and that at least £500 million of that can be verified, including 11 Tornados at £17 million each?

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend is right, and that is just a fraction of the billions that the Ministry wastes overall, as my examples show.

The Ministry of Defence has not even started on glasnost in respect of Zircon, which is not shown in these or any previous Defence Estimates, despite the £70 million that has already been wasted. If any local authority had wasted even a fraction of that amount, its councillors would have been dragged by the scruffs of their necks through the courts, surcharged and disqualified. There is one law for them and another for the Ministry of Defence. That is a scandalous situation. I have referred the waste of money on Zircon to the Comptroller and Auditor General and I shall be watching to see whether he reports. We do not want any whitewashing in that respect.

The Falklands accounted for £2,088 million between the end of the conflict and April this year, as *The Times* has reported, with a further £257 million this year. The Government have made no attempt to resolve that situation and to bring down those horrendous costs. There have been plenty of examples of waste, so let us have some answers from the Ministry of Defence. Instead of answers, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement gave us platitudes about value for money when he wound up the debate last night.

With regard to the high cost of equipment, I have a report entitled "World Military and Social Expenditure for 1986", issued by World Priorities in Washington and the armaments and disarmament information unit at the university of Sussex, which states:

> "Price increases of 300 to 400 times between 1945 and 1986 have been common for weapons systems performing the same basic functions, such as tanks, destroyers and transport planes."

The report puts the matter in perspective. It states that price escalation on this scale in the civilian market would have resulted in an average family car, which 40 years ago cost £704, costing £210,000 today. Inflation in the defence industry has been much higher than domestic inflation.

The Ministry of Defence is the major customer for the defence industry, and it is a soft touch. It is charging high prices and getting away with it. The Ministry of Defence is also a soft touch for such monopolies because it acts as a wedge in any Government — particularly this Government — thus ensuring a continuing arms race, high prices and high profits for those industries. The case for public ownership of those major defence industries is overwhelming, for several reasons. Vast sums of money and vested interests are involved, leading to high prices and excessive profits, there is no real competition or control and the Ministry of Defence is by far and away the major customer. Public ownership would save the taxpayer billions of pounds and help to halt the private vested interests that contribute towards war.

[Mr. Cohen]

The biggest waste of all is nuclear weapons. Billions of pounds go down the drain on weapons that cannot be used. It is worth analysing the Secretary of State's comment on this point yesterday. He said:

> "Of course it is absolutely clear that we have nuclear weapons in case we are put in a position that they are necessary for the survival of our country or the NATO Alliance."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 210.]

Presumably the Secretary of State is saying that he is prepared to sacrifice this country for the NATO Alliance and for the United States. We could be destroyed. That is the logical conclusion of his statement. The Secretary of State went on to say that we should be prepared to use nuclear weapons. If we use them, it is not a question of survival. To use them would be suicide. Those remarks are an indictment of the Secretary of State and the Government.

The intermediate nuclear forces agreement is a welcome start, but there are a couple of questions that we must ask about it. Will the agreement be circumvented by compensatory deployment in other areas? Will there be cheating? The answer is yes. There are many areas where cruise missiles are being converted from their present land bases to sea and air bases. Aircraft bombers, such as the modular stand-off bomber, are being used for nuclear purposes. There is a replacement for the Lance missile—the battlefield nuclear shell. There has been a vast increase in Trident nuclear warheads, when the super-powers are trying to reduce their arsenals. The world is demanding reductions, but with Trident we are making increases as well as wasting £10 billion down the drain in the process.

It was interesting to hear the speech by the spokesman for the rump of the Social Democratic party, the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), who is not here now. His colleagues have also not been present for the rest of the debate. He said that his party would be in favour of all those nuclear weapons, including Trident. No wonder the immediate response from the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), who followed him, was that should be on the Tory side. All the SDP's policies are pro-nuclear.

Star wars is also a way of circumventing the spirit of the agreement and the demand by the public that we should reduce armaments. The Government are cheating and all the time looking forward to increase nuclear armaments and the nuclear arms race outside the limited range of the agreement. Yet they have the nerve to describe the fact that there is an agreement as a triumph for their policies, when they had no place at Reykjavik or at any of the other negotiating tables. So much for our allegedly independent nuclear weapon. It did not give us a place at any of those tables.

Will there be more nuclear weapons in the world, even after INF, than before President Reagan and the Prime Minister started on their arms expansion? There will still be more nuclear weapons after INF than at the beginning of the Reagan presidency. Therefore, there has not been an enormous achievement in that respect. It is still a massive overkill.

Will INF lead to further nuclear arms deductions in Europe and the world? It should, but the Prime Minister has said that, as far as she is concerned, no way—it has gone far enough. We must fight that. It is an unjustifiable position. We must keep up the pressure for further agreements and get rid of that massive overkill. It has been said that there are over 60,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The annihilation is waiting to happen, and we cannot afford it. We in this country cannot afford the cost or the risk, which is much too great. There is a proliferation of accidents and dangers.

We cannot uninvent nuclear weapons, but we can renounce them. Such a course would be much safer for Britain. We cannot afford the waste in the Tory Defence Estimates. That money should and could be much better used for the welfare of our people. I want a fraction of the money wasted on nuclear weapons to come into Leyton, to improve the housing, the Health Service and the education of the children there. We cannot afford that waste.

The Tory defence policy is like the Harrier that we read about last week. It is heading for a crash, and we do not want the British people to go down with it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at about 9.20 pm. Several hon. Members who have sat in the Chamber for a good part of the day still hope to speak, so I appeal for brief contributions.

8.5 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The speech by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was extraordinary in many ways — first, because he is a Socialist accountant, which seems to be a contradiction in terms, and, secondly, we heard a Labour Member talking about waste. I began to wonder whether I was listening to someone on the road to Damascus, but what the hon. Gentleman meant by waste was the things that he did not agree with, not waste in the real sense of the word. The hon. Gentleman is an expert on waste as he represents a borough where the rates went up by 62 per cent. this year, so we listened with interest to his expertise.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on her maiden speech. I have never listened to a speech of such fluency and expertise, made with hardly a note. As my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) said, we look forward to her further contributions.

In my election campaign, I put into my election address the phrase:

> "Defence of the nation is the government's first duty."

When I spoke in the campaign, on every occasion I stressed the importance of making sure that this country is properly defended. On every occasion my Labour opponent never mentioned the subject. It was only when it was dragged out of him in questions that he even attempted to talk about that most important subject. He was embarrassed, as are Opposition Members, by official Labour party policy.

Before I discuss the topics that have been raised by some Opposition Members, I should like to mention two constituency subjects concerning defence, which are close to my heart. The first is the Royal Naval armaments depot at Milford Haven in my constituency and the related depot at Trecwn just outside it. At the moment they are the subject of an inquiry, known as the Glover inquiry, although I understand that Mr. Glover has since moved on. I appreciate that any inquiry or review into the future of those depots must start from the position of their importance to the future defence of the country. It is important that there is a role for the mine depot—ensuring that we have conventional mines for the Royal Navy for use in our waters for defensive purposes.

However, I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to take into account also the important economic and social consequences of the depot for the town of Milford Haven. The town has 30 per cent. unemployment, and if the depot were to close, or be transferred, it would have a dramatic effect on the town. Nearly 300 jobs are at risk there. I hope that the Minister will take the economic and social circumstances of the depot into account in the inquiry.

The second matter is the RAF search and rescue facility at Brawdy. I am delighted to see that in volume 1 at paragraph 426 of the annual statement reference is made to the Sea King helicopters at Brawdy, which rescued 28 people from the Kowloon Bridge in November 1986. At the moment the search and rescue facility at Brawdy, along with the other search and rescue facilities in RAF and Royal Navy bases around the country, is the subject of a review. I understand that Bristow Helicopters has made an offer to take over the running of those facilities.

It would be wrong for us to privatise that activity—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am delighted that for once in my life I have the support of the Opposition. I am sure that I shall not receive their support for the rest of my remarks.

Although I am a firm supporter of privatisation, I believe that, when we are talking about military matters, where it is important to have military discipline because the helicopters have to be on 24-hour standby and we cannot risk having strikes, it is important that those facilities remain under the control of the RAF.

This has been a fascinating debate for those of us who are new to the House because we have had the enjoyment of listening to several speeches by long-established parliamentarians. I refer in particular to the speeches by the right hon. Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It was interesting to hear what they said and what the official spokesmen did not say. I believe that the Chesterfield amendment is the real voice of the Labour party. I am only sorry that Mr. Speaker did not select that amendment. In a Division we could have seen the split in the Labour party. I am sure that if the amendment had been selected, there would have been strong support for the Chesterfield camp from within the new Labour party.

The speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield can be described only as vintage Bennery. He rewrote history. He set up straw men that he then proceeded to knock down. For instance, he talked about the American empire and derided any threat from the USSR. That reminded me of Sydney Webb and the other Left-wing intelligensia who went to the USSR in the 1930s and returned singing the praises of the Russian system. It seems that nothing has been learnt by the Left wing of the Labour party since then. There was no mention by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield about the Russian empire that controls so many countries. The difference between the USSR and the United States is clear. Of course, the United States is not perfect, but to compare that country in any way with a totalitarian dictatorship—for that is what the Communist countries are—and to pretend that a country that has free elections, a free press and free speech is in any way comparable to the USSR or even, in the view of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, less attractive than the USSR is absurd.

Mr. Cryer: In view of the wicked perils of the Soviet Union that the hon. Gentleman has just described, does he think it wise that his leader, the Prime Minister, should go to the Soviet Union and engage in lengthy conversations with the leadership and appear on Soviet television?

Mr. Bennett: Absolutely. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made an excellent speech on television. It was the first time that the Russian people had been able to hear about the joys and benefits of capitalism. For the Labour party to pretend that there is any comparison between the two systems shows the poor level of thought that exists on the extreme Left wing of that party.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield also said that he did not

"believe that for one moment the Soviet Union has ever planned a military attack on Western Europe."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 242.]

The right hon. Gentleman is at liberty to believe anything that he likes, and he does believe some strange things. However, the fact remains that in 1945 Churchill warned the Soviets that if they did not stop at the previously agreed lines, action would be taken. Churchill's threat in 1945 established the boundaries of Western Europe as far as the Communist bloc was concerned. However, it did not establish the boundaries of Eastern Europe. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield was careful not to talk about Eastern Europe, but we have seen one country after another fall under Communist influence since 1945. It happened in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Russian military intervention took place in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. We have seen what happens whenever those subject people wish to throw off the shackles of Communism. It was on those occasions that we saw the true face of the Soviet regime as it sought to ensure that they remain subject. It is that regime that the right hon. Gentleman thinks is better than the American system and the American way of life.

I challenged the right hon. Member for Chesterfield on this matter yesterday. At column 246 of the *Official Report* I asked him why he did not resign when his party was in government between 1964 and 1970, and 1974 and 1979 when he was a Cabinet Minister. He sat through 11 years of a pro-nuclear Labour Government as a Minister and had a collective responsibility in the Cabinet from 1974 to 1979. However, not for one moment did he contemplate resignation. He was careful to stay in office. He told me that we all make mistakes.

The right hon. Gentleman makes mistakes all the time. I was delighted when I obtained a copy of his book, "Out of the Wilderness". I am sure that official Opposition spokesmen hope that the last volume will be called "Back in the Wilderness", but if the right hon. Gentleman has his way, it will not be. Page 48 of that book contains a photograph showing the right hon. Gentleman advertising a rally in 1954 for the H-bomb national committee, which was the forerunner of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The right hon. Gentleman has told us that he makes mistakes. Indeed, he was anti the bomb in 1954, but for 11 years he was willing to serve in a pro-nuclear Government. Perhaps he could explain why he has suddenly found all these principles only when he is in opposition.

I have spent enough time discussing the embarrassment of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. However, he continued by referring to the famous book of the right

[Mr. Bennett]

hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent, which is entitled "Guilty Men". The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has had an honourable and consistent record of supporting CND. However, he, too, felt quite happy to serve in the Wilson and Callaghan Cabinets between 1974 and 1979. I collect the publications of the Left Book Club which is why I have a copy of "Guilty Men". What is interesting about that book, which was published in 1940, is that it does not mention the real guilty men before the second world war. I refer to the official Labour Opposition who, from 1936 to 1939, voted against rearmament and increased expenditure on defence in every Defence Estimate debate, just as they will today. They have not changed their colours. Those were the real guilty men before the second world war, and today's Opposition will be guilty if they do not support the Government's policy.

It is interesting to compare the amendment that was tabled today in the name of the Leader of the Opposition with an amendment that was tabled by Mr. Attlee on 9 March 1936. The wording is not dissimilar. Mr. Attlee's amendment proposed that

> "the safety of this country and peace of the world cannot be secured by reliance on armaments but only by the resolute pursuit of a policy of international understanding, adherence to the Covenant of the League of Nations, general disarmament, the progressive improvement of international labour standards".—*[Official Report,* 9 March 1936; Vol. 309, c. 1841-42.]

That amendment was tabled by Mr. Attlee two days after Hitler walked into the Rhineland. That was the way in which the Labour party operated in 1936 and that is the way in which it operates today.

At least the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has been consistent. It has been interesting to listen to the contortions of the official Opposition spokesmen in the debate. First came the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who retired from the Front Bench just a few weeks ago. His speech was in his usual disingenuous style. He accused the Government of relying heavily on the United States. He made the usual crude anti-Americanisms, which he must make for internal political reasons. He then went on to attack his erstwhile American colleagues. He said that the Labour party would increase reliance on the nuclear umbrella of the United States if we are not to have our own independent nuclear deterrent. One cannot interpret his speech in any other way. Presumably, therefore, we must rely on the Americans. It is interesting to note that when the Leader of the Opposition appeared on "This Week, Next Week" on 29 September 1986 and was challenged about relying on America's nuclear weapons, he said:

> "If we are not prepared to use the weapons system ourselves, we certainly would not be asking anyone else to jeopardise themselves by the use of that nuclear weapon. It would be immoral to do so."

However, the next day the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said that the United States is a member of NATO and that possession by the United States of nuclear weapons is obviously a deterrent. Unlike his leader, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was prepared to rely on American nuclear weapons.

There is a moral dimension to this issue. As a leading European and world power and as a nuclear nation, we have a moral as well as a political duty to maintain an independent nuclear force and to help in our own defence. It is not anti-American to support having our own nuclear deterrent. As a strong world power, we have a moral duty to help in our own defence.

Of course, Opposition Members would rather not talk about the official policy of the Labour party. I listened yesterday and this afternoon to their Front-Bench spokesmen. It is interesting to note that they do not have an official policy on nuclear deterrence. In fact, there was considerable confusion amongst them about the concept of deterrence. That was shown by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) when he backed up his hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) in questioning the Secretary of State. They have a policy that has been cobbled together for internal political reasons and it varies from day to day — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but we should look at just one week in the policy-making of the Labour party. If we take the week from 27 September to 3 October 1987, on Tuesday 29 September the official policy of the Labour party favoured a vague review of defence policy. On the following day, Wednesday 30 October, following a speech by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) which warned about civil war in the Labour party, that unilaterilist policy was abandoned. The Leader of the Opposition said on television that it was a jolly good speech, and added:

> "We are maintaining our non-nuclear defence policy and you know it. I said it yesterday."

Within minutes the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was contradicting the right hon. Gentleman on the same television station, saying:

> "We have announced we are going to have a review . . . we can hardly announce the conclusions of the review before we have even started it."

Naturally, by the following morning the speech of the hon. Member for Brent, East, which had been a jolly good speech the previous day was under attack from the official member of the NEC of the Labour party responding at the Labour conference debate as being immature, and the hon. Gentleman was attacked as exploiting the nuclear issue for his own political advantage.

That is one simple week in the life of the Labour party's nuclear defence policy. The policy cannot remain constant for more than five minutes, depending on which spokesman is called to defend it. It is no wonder that the public believe the Labour party as much today as they did on 11 June. We can see from the Government's position in the opinion polls that, as the gap between the Conservative and Labour parties widens, Labour party policy today has even less credibility.

If the Labour party's policy is now predicated on the INF talks being successful, what will it do if they fail? I hope the talks will not. Will the Labour party then back the retention of cruise—the very reason why the USSR is willing to talk — or will it still insist that cruise is abandoned? What is the Labour party's position on IBMs? Does it now support Polaris and its replacement by Trident, in the words of one hon. Lady, as a "bargaining counter"? Again, why should the USSR listen if it knows that a Labour Government means only to use that as a bargaining counter? The USSR then knows that it can wait and bluff through any negotiations which may be undertaken by a Labour Foreign Secretary. Labour Britain will give them up.

The fact is that the British people know that Labour party activists—I do not say Members of this House—

are riddled with barely disguised fellow travellers who would accept any little morsel, or even none, before throwing away our independent nuclear deterrent. It only remains to be said that Labour's defence policy is a mess because it is full of irreconcilable contradictions and riddled with holes. It was rejected on 11 June and it will also be rejected, rightly, at the next general election.

8.22 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I am struck by the amount of time the Government have spent attacking the Labour party. If the Labour party's policy is as bad as they say, why should they worry about it? The reason is that the Government are trying to disguise their own failures.

Let me remind Conservatives that they were in government when the Falklands campaign started. Had Argentina invaded a few months later, after the carriers had been sold, Admiral Woodward could not have mounted a fleet. Let me remind them what their preparations were—Argentina is not a major power—that at the end of that campaign some of our batteries were down to six shells per gun. Those were the preparations that they had made for the defence of this country.

The fact is that a country this size cannot sustain both a nuclear and a conventional weapons policy. Therefore, our nuclear policy depends on us going to the American nuclear pawnshop for Trident. But, remember, the Americans are craftily keeping the redemption certificate so that they control any use we make of Trident. Conventionally, we are prepared to rob Peter to pay Paul. That means that none of the services receives the equipment or support which it is entitled to expect. Much of our equipment is out of date. The Army still has 900 Chieftain tanks in service. These tanks put up so much smoke that they are targets from miles away. Is that how we should supply our armed forces?

Much of our radar for air defence is out of date. We now have six American AWACS systems and it is doubtful whether they would cover Britain as we should be covered. In fighter defence we depend on obsolete Phantoms and Lightnings. Under the Labour Government we had ordered Tornado replacements, but because their radar has not arrived, they appear in many cases to be used as trainers. However, I believe that some radars arrived yesterday—only three years after the projected date. Tornados must be the most expensive training aircraft in history. But what were our fighters supposed to do if a war had taken place meantime? They were carrying ballast instead of radar. Perhaps the Government's solution was that they should fly over the enemy aircraft and drop the ballast, in the same way as first world war figher pilots used to take up bricks and drop them on the enemy.

Then there is the question of the trainer ordered from Brazil—the Tucano—presumably for political rather than operational reasons. Its programme is falling behind. The MoD tells us that its policy is to deter a potential enemy. I would think that any potential enemy would be grateful to them; indeed, I would not be surprised to see some members of the Government gaining decorations for services to Russia. We cannot claim that we are deterring if our equipment is out of date, if some of it does not arrive at the right place at the right time and if we are never ready to meet the crisis that the equipment and forces are supposed to meet. That is the challenge that I put before the Government this evening.

Our merchant fleet is disappearing and we have managed to declare redundant many of the skilled men who prepared the Falklands fleet. When our minesweepers go on a limited operation in the Gulf—it should not have been a major operation—they have to wait to be fitted with chaff launchers and other missile deterrents. That is the result of a policy of a Government who claim they are prepared to defend Britain.

Although in some areas we have smaller forces than the Russians, our greatest assets are the flexibility, initiative and training of the members of our services. But all training, flexibility and loyalty depends on morale. While the Government spend £3 million training an operational Tornado pilot and £1 million on training a navigator, how do they boost morale? They bolster morale by denying the RAF sufficient training, so building up frustration. They support our sailors, who spend months away from their families, by making it as difficult as possible for them to visit their families when they may be stationed on the same island. The Government do not allow additional travel warrants unless service personnel are 200 miles from their families. By cutting local overseas allowances in Germany to save £17 million, the cost of one Tornado—they seem to drop out of the sky all over the place — the Government incur the justified wrath of those serving in Germany whose morale depends on allowances to meet family costs.

Industry after industry has been handed over on a plate to the Americans—witness, for example, the Westland helicopter industry. The biggest employer in my constituency is British Aerospace, which makes missiles, and the company is terrified every time it thinks the Ministry of Defence is reviewing a contract, lest it go to the Americans. There is also a factory in my constituency that is owned by a textile firm called Lantor. The major shareholders in that firm are Tootal in this country and an American firm, Westpoint Pepperell Inc. The company in Bolton has discovered a material that is extremely light, for use in protecting personell in chemical warfare. Into the material are built certain elements that allow it to absorb chemicals; it is a world beater. And what do the Government do? They reward the firm by telling it that they are cutting their ordering capability, to the extent that the American section of that firm is now bidding for contracts. So, as a result of the MOD's policy, that investment programme in Bolton, which has a high unemployment rate, has had to be cancelled. If that is a Government showing loyalty to British workers and firms, I wonder how one hopes to maintain the loyalty of the people on whom one's forces depend.

Our forces are only as independent as our control of the industries that supply them. Once those are put into foreign hands, not only is unemployment created here but people abroad are given the power to rule our forces' policy decisions. If we are not careful, I am afraid that the European fighter aircraft will be cancelled. Once that goes, the orders go to the Americans.

I know that several hon. Members are waiting to speak, but it is important to say that the country must define the global role in which our forces should operate. We are dragged along behind American policy. We were involved in Libya when the Americans chose to attack Tripoli. Unfortunately, the Americans had got it wrong, because the people behind the bombing of the La Belle night club in Germany, for which the American raid was retribution, were the Syrians. That did not stop the Prime Minister

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supporting the Americans in what was American Government terrorism. Yesterday, we attacked Libya; today we are dragged behind the Americans into what could be a Gulf war; what happens tomorrow? Do we become no more than a section of the operational armed forces of America, controlled and manipulated from Washington?

It is no good claiming to have an independent deterrent if the orders come from the country that supplied it. It would be much better if the Government concentrated on making Britain independent of all countries—including America. NATO was originally founded as a group of equals, each giving what it could afford to the common good, but sharing as equals a common policy-making process. That has now changed to the point at which, under the present Government, NATO has become more like the Warsaw pact—a super-power element decides, and the rest of us are dragged along behind. That is not an association of free men or equals; it is an alliance dominated by a central power for its own interests.

What has worried me in all the negotiations is the Government's attempt consistently to argue that nuclear weapons must be kept. Of all the countries in the negotiations, we are the country hanging on to nuclear weapons for their own sake and making excuses for not getting rid of them. I sometimes feel that the Government would sooner have a nuclear war in which they could say, "You see, even in dying we have been proved right," than make any concession that would enable the world to live in peace.

8.34 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I am grateful for having been called this evening, especially as I visited British front-line troops in the spring of this year, together with 15 other Conservative candidates. I am happy to say that all 15 are now hon. Members of the House.

I want to share with the House some of the experiences that we had on that trip and that are relevant to the debate. Secondly, I want to examine political relations as they appeared to be changing in Germany. Thirdly, I shall speak about British dependencies and morale. I am aware that other hon. Members wish to follow me, so I shall keep my eye on the clock.

I am particularly pleased to speak today because I served in Germany with the British troops as an officer in the Army some years ago, and I say from the bottom of my heart that I am delighted that we are, at last, moving towards reductions of nuclear missiles. An INF agreement is very much on the horizon. I believe that it is there only because the Government were prepared to stand firm and force the Russians to the negotiating table, and not to accept the notion put about by Labour Members that we should disarm ourselves before the other side considered doing so.

While in Germany we had the opportunity to talk to German and British troops, and I was surprised at the attitudes of those troops towards any proposed nuclear treaty. Most British troops, of all ranks, with whom I discussed the issue seemed lukewarm towards the idea of intermediate nuclear disarmament, because of the tremendous inequalities and imbalances between conventional forces. If we achieve that INF treaty, we must move on as soon as possible to a treaty that covers conventional and biological weapons. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), who made a distinguished maiden speech this evening, that that must be the next stage. The troops with whom I discussed the matter asked why I was surprised by their lukewarm attitude to nuclear treaties, given that the other side has 57 divisions and we have only 26. The other side has twice as many tanks and aircraft, and three times as many guns too.

It is important to consider the quality and the configurations of the troops that face NATO. It may be thought that the other side has only a conscript army, but that is far from the truth. In Russia, the word "guards" denotes first-class, highly-trained troops, as, I may say, it does in other countries, too. What do we find when we examine the deployment of Warsaw pact troops in Germany? We find that our forces are up against the 2nd Guards Army, the 3rd Shock Army, the 8th Guards Army, the 20th Guards Army, and the 1st Guards Tank Army, supported by East German troops in two army groups. All these units are motorised. The distance that they have to travel to reach our forces is not great; it takes one hour by taxi from the border to the Rhine, and two hours by tank. That is what the German Member of Parliament for Detmold told us, although he said that the Russians did not know about the traffic problems in his constituency. From there, we were fortunate in being able to go to East Germany.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): There is not much traffic in East Germany.

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman is correct, but there is a lot of military activity.

Mr. Hood: Just like Soweto.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Has the hon. Gentleman ever been to Soweto?

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman has made two helpful interventions. He laughs and jokes about Soweto. I have been to Soweto, and he has not. *[Interruption.]* I had a look at the problems there, too, because it is much better to go and see and form one's own opinions. The changes that have taken place there are another issue.

One issue that came up in Germany—which is far away from Soweto—was the so-called German question. This was brought up on several occasions. I found the nature of the question very strange. I wanted to know what it was, because it was continually being raised. Was it just about East German-West German relations? When one questioned the academics and the distinguished people with whom we had discussions, we found that it was part of a much greater question.

We went for a briefing to the 21st Panzer Corps at Detmold and there was a map on the wall to assist in the briefing. I and some of my colleagues looked at the map, but it was not a map with borders that we recognised because it showed the borders of Germany in 1937. When we talk about the German question, we must understand that many Germans consider the German question as something that deals not just with East German-West German relations. Rather it includes east Prussia, Silesia and the other lands that Germany lost at the end of world war 2. We are moving into a phase of closer relations between East and West Germany, and the sentiment that we found in Germany must be kept in mind as we see the two German nations appearing to form closer relationships.

The hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) spoke about the Falklands. Under no circumstances should we discuss the Falklands with the Argentinians until they have formally ceased hostilities. They have not done so, and must do so first. If we did have discussions with them now it would be interpreted as weakness.

I remind the House that after the Falklands had been invaded, and before the task force was sent, Spain suspended negotiations about Gibraltar. The Spanish Government scandalously used Gibraltar recently to sabotage the carefully negotiated agreement on European air fares. That was disgraceful and we must not let that blackmail influence us.

Finally, I shall speak about morale. We heard about waste from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), which is very close to Walthamstow, where a safe Labour seat fell to the Conservatives because of the enormous waste and rate increases in the area.

Mr. Cohen: We shall win it back next time.

Mr. Tredinnick: I doubt that because in London Conservatives tend to hold seats won from Labour and that can be seen from the results of the last two elections.

In conclusion, I say yes to INF, but we must move on to a conventional weapons agreement. Secondly, we should bear in mind that to many Germans' the German question goes beyond East German-West German relations in the sense of the geographical boundaries set at the end of the war. Thirdly, we must remain firm on the Falklands and on Gibraltar. Finally in terms of morale, I draw the attention of the House to figures that show that the premature retirement rate under this Government is much better than it was under the Labour Government.

8.45 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): One of the shortcomings of our parliamentary system is that having set up Select Committees the House too often pays insultingly scant attention to their reports. Colleagues of all parties spend hours beavering away taking evidence, and skilled and conscientious Clerks of the House burn the midnight oil on draft reports, while the rest of us are casual about the fruits of their work. Far too little parliamentary attention is given to the work of the Select Committee on Defence.

My second reason for using my time to return to the report of the Select Committee on Westland is that, whereas many colleagues perceive the Westland affair as the day before yesterday's issue and a few ardently hope that Westland can be swept under the carpet, I subscribe to the old-fashioned view that telling the truth to the House is today's issue. Certainly as long as those involved, however exalted and senior Ministers they may be, are still in office, this is a matter of paramount importance.

Paragraph 184 of the Select Committee's report refers to the Prime Minister's statement recorded in the *Official Report* of 27 January 1986 given in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who, as so often before and since in the past 15 years, asked the right question.

The Prime Minister said:

> "I did not know about the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's own role in the matter of the disclosure until the inquiry had reported." — [*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 657.]

The Select Committee was obviously incredulous, because in paragraph 184 of its report the Committee stated:

> "We asked Sir Robert Armstrong about this; and he thought it 'strange, but I believe that to be the case.'"

Paragraph 185 says:

> "The Secretary of the Cabinet's description of this as strange is something of an understatement. Parts of a classified document have been made public—a document of the same classification, incidentally, as the papers which Mr. Ponting disclosed."

I spent 11 days in the Old Bailey and perhaps I may be forgiven for having my thoughts about that.

The Select Committee's report says:

> "Not only was the document classified; it was advice from a Law Officer to one of his Ministerial colleagues, and its disclosure, in the words of the Solicitor-General, 'immediately and flagrantly violated' the rule of confidentiality of such advice. The disclosure was also, again in the words of the letter's author, 'highly selective'."

I hope that you will not take it amiss, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I insert in my speech that I hope that Lord Havers enjoys better health in his retirement. Some of us are grateful for his many personal courtesies during his distinguished eight years as Attorney-General.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) is one of the ablest lawyers of his generation, a QC who knew about the Law Officer's letters. I do not believe for a moment that it was his original idea selectively to leak a Law Officer's letter.

The Select Committee's incredulity escalates in paragraph 186. It says:

> "It is to be presumed that Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham were present when the Prime Minister discussed the matter with her office. From the Cabinet Secretary's evidence it appears that Mr. Powell knew that the Solicitor-General's letter was on its way. We know that Mr. Mogg spoke to Mr. Powell and told him that Mr. Brittan wanted the Solicitor-General's view put in the public domain. We know that Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham refused to disclose the letter from Downing Street. We know that Mr. Ingham knew in advance about the method of disclosure, because it was agreed in a telephone call between himself and Miss Bowe. It must also have been known to Mr. Ingham at that stage that Mr. Brittan had given his authority for the disclosure — otherwise Mr. Ingham was discussing the details of how to make a disclosure that had no Ministerial authority whatsoever."

The sequence of events recounted by the Prime Minister is incredible, as it requires us to believe that she never asked a single pertinent question about a scandalous situation that directly affected her Government.

To accept her full explanation it is necessary to believe that both she and Bernard Ingham behaved entirely out of character; that she never thought to ask a man in her office, with whom she worked in conditions of great intimacy, how a leak of major political significance had been affected; and that he, who knew more about the art of leaking than anyone else, had never told her what had happened. At best, it showed that she was a Prime Minister who was apparently unable to control her own officials but who approved of the use of smear tactics against a fellow Minister.

Then we come to paragraphs 187 and 188, to which no proper reply was offered in the Government's response, Cmnd. 9916, as it characteristically skirted difficult issues.

It is the same kind of dismissive, cynical long answer that the Defence Secretary gave to the Select Committee on 29 October last year — cols. 344 and 345 of the

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Official Report—when he devoted three minutes to the fourth report and 24 minutes to the technicalities of helicopters.

It was this kind of long answer that led the *Economist* on 1 February to say:

> "In the raucous atmosphere of the Commons on Monday, it was impossible for opposition (or government) MPs to get answers to straight questions. However, it was significant that replies were not given to two crucial questions asked by a Labour shadow spokesman, Mr. John Morris: 'Did the prime minister canvass her advisers or any minister before she requested through her office the solicitor general to write his letter or to put that letter into the public domain? Secondly, when she set up the inquiry, did she know that it was an official leak?' The question had to be fielded by the leader of the house, Mr. John Biffen. Mr. Biffen, a man of unimpeachable honesty, did his best: 'Those points have been dealt with by the prime minister'. . . ."

As the *Economist* said, "They had not," and they never have been.

This is the kind of non-answer that the Prime Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 14 July. The *Official Report* states:

> "**Mr. Fatchett:** When the Prime Minister said on 27 January 1986 in the middle of the Westland affair that she did not expect to be Prime Minister by 6 o'clock that evening what did she mean?
>
> **The Prime Minister:** That allegation has been made many times. I have nothing further to add to the many statements and replies that I have already given."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 965.]

At Question No. 4 for that day, I asked the Prime Minister:

> "Will the Prime Minister make just one reference to the "many times" when she has said that she knew what she had done as an explanation of why she said that she might not be Prime Minister at 6 o'clock that evening?
>
> **The Prime Minister:** I have repeatedly told the hon. Gentleman that I have nothing to add. He knows full well that I am here and that I am intending to stay."—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 969.]

Doubtless the Prime Minister was intending to stay, but it does not answer the question.

At paragraph 187 the Select Committee states:

> "187. It must therefore be the case that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell were in a position to tell the Prime Minister on 7 January what turned out to be the principal findings of Sir Robert Armstrong's inquiry more than a fortnight later. They knew that Mr. Brittan had given his authority, because, according to the evidence before us, they were told so by Mr. Mogg. They knew, or certainly Mr. Ingham knew, that Miss Bowe was going to give the information unattributably to the Press Association. They could not, of course, know of the 'differences in understanding' between No. 10 and the DTI which Sir Robert quoted in his inquiry, but these do not carry the same significance as the fact that the disclosure had been authorised by a Cabinet Minister."

The Select Committee further stated, at paragraph 188:

> "188. Yet on 7 January Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell did not share their knowledge—not with Mr. Nigel Wicks, the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary, not with Sir Robert Armstrong and not with the Prime Minister. Sir Robert told us he believed the reason the Prime Minister was told nothing was that
>
> 'it was understandable that people would expect the matters to be dealt with in the inquiry and would expect to give their accounts of the matter to the inquiry'."

The Committee said that that was speculation on Sir Robert's part. Members of Parliament can be forgiven for being contemptuous about the so-called inquiry by the Cabinet Secretary. Never has a Nelson eye been more adroitly used on behalf of Ministers — shades of Sir Lawrence Helsby and the late Lord Burke Trend.

During the Recess I indulged in the dangerous pastime of reading books, and one I read was Rodney Tyler's "Campaign". Tyler is a man very close to Tim Bell. At page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, Tyler began:

> "It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27 January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign, to the occasion, almost a year later, when she found herself, also in great secrecy".

Authors usually take great care in honing their opening sentences. But on pages 3 and 4, Tyler is even more explicit. He said:

> "On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shaky enough to doubt her future (although some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared by the following morning). It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent."

Who are these real culprits? Have they been sacked or shunted sideways into Whitehall's outer Mongolia? Have they ceased to prosper or do they languish like Leon? Not so.

Mr. Ingham went to Vancouver to conduct, as my right hon. Friend for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) put it, anti-Heseltine-type guerilla tactics against the host Canadian Prime Minister.

Mr. Powell, uniquely as far as I can ascertain, while remaining in the same post at Downing street, has become an Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office.

I have re-read "Not With Honour" by Magnus Linklater and David Leigh, in which it was stated:

> "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions."

In the summer I saw Mr. Linklater in Edinburgh and he stuck exactly to what he had been told.

Then there is the elegantly written volume by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) who, to use his own favourite word, is one of the "disregarded", but equally well-informed. He described the 1922 Committee in the last week of January 1986 in Committee Room 14. In his book, he said:

> "Leon Brittan's trial *in absentia* was in the great tradition. Brittan was to be the necessary sacrifice. Mrs. Thatcher's statement that afternoon had, for all its equivocation, fingered her secretary of state. She may have tried to protect him but the result was to leave him naked to his enemies. The atmosphere in the committee room was highly charged."

The hon. Member for Aldershot continued:

> "Later that evening there were rumours to the effect that 'Leon will spill the beans'. But he did not. Instead he resigned on the following day, disregarding Mrs. Thatcher's efforts to persuade him to stay put. His speeches since on Westland have been devoted to attacking Heseltine's part in the affair"

We want to know what "the beans" are, and the only possible beans are those of truth about the Prime Minister's behaviour. As she confirmed to David Frost during a pre-election broadcast on the Sunday morning, she thought that she might not be Prime Minister on the night of 27 January because she did not know that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks would remain silent and be a scapegoat or would reveal his role in the affair, and her role, and spill the beans. She did not know that, and that is precisely why she doubted whether she would be Prime Minister at six o'clock that night.

Before leaving the works of the hon. Member for Aldershot, I should draw some attention to the role of the then Government Chief Whip, the present Leader of the House of Commons. In a dramatis personae he states:

> "John Wakeham, the government chief whip. The keeper of the party's interest. Worked first to keep Heseltine within the government, but grew increasingly anxious about the political consequences about so public and violent a disagreement, helped to concoct Mrs. Thatcher's ultimatum which she delivered at the cabinet meeting on 9 January 1986. Shrewd, mild in manner, his contribution to keeping the ship afloat, with two men overboard and the Captain confined to her cabin, was decisive."

This is the writing of a Conservative Member. He continues:

> "John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite if effective message that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. We did."

That man, the then Government Chief Whip, is now the Leader of the House of Commons, and those who are Leaders of the House of Commons should never be party in any way to misleading the House. I am afraid that the present Leader of the House, in his previous incarnation, was part of the Prime Minister's behaviour towards the House. The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks might reflect with Cardinal Wolsey that

> "Had I served but God as diligently as I have served the King, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs."

I then made inquiries, which brings me to the difficult problem of sources, which is common to journalists and politicians. I have to judge whether angry people were, first, in a position to know and, secondly, telling the truth.

I have come to believe that Mr. Charles Powell, working in Downing street with the rank of under-secretary of state, did his duty. But had he not done so, he would have been shunted out of Downing street, and not put in an unprecedentedly senior post.

I believe that Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham kept the Prime Minister fully informed about all that occurred as it occurred. That is not surprising, as the selective leaking of a Law Officer's letter was probably the Prime Minister's own idea in the first place.

I do not think that the House should be surprised at this behaviour, because we have seen only recently the ruthless operation in Canada. Had the Prime Minister said otherwise than in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 27 January, she could have hardly have remained in No. 10 Downing street. I remind the House of what she said:

> "I did not know about the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's own role in the matter of the disclosure until the inquiry had reported." — [*Official Report*, 27 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 657.]

That had to be said at that point to protect the Prime Minister's position. Had she not made such a claim, the removal van would have been outside No. 10 Downing street.

One question is whether civil servants should be party to such behaviour. I admit that they are put in an extremely difficult position because, understandably, they wish to continue their careers rather than tread the path of Clive Ponting.

I give notice to the House that I propose to pursue this matter as incessantly as possible until an inquiry has been set up and the following examined: Mr. T. P.Abraham, Sir Robert Armstrong, Miss Collette Bowe, Sir Brian Hayes, Mr. Bernard Ingham, Mr. John Michell, Mr. John Mogg, Mr. Richard Mottram, Mr. Charles Powell, Sir Clive Whitmore and Mr. Nigel Wicks. They should come before some form of inquiry or a Select Committee of the House of Commons to answer questions, and I believe that as honourable civil servants they would do so.

If the House says that it is not interested in the truth and that the events that I have set out are past history, I can say only that they do not relate to a minor event. It was an event in which the Prime Minister lost the cleverest member of her Cabinet, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks. She lost also the greatest expositor to his party conference of a case and one of the few orators of our generation, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

If it is said that we should regard all this as water under the bridge, I can say only that if the House is not interested in the truth, it should be. For a quarter of a century I have had the privilege of being a Member of this place and I believe passionately that Parliament should get from Ministers, however exalted, and from those who are created by the House, and who ultimately theoretically depend on the House, the truth. If we do not get the truth, the whole British system breaks down.

9.4 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): It is always an interesting challenge to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). However, regardless of our political differences, I believe that this place would be far worse for his absence. For all that, I thought that the House was debating the Defence Estimates. For one horrid moment I thought that perhaps the hon. Member for Linlithgow had slipped to item No. 9 of the Remaining Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions on the Order Paper relating to knitting yarns in the European Community.

The last time that we had occasion to be together in a defence debate, the hon. Member for Linlithgow took my hon. Friend the Minister to task over the matter of low-flying aircraft. The hon. Gentleman has rightly pursued that matter, and it is a concern in many places, not least in my constituency. I did not have the opportunity to intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech then, because he did not feel able to give way, to remind him that my hon. Friend the Minister has been very helpful in my case, because he advises me when RAF exercises, particularly of a low-flying nature, are to take place over my constituency. His advice enables hon. Members to advise their constituents when such exercises are to take place. That is very helpful, and I want to put on record the fact that that is valuable advice for constituents. I hope that that practice will continue.

Within the Defence Estimates, the Territorial Army is listed as 2 per cent. of the budget. I have developed a reputation for harping on about the TA, partially because I serve and have a particular interest in it. As well as forming 2 per cent. of the Defence Estimates before the House as laid out on page 53 of the White Paper, hon. Members should bear in mind that the Territorial Army presently supplies 40 infantry battalions to our armed forces. That figure is in annex C. Of those 40, five are the newly created phase II enhancement battalions under the TA expansion programme.

When we bear in mind that we are talking about 2 per cent. of the budget for all the Territorial Army volunteer reservists commitment to the armed forces providing 40 infantry battalions with the TA cap badge, it is interesting to note that there are 50 regular battalions. Therefore, I

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suggest that the Territorial Army is providing very good value for money. That is why I was particularly glad to note that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence recently visited Germany to observe Exercise Keystone — a major Territorial Army and Regular service exercise.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his visit to the exercise, but I should take him to task. He did not come to see our battalion, the 5th Light Infantry. Although the corps commander had insisted that the exercise should be dry, I am sure that, as the Secretary of State emanates from Scotland, we could have made his reception with the 5th Light Infantry most worthwhile.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have been impressed by the enthusiasm of those taking part in that exercise, particularly the TA. Hon. Members should bear in mind that many people who give up time to take part in TA activities and in particular exercises actually lose pay as a result. It is more than a hobby for many families; it is a genuine sacrifice. Exercise Keystone seemed particularly long, but it enabled part-time soldiers to get into the swing of things. However, it is important for exercises involving travel abroad that those responsible within the Ministry of Defence ensure that the Territorials can return to the United Kingdom in time to fulfil their civilian commitments. There was some doubt whether that would happen after that exercise. I hope that that point will be noted in relation to future exercises.

Undoubtedly, the Territorial Army commitment within our defence services and within the Defence Estimates proves to be a very effective part of NATO. One of the areas of concern to which I have referred previously is that we are more and more centralising the armed forces within the United Kingdom into large Regular depots. The danger is that we will remove from communities within the United Kingdom a form of military presence, and that may be seen as sinister. That is why it is particularly encouraging that the Government have increased the TA by five infantry battalions so that the 40 battalions can maintain a military presence within the communities—as is the case within Shrewsbury—and be seen as part of the community, in defence of the community and in no way as a sinister arm of the Government.

I am a little disappointed that the Defence Estimates contain only four references to the Territorial Army. Initially, that may sound generous, but three of those are brief statistical references in section 2, and the fourth is an even briefer reference on page 37 of section 1. Bearing in mind the size of the Territorial Army and its role within our armed forces, it has been rather neglected in the Defence Estimates.

Before too long, the House, and those within it who are interested in defence matters, will have to consider the future of voluntary and part-time military service within the United Kingdom. At present, recruitment levels are undoubtedly good, and the training, facilities and equipment provided for the Territorial Army are excellent. But, as our national economy is strengthening and booming, it is becoming harder for those involved in Territorial Army activities to obtain leave from their employers, not only for weekend training, because many now have to work on Saturdays, but for exercises.

Some employers who are now proving reluctant to allow employees to take part in Territorial Army activities are suppliers of equipment to the Ministry of Defence. They should take note that it is part of their duty as United Kingdom employers to enable their employees to take part in part-time military service. As many of them rely on Ministry of Defence contracts, it may be necessary before too long to consider a code of practice which would ensure that minimal release for Territorial Army activities could be assured.

Since the last time that we debated Defence Estimates, there has, fortunately, been progress on the relationship between the unemployed who earn money in the Territorial Army and the Department of Health and Social Security offices. Attitudes have varied across the country, and in many places in the past they have been to the detriment of those serving in the Territorial Army. There have been changes in calculating the monetary value of training and drill nights, but the Ministry of Defence must come to grips with the DHSS regarding weekend deductions.

I understand that those who are unemployed but who serve as part-time firemen do not lose financially. That is not the case in the Territorial Army. My right hon. Friends will have had the opportunity not only to meet the generals but many of the men serving in the Territorial Army on Exercise Keystone. If they spoke to those who are unemployed, they may have learnt of the difficulties that their families face when they return to the United Kingdom as a result of the delay in regaining their social security benefits.

It is important for Britain to understand the importance of the services in no less a place than the House itself. In the days when national service gave a number of Members to these Benches, the understanding of life in the services was greater, but that is undoubtedly diminishing. That is why we hear less of the traditional voices from the Opposition Benches, of those who, at one stage, used to represent much more the strong service vote which exists for the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), who is not in his place at the moment, has an interest in his local battalion—the 6th Fusilier battalion based in the north-east. All hon. Members who make contact with a Regular or Territorial Army unit will find a warm reception and genuine delight that an interest is being taken in their training and concerns. I hope that that will become much more of a feature across party lines so that modern attitudes in the services can be better understood.

Earlier, one of my colleagues referred to a visit that he paid to Germany as a candidate. Many visits to the armed forces are arranged for candidates, but fewer for serving Members. If my right hon. Friend could address that question in the Ministry of Defence, there may be a greater understanding of the need for sensible Defence Estimates.

In a few days' time, a number of hon. Members—again, I am sure, from both sides of the House—will attend Remembrance day services in their constituencies. One of the stranger titles for someone of my age to hold is that of president of the Shropshire Normandy Veterans' Association. While I was clearly—I hope clearly—born some years after the second world war, it is a title in which I particularly delight, because those brave men served the country with skill and determination. It is especially important for those of my generation, and, I hope, my children, to understand the sacrifice made during that conflict—a conflict that I believe would not have come about had we not listened to the siren voices of unilateralism.

The Estimates will confirm that there is still a conventional imbalance between NATO forces and the forces of the Warsaw pact. As long as that conventional imbalance exists, we must ensure that we maintain not only a nuclear deterrent within NATO, but an independent nuclear deterrent, to ensure that our nation's future and its freedom of speech can never again be put in jeopardy.

9.15 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I shall be mindful of the time, as the summing up must be done in five minutes.

I was much intrigued by the debate on "rent-a-Trident", as it was called last week—whether we buy missiles or not. Whether that was due to the deviousness of MOD officials or to a lack of perspicacity on the part of journalists, I leave open to question. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), a Max Boyce incarnation, proclaimed loudly and defiantly that he had been there. The "there" referred to the base at Faslane and Coulport. It seems that there was a difference of opinion on what was said by MOD officials there. As the hon. Member of Parliament for that constituency, let me say that it might have helped if the MOD had invited me along. I might have been able to impart a balanced or objective aspect to the debate, and the confusion between MOD officials and the press might then have been cleared up immediately.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), a former Secretary of State for Defence, has called Trident a weapon of last resort. I have to ask what has happened to the weapons of primary resort. In our area, the conventional weapons budget is being decreased. There is a 35 per cent. decline. Only yesterday, the managing director of Yarrow said on local television that, if the type 23 frigate orders were not placed, at least 500 of the 4,000 jobs there would have to go.

If Trident is to go ahead, as the Government stoutly maintain, what are their assurances for the jobs at Coulport? It was stated last week in the newspapers that the servicing will be done at King's Bay, Georgia. The Trident missiles will remain in tubes on the submarines for seven years, but the warheads will have to be tested. They will be tested on the United States sites, but will they be serviced in the United Kingdom? If so, will the operational patterns for servicing the warheads be the same as are now used with Polaris?

Those issues are of real importance to my constituency and the jobs there. I can see nothing to support those jobs in this year's public expenditure review. It confirms the rundown in the amount and quality of non-nuclear equipment for the armed forces, as was mentioned in yesterday's debate by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies).

Trident is just a manifestation of this Government's policies. It is privatisation, with the United States as the vendors. They are the Grand Metropolitans of the defence industry. Conservative Back Benchers say that privatisation is all right, as long as it is not the defence industry and as long as it is not in their back yard. Trident denies to the United Kingdom an effective military strategy for the 1990s. The Government are red-faced, because that was exposed last week.

The White Paper is based on a false premise: the use of nuclear weapons. We are told that nuclear weapons have kept the peace for 40 years. However, we have to consider the statements of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on our intervention in the Gulf. Perhaps the peace has been kept for 40 years because a number of countries that do not speak the same language have banded together. If that is so, vive la difference.

If the White Paper is to have credibility, the Secretary of State must say under what circumstances he will use nuclear weapons. He refused to do so yesterday. The honesty and the morality of the Government's case rest on the answer to that question. Until then, the defence budget, which is heavily weighted towards nuclear weapons, must be rejected. Public investment must be for the public good. As it is manifestly not so in this instance, the statement on the Defence Estimates must be rejected.

9.21 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): This two-day debate has raised interesting and probing questions. I congratulate and thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for their substantial contributions, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy). His kindness and generosity in helping new Members of the Opposition defence team is a tribute to his character and personality.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on her maiden speech. It was non-controversial in parts. I congratulate her also on her long-sightedness. She has obviously used one of the tricks of the Chamber, which means that she will serve her constituents well—as did her predecessor, Sir John Wells.

The debate has demonstrated that in all parts of the House there is a strong commitment to the defence of this country. What most insults Opposition Members are gratuitous remarks, such as those of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). Opposition Members, as can be seen from our record, our general politics and our commitment to this country, are just as committed to the defence of Britain as is any Conservative Member. We may have a different view of how to defend this country, but it is insulting to suggest that Opposition Members are not prepared to defend Britain. If the hon. Member for Pembroke were to come to my constituency he would see many white memorial stones to miners, steel workers and factory workers who gave their lives for the defence of this country. They volunteered to defend their country in the 1930s, when many members of the hon. Gentleman's party and class were consorting with Hitler and the Nazis in Germany. The Opposition do not therefore need any lessons in patriotism from Conservative Members of Parliament.

We are prepared to recognise and accept changes, but it is fairly obvious that the old gung-ho Victorian values still control and shape the policies of the Conservative party. In this White Paper the Government are talking big, but acting small. Although the Secretary of State said yesterday that there would be no cuts, an analysis of the words and figures in the document prove that to be a lie. We see a picture of developing neglect and an inability to maintain our conventional defences.

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

The defence posture that the Government are trying to maintain is not strategic, credible or economically sustainable. The Government's defence policy is rather like someone who takes out insurance against burglary and every other contingency and then leaves the door wide open. The acknowledged cuts and the delayed decisions show that Britain is incapable of meeting her NATO conventional commitments together with the burden of nuclear modernisation.

Such problems are not recognised only by La[illegible]r Members. The Chairman of the Defence Select Committee recognised them yesterday. If anyone bothers to read the hon. Gentleman's contribution in column 241 of *Hansard*, he will learn that the hon. Gentleman is concerned that the mismatch between commitment and resources is bound to grow as a result of the White Paper. He said:

> "What concerns me is that there is no sign that the Government . . . have taken a strategic view on what must be put into our defence resources in the next four or five years."

It does not require my right hon. and hon. Friends or myself to demonstrate what this Government White Paper is about. It has been done perfectly well by the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I was quoting the words that the Select Committee used in its report on the statement on the Defence Estimates of the previous Parliament. I simply want to put it on record that they were the words used by the Committee on the statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, and which the hon. Gentleman could and should have read last year.

Mr. Rogers: I am sorry. I would hate to correct the hon. Gentleman who has such experience, but if he will bother to read his own words he will note that he rose at 7.36 pm and that his speech covered four columns. At the top of the fourth column he said:

> "Having said that, I shall make one or two brief remarks on my own account. The Committee does not exist".—*[Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol 121, c. 241.]

He then proceeded to speak on his own account. If the record is wrong, I am sure that he will correct it.

Mrs. Kellet-Bowman: In the column to which the hon. Gentleman has just referred, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) categorically referred to the magnificent achievements of the Government.

Mr. Rogers: Indeed. The Chairman of the Defence Select Committee stands condemned by his words, and the Government, too, stand condemned by his words.

Throughout the debate the Government have conjured up the same old sterile arguments about defence spending increasing between 1979 and 1984. That is absolutely correct, and we have not disputed that. I remind Conservative Members that, shortly, 1984 will be four years past. For Conservative Members to carry on as they do makes for sterile discussion and is a waste of time. The real point at issue is what the Government are doing today and what they will do tomorrow.

By the Government's own admission, and according to their facts and figures, they will cut the defence budget. That budget will be cut from £17·2 billion in 1984-85 to £15·9 billion during the period 1984 to 1990 at 1984-85 prices. That is an 8 per cent. real cut, and it cannot be denied, because the Government state that in the Estimates. The Secretary of State has tried to deny it, but paragraph 603 of the Estimates states:

> "the defence budget is expected to decline by some 5 per cent. in real terms over the 1986 Public Expenditure Survey period".

Mr. Younger: Will the hon. Gentleman also give the figure for the real increase over the highest budget of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State should not be so upset. It might well be a great comparison with Victorian times, which probably suits the Conservative party.

There is a real cut, and it comes in a budget which is elastic in the sense that the Government are trying to stretch diminishing resources over increasing possibilities, but which is inelastic in economic terms. Its inelasticity stems from the high percentage of the defence budget spent on standing charges such as salaries, wages, pensions, maintenance and the irrevocable commitments to collaborative ventures. When all that is taken into account, it means that the total spend on production of equipment by 1989-90 will have fallen by about 39 per cent. from its 1984 level. The implication is for cancellations, the slowing down of acquisitions and the running on of equipment beyond its economic and operative life.

Mr. Mates: I hesitated before interrupting the hon. Gentleman's speech, because I am aware of the time factor. However, although a certain amount of robust give and take might be allowed, I must put right that complete misquotation. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my speech, when I said that the Government had made a significant achievement. I then said:

> "However, now may be the moment to warn, as the Committee did last year, that the breathing space can only be short, otherwise the mismatch between commitment and resources is bound to grow."—*[Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 241.]

I was faithfully reporting what the Committee, of which I was then the Chairman, had warned. They were not freelance remarks. They were the remarks of an agreed Committee.

Mr. Rogers: I wish that I had not given way. I should have realised that the hon. Gentleman is one of the original Heseltinies, so I should have expected him to whinge about these issues.

I recently attended a Battle of Britain memorial service. It was a moving occasion which showed that we had not forgotten the sacrifice of young lives in the battle against Nazism and the Right-wing reactionaries of Europe. It was a privilege for me to represent the Labour party at that memorial service, which was also attended by the Secretary of State.

During the Battle of Britain we had, as well as our brave pilots, the best radar and aircraft in the world. However, today we are relying on a 1941 system for airborne early warning. We must wait until 1991 for a replacement system that will, even then, be inadequate. We cannot go over old ground on the decision to drop Nimrod and purchase AWACS — a decision described in the Estimates as the most significant procurement decision of the year. Both sides of the House are obligated to ensure that that decision does not leave us woefully unprotected. It has meant that at least £860 million must be found from an already overstretched budget to pay for six aircraft—

and even then we will not have adequate coverage. Air Chief Marshal Sir David Craig has said that six aircraft are not enough to provide the necessary cover that we require in this country. While we wait, five of our old Shackleton aircraft must be maintained until 1991, even though their radar was designed in 1941. Does the Minister intend to order the two further AWACS that we so desperately need? Are we to have the 165 Tornados, or must we go to the back of the queue until the Saudis have all theirs? What is happening to the second batch of the 40 Harrier GR5s? Are they to be cut, as is widely rumoured?

What is happening to the Tucano project? Yesterday the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who is not present today, praised that project, but was soon corrected by the Minister. There seemed to be a note of despair in the Minister's voice when he said:

> "There is a few months' slippage on deliveries".

I remind the House that 130 Brazilian Tucanos were ordered against the advice of the RAF, instead of the British Aerospace PC9s, which are now entering service in the Saudi air force at a rate of two per month, with a total of 28 this year. Meanwhile, we still do not have our training aircraft. Because of the delays in delivery of the Tucano, air crews have to stretch the life of the Jet Provost, which entered service in 1956, before many of our young pilots were born.

An important issue was highlighted in the newspapers today. The Minister said yesterday:

> "radars to an agreed interim standard have already been delivered".—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 270.]

What does that mean? Does it mean that they only half work, that they work only half the time or half the distance, or that they see only half what is there? What exactly is meant by "interim standard"? Will the Minister acknowledge today that it will take another four years' work and a further £100 million to put this matter right?

The strictures of time and of the debate do not allow me to say all that I should like to say about the shortcomings in our conventional defence, but I shall refer briefly to the problem of low flying. In this context, I apologise for not having been able to attend when the Minister met some of my Welsh colleagues yesterday. There have recently been a number of tragic accidents in which brave and skilled young men have been killed and an even larger number of relatives bereaved. It is a miracle that no civilians have been killed. Two young service men were killed near Treventer in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), and it was fortunate that two nearby houses were not destroyed with further loss of life.

I hope that the Minister will examine this problem urgently. There is no increment of skill acquisition in such flights. At 100 ft and 500 mph the only response can be a reflex response, and reflexes can be developed otherwise than by dicing with death. Every such flight is a one-off gamble. A bird strike, a mechanical failure or even sheer bravado can make each flight unique. The Minister must realise that people do not get better at Russian roulette by practising.

It is clear that the real issue is no longer whether we are to have Trident, but whether we can afford adequate conventional defence as well. The Government say that they have an absolute commitment to adequate defence, but it is clear from the facts presented in the White Paper that the cuts will mean that planes cannot fly, ships cannot sail and tanks cannot be moved.

As the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said in last year's debate:

> "we must view with anxiety the decision to cut defence expenditure".—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 885.]

Like his grandfather, the hon. Gentleman might turn out to be a beacon of rightness against a background of Tory wrongness.

If the outcome warrants it, the Government should amend their policies to take account of the changes. We in the Opposition have a vested interest in defending our country—*[Interruption.]* As I said before, the mantle of patriotism sits ill on some Tory Members, whose links with the neo-Fascist elements in this country remind us of what happened to their party in the 1930s.

The obsessions, dogma and hatreds of the Tory party and the Prime Minister have trapped them in a ghetto of nuclear bigotry. They are prepared to sacrifice the real defence of this country on the altar of their bigotry. We shall not follow them down that road, and that is why we shall vote against them tonight.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): We in the Conservative party welcome the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to his new position. We look forward to many colourful interventions and contributions, but permanently from the Opposition Benches.

This has been a wide-ranging debate. In the few minutes available to me, I shall try to answer as many points as possible. I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on her contribution, when she made an eloquent and persuasive defence of Trident. We look forward to many speeches from her in defence debates.

Several hon. Members have spoken about the morale of the armed forces, including the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) last night and the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) today. Fundamental to good morale is the confidence of service men that they are and will continue to be properly paid. The Government have accepted and implemented the findings of every report of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, and that is fully recognised by our people.

In consultation with the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence is reviewing the range of allowances payable to service men in carrying out their duties. We are aware that there are several anomalies in those allowances and some areas in which improvements would be welcome. That is a complex area and it would serve no useful purpose to rush what must be a thorough and sensible exercise, but we are determined to bring that review to a satisfactory conclusion as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) referred to the Robson report. I know that he is a former RAF pilot and concerned about the terms and conditions for those who serve in the RAF. The report, which was initiated by the Air Member for Personnel, is being taken seriously by the RAF. Half the recommendations have already been acted upon and the rest are being staffed. I take my hon. Friend's point about the anomaly of the

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

gratuity paid at the eight-year point to short-service commission pilots. I appreciate that it creates tensions. I also take my hon. Friend's point about the anomalies created by paying a storage allowance to service men, but not helping them to move their furniture, equipment and belongings abroad. We are looking seriously at both points.

We are also paying close attention to the accommodation provided for service men, married and single. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred to that yesterday. Expenditure on married quarters more than doubled between 1982-83 and the current year, but I do not underestimate the difficulties of funding all the work which, ideally, we should like to undertake to raise standards. Much of the housing stock is elderly. In other contexts, for example, schools and hospitals, many hon. Members will be familiar with the problems associated with much of the construction work undertaken in the 1960s.

More and more service families expect to own their own homes. That has led to a significant reduction in demand for our married quarters. We have therefore set in hand a programme to reduce the stock of vacant married quarters. Over the next three years we have set ourselves the target of disposing of 7,500 married quarters. That should produce substantial receipts for the benefit of the defence budget as a whole and contribute to the national stock of privately owned houses. We intend that as many as possible of these houses should be sold under the " sales to service men" 30 per cent. discount scheme.

Recruitment for all three services remains buoyant. Competition is strong in a few specialist areas, but that represents national trends. Overall, our recruiting targets are being met. There is no shortage of well-qualified young people wishing to join the armed forces, and with good reason.

We have heard the usual suggestions of gloom from Opposition Members about the premature voluntary retirement rates. I am grateful for the chance to put the record straight tonight. The number of premature voluntary retirement applications and exits from the armed services have been level since mid-1986. The slight upward trend of the early 1980s, which I mentioned in the last debate on the defence statement has been stopped and the rates of PVR applications and exits is still substantially lower than the rates in 1978-79 which were a direct result of the Labour Government's pay policy for the forces. However, the absolute numbers of those leaving the services are still too large. In an ideal world, we should like them to be lower. Naturally, within the overall figures, several areas need to be watched closely, but the figures and the facts speak for themselves. Our armed forces are in good shape and excellent spirits. Recruiting is good, exits are stable and morale is high.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan asked me about the second auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel and when we intend to make an announcement on it. We are currently negotiating the order for the second AOR with Swan Hunter shipbuilders under the conditions that were outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 24 April 1986. We are awaiting a revised tender from the company as the two previous bids that we received were too high. I hope that Swan Hunter will be able to submit an acceptable bid to take advantage of its preferential opportunity to gain the order.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) asked about the European fighter aircraft and whether it was financed and provided for. I assure him that in our defence programme, financial provision has been made for EFA.

My hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) referred to search and rescue. At the moment we are studying two aspects of the military search and rescue facilities. It will help the House if I explain what we are looking at. First, on the present military deployment of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force helicopters, we are trying to deploy those assets as efficiently as possible, in close consultation with the Department of Transport. We hope to be able to announce the outcome before very long. The Government are fully aware of the need to have satisfactory levels of search and rescue coverage around our coastline and in mountainous areas for military and civilian purposes.

The second aspect is the initiative that was taken by Bristow Helicopters Ltd, which came to us with a suggestion for transferring to commercial contractors the search and rescue helicopter service that is currently provided by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Bristow believes that a commercial service would meet civil and military search and rescue needs at less cost than the present arrangements. We are studying these ideas. Indeed, we are bound to study them and we shall take into account the forceful points that have been put to us not only in writing but in the House during the past two days' debate.

I wish to comment briefly on bullying in the Army. That was raised by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). All hon. Members would condemn bullying. It is a serious offence, whether committed by non-commissioned officers of junior ranks, or the peer group—soldiers bullying other soldiers—and tough disciplinary action is taken. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South made three suggestions: an amnesty for those absent without leave, a central complaints record and an ombudsman for the Army. I shall reflect on his suggestions with my colleagues in the MOD and reply to him. He has made it clear that he does not expect an answer tonight, but at a more convenient time and I undertake to reply to him.

I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. Since January 1986, only 20 allegations have resulted in disciplinary action. We have an Army of 150,000 men and an annual intake of 25,000 to 30,000, so we must set this serious matter in context. On entitlement, young soldiers and recruits must understand their rights. We are continually reviewing how young service men and women can be more accurately and comprehensively informed of their rights and how they can exercise them. They have the right to appeal, not only up the chain of command, but directly to their commanding officer.

Mr. Ashley: Although the Minister mentioned that number, does he agree that the allegations are far more numerous than the official complaints made, but do not come to light because of fear?

Mr. Freeman: I was about to deal with the so-called fear of reprisal, to which the right hon. Gentleman refers. I am sure that he will agree with me that it is important to encourage service men and women to reflect their anxieties promptly and properly to commanding officers and that those complaints should be investigated independently and thoroughly by the special investigation branch of the military police. Moreover, officers and NCOs should recognise that they have a duty and responsibility to supervise their men at all times. Life in the armed services is tough, difficult and onerous for the officers and NCOs who have a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week job making sure that those under their command are properly supervised and reflect any serious allegations properly.

The adjutant-general wrote a private letter in July, but as it is an internal Army letter it is not appropriate to be placed in the Library. He wrote to commanding officers of all units in the British Army asking for a response by 1 December on whether they were clear that there was no intimidation or bullying in their units and, if there was evidence of it, what steps they would take. I should like to see the results and perhaps it would be for the convenience of the House if we returned to this issue in the Army debate later in the year when more information will be available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North and the hon. Members for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and for Orkney and Shetland raised questions about low-flying aircraft. I am sure that all hon. Members will appreciate the need for realistic training for our RAF pilots. The criticisms made about low flying — it was adequately defended by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North—were essentially that it was too dangerous and unnecessarily realistic. Most low flying is done at 250 ft and flying at 100 ft is carried out only in three sparsely populated areas. Only 0·5 per cent. of all low-flying missions are at 100 ft and it is carried out prior to further exercises at that height and lower in Canada. In war, our pilots would have to fly lower than 100 ft, faster than they are permitted to fly at present and at night. This training is absolutely essential for them, and the whole House will join me in complimenting our pilots on their skill and bravery. The accident trend is down. The number of accidents in 1987 is the same as for 1986 and the long-term secular trend is down. There have been no civilian fatalities in the 1980s.

Several of my hon. Friends, especially those who serve in the Territorial Army, spoke about the reserves. My hon. Friends the Members for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) and for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) referred to the need for greater employer support for the reserves, and the Territorial Army in particular. I agree with them. The period from the end of national service in the early 1960s to today constantly grows. Hon. Members' experiences of the activities of the Regular Army and reserves are now rapidly dating. Therefore, the Ministry of Defence is considering how best we can inform and educate the public about the valuable role and service performed by the reserves. We are working closely with the National Employers Liaison Committee, which is so ably headed by Mr. Tommy Macpherson.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) raised a number of interesting points about the organisation of the Ministry of Defence since my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) arrived there and undertook certain organisational changes. My hon. Friend's points will be noted by officials at the Ministry of Defence. We have introduced tough, value-for-money targets in that Ministry and have saved £30 million already as a result of contractorisation. We believe strongly in delegating financial responsibility to commanding officers. That constitutes part of the reorganisation.

The Opposition's own defence review has, we understand, begun today. It will take some considerable time to be completed, and we wish it well; the House awaits its conclusions. In the meantime, Opposition Members have three choices tonight, because there are three distinct factions within the Labour party.

First, there are the multilateralists, led by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who wrote in *The Guardian* on 18 September:

> "I insist that to single out defence as the one inviolable item in our 1987 programme would be absurd. It would be ridiculous to protect even from scrutiny the most unpopular proposal in the manifesto."

The right hon. Gentleman's choice tonight is to vote with us in support of the statement on the Defence Estimates.

The second option open to Opposition Members is to support the official Opposition Front Bench. Its view is to cancel Trident and divert resources to increasing conventional expenditure. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) should now start casting his mind forward to the next election, when Trident will be fully committed and there will be little expenditure to divert from it to conventional expenditure. The right hon. Gentleman may be about to suggest in his defence review the offering of Trident in multilateral negotiations. If he does, it would be a gross discourtesy to the public, for the simple reason that the Opposition also propose to cancel Trident in any case.

The third and final choice open to Opposition Members is to support the unilateralists, led by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who has tabled an amendment that has not been selected. At least the right hon. Gentleman has been unambiguous, consistent and clear in his policy, which is the true policy of the Labour party. I have been trying to discover in which faction the hon. Member for Rhondda is encamped, so I took the trouble of looking at his election address. I looked through it carefully for his statement on defence, but there is a complete blank on defence.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: The Conservative party is the only party with a defence policy. It is a policy with a clear commitment and the only sensible, sane and popular defence policy. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 346.

Division No. 35] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*

Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 332, Noes 221.

Division No. 36] 10.15 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina

Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*

Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*

Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael

Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*

Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence

Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987 contained in Cm, 101.

Foodstuffs (Radioactive Contamination)

10.28 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I beg to move,

> That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7183/87 on maximum permitted radioactivity levels for foodstuffs, feedingstuffs and drinking water in the case of abnormal levels of radioactivity or of a nuclear accident; and urges the European Community to assure a common standard of health protection by adopting a rational set of scientifically based Intervention Levels for foodstuffs.

I should like to make it clear at the outset that this debate is not about the details of the precise levels of radioactivity that may be permitted in food to be put on the Community market following any future nuclear emergency. Those precise details are still being discussed in Brussels and Strasbourg.

This debate is about the principles to which the Government attach importance—that the agreed levels should be related to scientific advice, particularly when it is provided by the Community's experts. I am glad to say that a number of the Commission's proposals have already taken into account the United Kingdom's views on a number of important aspects, but as negotiations are still in progress it would be inappropriate for me to be more specific at this stage, apart from saying that we believe that we have reached agreement on precisely what should be the mechanism for triggering future action, and how it should be applied to areas such as foodstuffs and tap water.

However, there is a considerable difference of opinion on one issue. That has arisen because the Commission, although it accepts the advice of its experts under article 31 of the Euratom treaty on all other radio nuclides, has divided the figure for radio caesium by four. The rationality of this action is in dispute.

The Ministry's explanatory memorandum sets out the background to the Commission's proposal. The draft regulation aims at establishing Community-wide levels that would be applied as soon as a nuclear emergency was identified. However, it may be helpful if I explain in more detail just what the Commission is proposing, and why.

The accident at Chernobyl in the USSR on 26 April 1986 threw up a plume of radioactive material, which was then carried to various parts of Europe. All EEC countries, except Portugal and most of Spain, suffered contamination of varying degrees.

At Community level, the most apparent threat was from the possible import into the EEC of heavily contaminated food from the Eastern bloc. Therefore, on 12 May the EEC banned all imports of fresh food and livestock from within a 1,000 km radius of Chernobyl. On 30 May this ban was replaced by a Council regulation that specified maximum permitted radioactive levels for all third-country foodstuffs. That regulation has been extended twice, and is currently due to expire at the end of this month. The regulation was not based on scientific advice but sought to reconcile the actions taken unilaterally by certain member states — often for presentational as much as for scientific reasons.

Throughout 1986 and the early part of this year the European Commission came under increasing pressure to put forward a draft regulation on a more scientific basis that would automatically implement pre-agreed threshold levels for the radioactive contamination of food in the event of a future nuclear accident, whenever that may take place. By this means it was hoped to avoid a repeat of the confusion and indecision at Community level that arose immediately after Chernobyl. Consequently, after first seeking advice from a group of experts set up under article 31 of the Euratom treaty — commonly known as the article 31 group, or the group of experts — and convening an international scientific seminar at Luxembourg in April 1987, the Commission submitted a proposal for a Council regulation on 16 June 1987. That proposal has led to this debate.

As I said earlier, the proposed regulation lays down maximum permitted radioactivity levels in foodstuffs. If agreed, these levels would, in the event of a future nuclear emergency, be automatically applied right across the Community. Unlike the post-Chernobyl controls on third-country imports, they would apply to all foodstuffs marketed within the Community, whatever their origin, and would mean that any foodstuffs above the level set could not be marketed. In many cases such foodstuffs would have to be destroyed.

It is therefore important that the levels applied should be the right ones, and based on the best scientific advice available to the Community. We welcome the proposal to establish Community-wide criteria to be applied to foodstuffs in the event of another major nuclear emergency. However, we have been deeply disappointed to find that, in drawing up its proposals, the Commission has arbitrarily lowered—in fact divided by four—the two figures recommended by the article 31 group—its own group of experts—for caesium 134 and caesium 137. Its reasons for doing so are unclear.

As some hon. Members will be aware, the nuclides were the main source of contamination following Chernobyl. However, it does not automatically follow that they will be our main worry following any future accident. The result of the Commission's actions means that the regulations as drafted propose maximum permitted levels of caesium 134 and 137 that are entirely different from those proposed for the isotope strontium 90.

Inevitably perhaps there are a number of more detailed points that are currently under discussion in Brussels. However, the main focus of our concern has been, and remains, the level that will be applied under the proposed regulations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does the Minister agree that the basic reason why the May 1986 proposals were so ineffective was that there was a specific decision to exclude East Germany, although parts of it fell within 1,000 kilometres of Chernobyl? As the new regulation deals with imports from third countries, can the Minister tell us whether, once again, it has been decided to treat East Germany as part of the European Community? Does he agree that if the Community does so, it makes the regulation nonsense, because food will simply pour in from other parts of east Europe through East Germany?

Mr. Thompson: I shall deal with the first part of my hon. Friend's question. There was a great deal of confusion after the Chernobyl accident and therefore some countries made unilateral decisions. For that reason, we had to have a Community-wide agreement, and that is why we are discussing that agreement tonight.

On the detailed point about East Germany, I do not think that such specific questions have yet been resolved in the Community and the Council. There are many detailed points currently under discussion in Brussels. The main focus of our concern remains the levels that will be applied under the proposed new regulations. We attach importance to the adoption of the article 31 group's figures in their entirety.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister agree that if East Germany were to be excluded, that would be in breach of the inner German trade agreement, which has the same status as the Treaty of Rome? Will the Minister endeavour to find out the answer before the end of the debate? It would be nonsense for us to vote for or against a principle of a regulation unless we knew whether the inner German trade agreement was discussed.

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend is always helpful with his detailed and important questions—*[Interruption.]* I am trying to help my hon. Friend. I am sure that his question has been heard and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office, will, if possible, give him an answer at the end of the debate.

The Commission's modified figure currently proposed are higher than the post-Chernobyl levels for caesium 134 and 137 applied in the United Kingdom and higher than those applied to third-country imports under the current EC regulation. Because the interim figure of 1,000 bq/kg recommended immediately after the Chernobyl accident was set up very strictly at that time, it was not certain whether other radionuclides might have contaminated produce. A very wide margin was therefore adopted on the understanding that the article 31 group would look at the overall picture and make appropriate adjustments. That it has now done, and it has set out a table covering all radionuclides, and not just iodine and caesium, which were the two that most affected the United Kingdom in the aftermath of Chernobyl.

As the House knows, we adopted an equally cautious approach when we set our national controls on sheep from the heavily affected areas in the United Kingdom following Chernobyl. However, the proposed new regulations for use in any future emergency lay down specific figures for the whole range of radionuclides and benefits from the results of detailed scientific work.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I come from a nuclear constituency where, over decades, we have noted that scientist after scientist has come forward demanding that the levels be reduced. Indeed, the International Commission for Radiological Control has itself reduced levels. Is it not possible that those eminent scientists might make a mistake? Perhaps in 20 or 30 years, decisions taken now to release all the lamb that currently cannot go on to the market may turn out to be wrong. Does not the Minister understand that millions of people in this country actually believe that that may happen because they have witnessed scientists changing their position? Could that not happen again?

Mr. Thompson: The debate tonight deals with a future accident, not the lamb that may be released now. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has read the European document and noted that from page 31 onwards the group of scientists has given detailed explanations of how it proceeded and why it reached its conclusions. It may be that the hon. Gentleman simply does not trust scientists——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister quotes the scientists, but that is exactly what happened in the late 1950s and the 1960s when Ministers came to the Dispatch Box and justified the work of scientists which, today, is regarded as useless. It is no longer relevant. The discharges from British Nuclear Fuels plc into the Irish sea were for years regarded as acceptable. It was from further work by scientists that we recognised that mistakes had been made. That is why BNFL is now spending £400 million on reducing discharges into the sea. Does the Minister now endorse the possibility that another error may well be made because scientists have, for whatever reason, decided that they can set new levels?

Mr. Thompson: I am not saying that another error cannot be made. We can all list scientific errors that have had tragic consequences. However, those errors have eventually been put right—not by politicians, but by scientists who stand on the shoulders of their former colleagues. The scientists will be the first to spot those errors, not the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Bearing in mind, word for word, exactly what the Minister has graciously said, will he explain why there is so much haste when he must know that the International Commission for Radiological Protection is, right now, reviewing the whole basis on which international recommended standards were first set? As a result of the work of Professor Ted Radford, it is generally thought that the Commission is likely to review those standards to make them at least two, possibly five times and, some claim, even 15 times safer. Therefore, how on earth can we think of relaxing standards now?

Mr. Thompson: There is haste because of the growing pressure to sort out this business in the Community. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has not missed the provision in the document for exactly the contingencies that he mentioned. The article 31 group of experts is committed to reviewing its advice as new advice comes forward. To do otherwise would be to ossify and make nonsense of all the regulations. They must be reviewed.

We are not, of course, saying——

Mr. Cook: Answer the question.

Mr. Thompson: I am coming to it now.

We are not, of course, saying that the latest article 31 figures are the last word on the subject. The proposed new regulation itself makes it clear that the levels to be applied immediately following an accident would subsequently be reviewed in the light of the particular circumstances surrounding the accident and new knowledge available. It also provides for the levels in the parent regulation to be reviewed in the light of latest scientific data. However, the article 31 group recommendations represent the best scientific advice currently available and should therefore form the basis of the proposed Council regulation.

To sum up, we support the principle behind the EC proposal to establish maximum permitted radioactivity levels for foodstuffs that would automatically be applied on a Community-wide basis in the event of a future nuclear emergency.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Are the proposed EC levels stricter or more liberal than what has applied

[Mr. Churchill]

hitherto in the United Kingdom, and stricter or more liberal than what the United Kingdom Government proposed to the European Commission?

Mr. Thompson: The present proposed regulations are more liberal than those that we have applied, and the concluding regulations have not yet been agreed. However, we believe that such levels must stem from a sound and consistent scientific base.

10.47 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I hate to take issue with the Minister right from the start, but he was slightly disingenuous in trying to confine the debate to the narrow principle of how the levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs in the Community should be reached. As I understand it, we are taking note of the European Community document No. 7183/87, which is wide and far-reaching.

I disagree with the Minister when he says that we are talking only about future accidents. In a sense, we are not. If agreed, the regulation will come into force from next Monday. It means that sheep and other foodstuffs caught up in the Chernobyl accident will be covered by the document. Indeed, at a stroke the Minister will get out of his difficulty, because all the sheep currently covered by the present restrictions will be set free.

In essence, this important debate is about raising the safety levels of the radioactivity permitted in foodstuffs in Britain from 1,000 bq/kg to 5,000 bq/kg.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): In view of the cautious levels adopted by the Government after the Chernobyl accident, which was not their fault or responsibility, is the hon. Gentleman now trying to say that somehow we want to ignore all that and literally open up the markets? If he is, it is obvious that that is exactly what we have not done since the Chernobyl accident.

Dr. Clark: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the document that we are debating. I am arguing exactly the contrary. It is his Government who intend to open up the market. We are arguing that the present level and the present restrictions should be maintained. If the regulation is approved, the becquerel readings will be increased to 5,000 kg. Therefore, sheep in Cumbria, north Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland will be deristricted.

We know that the matter was discussed at the European Foreign Ministers' meeting on 19 and 20 October and that they found it impossible to reach a decision. We know that Britain, with France and Spain, went for a higher level than the Commission was recommending, and that the Germans and the Danes disagreed. We hope that there will be an emergency meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Community tomorrow night and that the views of the House will be reflected at that meeting.

As the Minister explained, the kernel of the Government's case is that the new limit is safe because, so the Minister argued, it is recommended by scientists. That this Government of all Governments should call scientists in their aid is somewhat ironic, because this Government are the most anti-science of any Government that we have had since the war. We have already seen the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food decimate the Soil Survey and create hundreds of redundancies in the Natural Environment Research Council and the Freshwater Biological Association. Only last week they were reported as contemplating slashing the Ministry of Agriculture research and development budget from £112 million to £52 million, throwing 3,000 scientists out of work. My hon. Friends and I could therefore be excused for being a bit sceptical about the Government praying in aid scientists. We would treat that with the same suspicion as one would treat a vegetarian who recommended lamb cutlets.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Should the hon. Gentleman ever be in the position of my hon. Friend the Minister, in such a situation whose advice would he take, his own or that of the expert scientists?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman has posed a serious question and I assure him that I shall answer it, because it would be irresponsible of me not to do so.

To understand the significance of the proposals before us this evening we must examine the position in which the Government find themselves. The situation is not as the Minister explained. If the regulation comes into force it will affect all foodstuffs in the Community. We have seen the post-Chernobyl situation. I accept that that was not in any way the responsibility of this Government or of any other Government in the Western world. However, the Government were caught flat-footed and they dillied and dallied. Indeed, although the Minister said that it was not true, it was six weeks from the first monitoring and the first telexes arriving on the Minister's desk before any action was taken.

Mr. Donald Thompson *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Clark: The Minister shakes his head. It is recorded that the monitoring began to take place on 4 and 5 May 1986, but it was 20 June 1986 before any restrictions were announced by our Government. The Government were right to take that action, but they should have taken it earlier. They put restrictions on the movement of sheep in Cumbria, north Wales and Scotland. They chose the critical level of radioactivity for caesium 137 of 1,000 bq/kg. That was a higher level than that set by most other European countries. The Swedes took a level of 300 and the Germans 600. Therefore, ours was not a restricted level in any way. However, I shall not disagree too much with that.

We believe that when introducing those measures the Government considered that they would last for only a short time. Indeed, Ministers led everyone to believe that. However, 18 months later, we have restrictions not only in the original areas, but 39 farms in Scotland are now included, and 100 farms in Northern Ireland are covered for the first time.

The truth is that the problem has not gone away, and will not go away, because the half life of caesium 137 is 30 years. I understand that the biological half life is less than that, but this problem will lead to restrictions in many areas for several years to come unless the Government manage to raise the level for restrictions.

The Minister may say that the Government will not count the present restricted sheep within the catchment area. How, then, will they explain to their farming friends in Cumbria, north Wales and Scotland that the safe level for future accidents is 5,000 but for past accidents it was 1,000? There is no logic in that. It means that the sacrifice, anxiety and hard work of the farmers in upland hill areas has been in vain. We need an answer to that.

The Minister made great play of the fact that the limit of 5,000 bq/kg was recommended by the article 31 group of scientists, but he did not tell us that a larger meeting of scientists held under the auspices of the European Commission in April 1987 could not agree on the new recommended level. The Minister assures us that the levels are safe, but any radiation dose to man causes some increase in the risk of long-term consequences. The consumption of food contaminated at any level implies some risk. As the House knows, the only absolutely safe level is zero.

The level of safety is a subjective judgment. Obviously, the higher the level, the greater the risk. The decision

> "must be based on a balance between the magnitude of these risks and the costs in money resources and social disruption of any protective action."

Those are not my words, but the words of the article 31 group, and that is the key issue.

When we deal with these issues, Ministers frequently remind us that there is natural radiation and, of course, they are correct. Surely, then, we should compare natural radiation with radiation in an emergency. Might it not be wise, for example, to examine the natural level of radiation in sheep? Perhaps we could take a pre-Chernobyl example of the radiation of sheep in an area near Sellafield, close to the area which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) represents. It is not usually accepted as exactly nuclear free.

In a letter of 24 October 1986, British Nuclear Fuels plc confirmed that research on sheep grazing on salt marsh pasture in the Ravenglass area, which is close to Sellafield, had shown those animals to have less than 100 bq/kg before Chernobyl. While acknowledging that little attention was paid to sampling meat from fell sheep, BNFL undertook some analysis pre-Chernobyl from sheep in Eskdale and found a level of only about 4 bq/kg of caesium 137. Therefore, those levels of 100 bq/kg and 4 bq/kg might be a starting point for a measure of natural radiation, although they were in the immediate vicinity of a nuclear establishment. I remind the House that the Government are advocating a level of safety no less than 1,250 times that found in the Eskdale sheep.

Scientists are deeply divided on the matter, and in this sphere of knowledge there is a rapidly changing situation. Everyone acknowleges that. The recent studies from Nagasaki and Hiroshima suggest that for the past 40 years we have been underestimating the danger levels, and scientists throughout the world are now recommending a complete rethink.

Current risk estimates used by the EEC are those produced by the International Commission for Radiological Protection. That same body now admits that new data from Japan support a twofold increase in the safety limits. Other scientists, such as Professor Edward Radford, the former chairman of the United States BEIR III, argue for an eight to tenfold increase. Of course, the higher the safety limits, the higher the bq/kg readings.

It comes down to a matter of judgment. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington has already described how, in the past, politicians of all parties have accepted advice given by scientists with the best will in the world, but, in a matter such as this, one must always err on the side of safety—and ten times on the side of safety. Ultimately, the key issues are public health and the retention of public confidence. By lowering safety standards, as the Government are suggesting, they are risking losing public confidence.

I said that I did not disagree with the Government's decision to lay down a level of 1,000 bq/kg. That level has retained the confidence of the general public, as is exemplified by their continuing to buy lamb. If the levels of permitted radioactivity are raised, as the Government wish, there will be a public reaction that might mean that lamb will be boycotted and sheep farmers badly hurt.

We maintain that the Government made a complete hash of the handling of the Chernobyl disaster and that is why they fear a public inquiry into the matter. The Government have compounded their incompetence by secrecy and cover-up. The public are beginning to realise that, and the Government see the lowering of safety levels as their only way out of the problem with farmers. The Government are wrong to lower the safety standards. Public health and safety are of paramount concern. That is the issue that we shall be trying to impress on the Government in the course of the debate.

11.3 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I want to ask the Minister a few questions, to which I hope he will be able to respond. I hope that he will agree that it is unusual and unsatisfactory to ask the House to approve a procedure for imposing levels of radioactivity when there has been no agreement—it seems unlikely that there will be one for some time to come—on what the levels are.

Knowing that my hon. Friend has an open and flexible mind, I ask him how he would have felt if, as a Back Bencher, he had heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer say that he wanted the final, formal approval of the House for his Budget, even though it would be some time before he decided what rates of tax were to be fixed. That is the position in which we find ourselves tonight. The Minister is asking for our approval for an arrangement, the basis for which we do not yet know.

The Minister should also bear in mind the feeling of an injustice having been committed that there will be among those who have been complaining about what they regard as the unduly strict levels after Chernobyl if a higher level is now fixed. The basic question is that of what the status of the EEC is to be in the regulations. The Minister will recall that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs came to the House on 8 May 1986 and said that he was going to announce a package of proposals to deal with the emergency. He said that all foodstuffs would be restricted from coming into the EEC if they came from within a radius of 1,000 km of Chernobyl.

However, on reading the details, we found that this was not the case. Large parts of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which were more than 1,000 km away, were included in the ban, but the whole of East Germany was excluded. The Minister must know that that drove a coach and horses through the restrictions. It is well known that vast quantities of materials poured into the EEC through West Germany straight from East Germany, and the only people who control what comes from East Germany are the East German authorities. That is one of the reasons why we have such difficulties trading with Germany. The inner German trade agreement provides a vehicle whereby virtually all the products of the Eastern bloc come into East Germany and straight into the EEC. That is not a

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

silly little arrangement that we can change by regulations here. The inner German trade agreement has the same status as the treaty of Rome. That is why, when they imposed the Chernobyl restrictions, the Government said that it had been done by excluding East Germany.

The Minister has a great knowledge of agriculture. Could he tell me how it is possible to isolate and identify a Polish pig from a Czechoslovak pig or an East German pig? How is it possible to tell whether skimmed milk comes from East Germany, Czechoslovakia or Rumania? It cannot be done, and we rely entirely on the West German authorities to impose these restrictions. The Department of Trade and Industry is well aware from the multitude of evidence that has been sent to it that there is not the slightest indication that the West German Government try to ensure that goods coming in are only from East Germany and that those going out have the necessary provisions put on them.

On 8 May 1986 the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said: that the West German authorities

> "are well aware of that alleged loophole, and I am sure that they will take the necessary precautions."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1986; Vol. 97, *c. 256*.]

What is proposed here is rather different. A permanent arrangement is proposed whereby labels will be fixed on goods that are placed on the market. First, can the Minister tell us precisely what is meant by "placed on the market"? Does that mean simply offered for sale, does it mean traded across Community frontiers or does it mean traded generally? It is very important that we should know straight away whether with these new regulations the same absurd loophole will exist as existed in the original regulations of 8 May 1986. If it does, we are wasting our time.

The second question that we are entitled to ask the Minister is why this is being done as an EEC arrangement. Would it not be infinitely better to pursue this through the international authorities and the World Health Organisation—if there is a real need?

The third question is the one that worries me most. Can the Minister tell us precisely how he intends to protect the Third world against the export of these radioactive materials, bearing in mind the evidence that the European Community's alleged humanitarian food aid programme has been used as vehicle for the export of radioactive materials?

The Minister may say, "Where is the evidence?" I draw his attention to the formal complaint made the other day to the EEC by the Government of Ghana in which they complain bitterly that radioactive skimmed milk powder had been sent to Ghana by the EEC and, according to their estimates, it was highly radioactive. This, of course, was taken up by the Commission, which said that according to the information from the German Government it was not quite as radioactive as the Ghanaian authorities said.

The point I want to make is that there were two sources of skimmed milk powder—one consignment of which went from the Federal Republic of Germany. We understand that this came from eastern Europe. The second source was Czechoslovakia. Under the existing regulations, both should have been stopped, unless in the case of the Czechoslovak milk powder some way was found of getting it to Ghana without crossing the frontiers of the EEC. Can the Minister say exactly how it was possible under the existing regulations for this radioactive skimmed milk powder supplied under the so-called food aid programme to go to Ghana?

I think that the Minister is well aware from the recent report of the Court of Auditors that the food aid programme has many shameful aspects. Materials in a totally inedible state are supplied to starving countries. A great deal of money is involved and when we have this specific case of the formal complaint from the Government of Ghana, we need to interpret it.

Fourthly and finally, if we bring in these regulations and if bringing to market simply means selling goods within EEC countries, how is it possible, or would it be possible to stop the export of radioactive materials from eastern Europe through East Germany to West Germany under the inner German trade agreement—bearing in mind that the country of export would not be West Germany but that West Germany was simply providing a vehicle? The Minister may think that this is nit picking but it is not nit picking when we have one specific formal complaint from the Government of Ghana and a number of other alleged instances of radioactive foodstuffs which apparently could not be sold in western Europe but which were being put through the food aid programme of the EC.

If these new regulations existed and if the levels were agreed, would the Minister regard the export of food from eastern Europe through West Germany as an export of West Germany or of eastern Europe? They are serious matters and we are entitled to some answers. If the Minister has any doubts, I ask him to look at the report into food aid to the Third world. I believe that all hon. Members should read that report because I believe that they would agree that it is shameful that public money is being wasted, not to provide relief to those Third world countries, but to dump substantial substandard goods, in this case alleged radioactive goods, or goods that do not even arrive. It is a shameful business and I suggest to the Government that, instead of bringing forward a resolution tonight that does not consider the question of radioactive levels, they should hold talks in Brussels to try to get some answers so that they can put a real proposition before the House and not an instrument that does not even contain proper figures.

11.10 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The subject that we are debating tonight—the maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in food and water—has a certain amount of urgency as a result of Chernobyl. There is too much haste when certain decisions are being taken at a European level and when it would be wiser to look more acutely at what is going on. The haste is a reaction to the amount of radioactivity that came from Chernobyl, the effects of which have been different in different countries.

If one looks at the ways that the fallout affected countries such as Germany, Spain—hardly at all—and Wales, one sees that there is a great variation. It is quite noticeable that Germany, being one of the worst affected countries, had one of the best safety levels. That is quite significant. The biggest criticism of the proposals is that they are a compromise and that there is no scientific basis for them. A worrying feature is that, in respect of caesium

134 and 137 levels in milk products and other farming products, there is no logical basis for the Commission's conclusions.

We must surely be concerned that there will be a relaxation from 600 bq/kg to 5,000 bq/kg for other major foodstuffs at a European level. This reinforces the evidence that it was a wise decision in the United Kingdom to impose a level of 1,000 bq/kg. Many hon. Members attacked the Government at that time for introducing a limit of 1,000 bq/kg because in Holland and Germany, in particular, the levels set were much lower. There seem to be good reasons for that. The effect of this level has been that farmers in North Wales, Cumbria and south-west Scotland have had to struggle very hard throughout the last 18 months on a 1,000 bq/kg limit for lamb. This has resulted in real hardship. Are farmers now going to give up that struggle for a massive relaxation of those restrictions because, as we have heard, they are still under restriction. It will be an unsatisfactory state of affairs if those proposals are relaxed. Compensation has been paid out to those farmers in the order of £4·5 million. There are still about 50 cases under review in north Wales. I thank the Secretary of State for Wales for taking those cases under review. However, there are other farmers in north Wales still in need of further compensation. There must be a wide-ranging review of the current situation. Indeed, one must ask why it is that in Trawsfynydd a farmer and his wife were examined in hospital and registered levels of contamination of 4,500 bq/kg. That is a serious matter that must be considered, bearing in mind that the general imposition was a limit of 1,000 bq/kg.

The efforts of our hill farmers must not appear to be in vain. The current limit errs on the side of safety and I ask the Minister to ensure that all farmers are properly compensated for the contamination that is still present in the hills, especially as there is no guarantee that next year there will not be similar levels of contamination. I hope that that will not be the position, but if it is I ask for an assurance that there will be further compensation. The proposals before us suggest that the Government will cop out of their responsibilities.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Gentleman is drawing attention to the way in which the regulations bear on the farming community of certain areas. Will he confirm that no representations have been made by the farming unions of Scotland, England or Wales that the limits should be increased in the way suggested? Instead, they are calling for adequate compensation. Our proceedings this evening must raise speculation whether the alterations are proposed for the purpose of saving money.

Mr. Livsey: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Farmers have borne the imposition of realistic standards with fortitude and have won the admiration of most of the population in accepting levels that have been regarded as reasonable. In so doing, they have given the population the confidence to buy lamb.

We should not play with human health. The current limit of 1,000 bq/kg is one that can lead to a low level of human cancer, and we must not ignore the fact that there will be a few such cases in certain areas. According to risk estimates of the International Commission on Radiological Protection, a level of 5,000 bq/kg could result in anything up to 29,000 cases of cancer throughout the European Community. That is a factor of which we should take note.

Why are these proposals before us when current United Kingdom standards are at an adequate level? Why is there to be a relaxation? Following the Chernobyl incident, there were high dosages of radioactivity in Germany. Secondly, France is dependent upon nuclear power for its energy. Thirdly, the British Government are placing more dependence on nuclear power in the form of pressurised water reactors. This means that there is a greater likelihood in future of nuclear accidents somewhere in Europe. There is a large stake in nuclear power and the EEC, in relaxing standards, is responding to that. My colleagues and I believe that it should not tamper with standards. The levels set by the British Government are adequate and the public have confidence in them.

Common sense should prevail this evening. The Liberal party frequently supports European legislation, but it seems that we are being asked this evening to put human health on the line and to place people's livelihoods at risk. For these reasons we do not believe that these proposals should be supported.

11.19 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am disappointed that we are debating these issues tonight in the knowledge that we shall be negotiating next week in Europe. Surely it would be more sensible to wait until we have completed the negotiations to our satisfaction before reporting to the House. Instead, we are being asked to debate the issues and reveal our position this evening.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Surely that would negate the whole process of scrutiny in this House whereby an EEC instrument is debated thoroughly to guide and help the Government to reach a decision whenever a Select Committee makes that recommendation.

Mr. Thurnham: We still do not know what we are scrutinising. Therefore, I believe that it would be better to go to next week's negotiations before we debate the matter here.

Although I was very pleased to hear the robust attitude taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), I was very disappointed by the Opposition's attitude. There has been some scaremongering, and questionable figures have been put forward. The limits produced by the Euratom experts are safe. The Opposition's figures assume that people will eat nothing but contaminated food. I was very sorry to hear the figure of 29,000 deaths referred to by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). That figure will cause great alarm if people believe that so many deaths might occur. That figure assumes that people would continually eat nothing but highly contaminated food. However, we know that fortunately only a small amount of food has been contaminated.

I live in Cumbria, and to a small extent I am engaged in rearing sheep. Fortunately, I was not affected, but I know that great concern was expressed by people living nearby when they realised just how much some farmers were being affected.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, did not

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

answer the question that I put to him about whose advice he would take? Perhaps the Opposition spokesman will bear in mind the old legal adage that a lawyer who advises himself has a fool for a client. Does my hon. Friend agree that the people to take advice from are the experts, that they have made very clear what is happening and that the Government have taken their advice? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the sensible course of action?

Mr. Thurnham: Indeed. I was concerned that we did not receive an answer from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman to that very good question. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) could not answer it. He made out that the Conservative party was not a scientific party. What qualifications does the hon. Member for South Shields think that his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has in this matter? I do not think that the right hon. Member has any qualifications in science, whereas the Conservative party has chosen a leader who has an honours degree in a science subject. How can the hon. Member for South Shields possibly accuse the Conservative party of not being scientific when the Leader of the Opposition has no qualifications in science? If the hon. Member for South Shields were responsible, whose advice would he take?

A balance must be struck in this subject. We must consider the right level. If the experts advise a level of 5,000bq/kg, it is arrogant of Opposition Members, and especially of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), to be disparaging about the way in which the figures are decided. We must consider how the scientists have arrived at the figures and decide whether they have taken sufficient account of the available evidence. If they have taken sufficient account of that evidence, we should accept their findings and not double guess them and claim that we are cleverer than the people who have examined all the evidence.

I was very disappointed at the attitude expressed by Opposition Members that we should not accept the evidence of the experts who have been asked to report on this matter. Scientists are the only people who can carry out measurements in this area and work out the results. It is therefore absurd that we should suddenly divide the experts' figures by four.

In the negotiations next week, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will continue to take the robust attitude that he has taken in other negotiations with our European friends. I do not accept that we should be railroaded into accepting a lower figure.

Does the variation from the experts' recommendation affect Britain more than any other EEC member? If so, should we not fight our corner and stick out for the level that we believe to be safe and which has been recommended by the experts, rather than give in to any scaremongering or machinations which have come up with a lower figure? Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will be robust and pay no attention to the points made by the Opposition.

11.25 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity this evening to speak for Northern Ireland. I say that in the confidence that my colleagues, of whatever party, would support my grave concern on this issue.

I am particularly concerned that the Minister did not seem to specifically declare his intentions about the negotiations that he proposes to carry on next week or the week after in Europe.

The kernel of the issue is whether the British people can have confidence in the safeguards initiated by the Government and legislated for.

I sincerely hope that the precedent set by BNFL in its famous principle "as low as reasonably achievable"— ALARA—given the economic and social factors, will not be applied in the post-Chernobyl era of nuclear pollution. Country by country, economics are dictating the level of radiation that is said to be acceptable to us.

Each country seems to be capable of producing a scientist to back up its argument. If the Government are to base their legislation on scientists, to what group of scientists shall we listen? Will it be to scientists on this side of the Atlantic ocean or to those of the United States, who, I am reliably informed, state categorically that the levels of safety in the United Kingdom and Europe are 10 to 20 times poorer than those in the United States? There we have at least two different comments on what is safe and what is not.

Surely, if scientists set a level, the public should demand a safety net below that and we should introduce regulations to provide that added safety margin. Therefore, it was with grave concern that I thought I heard the Minister say that he would try to negotiate a lower safety factor than that in the table in annex 1. I am not clear what the intentions of those negotiations are to be.

In the post-Chernobyl era it is significant that the report of the EEC's economic and social committee shows that the Government were one of the least concerned in Europe about the implementation of the various safeguards and restrictions. Of the five or six different activities carried on by many European Governments, the British Government only initiated a hotline. One wonders whether that was a radioactive hot line or simply a hot air hot line.

The confidence of the public in Britain and Northern Ireland has been eroded and undermined. It needs a reassurance that the legislation will protect them and their families in the future.

The farming community in Northern Ireland has only recently discovered that 100 farms have been affected, although we were told after Chernobyl that there was nothing to worry about. Yet a year later restrictions have been applied to 100 farms.

The Minister seems to find it difficult to understand why the proposal in annex 1 gives a fourfold increase in the safety factor.

It seems strange to me, although there may be reasons for it, that we insist and have always insisted that the way to handle land contamination is to keep the herds on contaminated land. Is it not more appropriate, subject to proper economic recompense for the farmer, to move the stock from the land on which they are continually ingesting radioactive material through the food chain, to clean areas, and thereby run the radioactive material out of the system? Surely that is a more scientific way of approaching the problem, although proper and adequate compensation must always be provided.

I am not enamoured of scientists. I come from South Down, which has suffered over the years from scientific platitudes about Sellafield and its discharge into the Irish sea. Year after year, the safety level has become lower and lower. The least that the Government can do is to ensure that the consensus under annex No. 1 of the report is a starting point. In no circumstances should they try to negotiate a less safe safety factor for the people of this country.

We appear to be talking only in the context of a Chernobyl-type disaster, but many disasters are happening every day. At Sellafield alone, we have a continuous 40-year leak into the Irish sea.

When the new levels are reached, who will monitor them? The Government's record on monitoring is very poor. Lancaster county council was able to assess the Chernobyl disaster some time before the Government. The lack of confidence in the Government's monitoring system is borne out by the plethora of local authorities now installing their own radionuclide detection systems. That lack of confidence is due to the duplicity of the Government, and the lack of concern and of proper statements coming from them.

It must always be remembered that we are talking about human life, into future generations. Such matters should not be measured solely by the economics of today.

11.32 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Tonight's debate is one of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, which was unprecedented and which gave rise to many lessons. At that time, I had the opportunity of serving as special adviser in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I shall not speak about that experience tonight, except to say that we and Europe had much to learn, and that we are still learning.

I felt that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) was less than generous in his comments about the Government's action following Chernobyl—not only the finding of the problem and the taking of action to control it, but the money that was spent. After all, £4·5 million is a substantial sum; it is also £4·5 million more than the originators of the accident produced.

I welcome the proposal for a common regulation, first, because it would impose a common regime of control throughout the member states of the European Community. It would also impose restrictions and controls equally on imports and on domestically produced food. I hope that that will answer the point put by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

I feel that it is important for us to maintain and sustain, and encourage the Government to sustain, the principle of being driven by the scientists. We have heard nothing from the Opposition to explain why their wisdom is greater than that of the experts.

There has been some recourse to the argument that some experts might think differently or that they are divided, but when calling on expert advice I have always followed the basic rule offered by the country, saying, "There is no point in hiring a dog and barking yourself." The move, for purely political reasons, from a purely scientific appraisal, is part and parcel of a rather disturbing tendency in Europe. We saw it in regard to Professor Lamming's expert group on beef hormones. It happened to suit a number of member states to fry their political fish and disregard the scientific evidence. If we continue to do that, there is little chance of our curtailing the damage.

I am extremely suspicious of the way in which Opposition Members have put their case. There has been some scientist shopping and much of what I call a safety arms race. Many figures have been given. We were given some terrifying figures by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), which assume, I think, constant consumption of all foodstuffs, regardless of origin, at a level of at least 5,000 bq/kg, which is not realistic. The hon. Member for South Shields spoke of sheep being found with 100 bq/kg before Chernobyl. When people suggest that zero bequerels is a desirable level, we must consider, as they have not, whether we can achieve it.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Government have alleged that we are scaremongering, not relying on scientific advice and not acting in the interests of public health. We believe that there is no level below which radiation is harmless. When talking about safety levels, we are talking about a level above which something represents an unacceptable risk to the public. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is now evidence from scientists who have had a chance to study reliable data on the effects of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which suggests that our present levels——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. An intervention has to be a direct question or very pertinent. Will the hon. Lady, who is making a speech rather than an intervention, bring her remarks to a close?

Ms. Walley: The point is that we believe that our data are valid and that there is new scientific evidence that suggests that the hon. Gentleman's data are not.

Mr. Boswell: I think that we are scientist shopping again. I believe that the European expert group are the right people to decide. The levels that we are discussing are not on the borderline. They already contain a built-in assurance of safety so that a commodity is as safe as can reasonably be expected.

We have difficulty with measuring miniscule levels and enforcing such safety levels in member states. We also have a problem associated with sheep that have been reared on mountain pastures where the rock is high in natural radioactivity. I do not believe that we get a level of zero there. There is a danger, a friction and a myth involved in demanding assurances of absolute safety. Such can never be possible with food safety.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is much more in the document than figures to be decided in the negotiations? The procedures and safety requirements are even more important, and it would be wrong for the House to bind the Government to a figure that would be misleading in the negotiations.

Mr. Boswell: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend.

If a choice has to be made between the fiction of an absolute assurance of absolute safety and proposals that are based on the work of an expert committee that has established a certain scientific basis for certain set levels, I know which of those seems to be most plausible to me and, I hope, to the rest of the House.

11.39 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make a contribution to this debate. I promise to be as brief as I possibly can.

We welcome the moves towards harmonisation of regulations that set out the levels of radiation in food and

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

water. In the aftermath of the Chernobyl incident, we in Wales saw the problems that were caused by the different levels that were adopted in the EEC states, particularly over the export of Welsh lamb to France. The French are prepared to use many tactics to prevent the import of Welsh lamb, and the lack of a cohesive Community approach was a gift to them.

We are surprised to find that we are debating this matter at a time when the Community has failed to adopt a common approach to the problem. Public confidence was maintained when the Government set the level at 1,000 becquerels. Therefore, many Opposition Members are asking the Government why they are attempting to shake public confidence by trying to raise that level to 5,000 becquerels.

I understand that the European Commission is suggesting a caesium limit of 1,250 bq kg, whereas the United Kingdom, France and Spain are pushing for a higher level—5,000 bq kg—at a time when agreement has not been reached in the Council of Ministers. Denmark, West Germany and the Netherlands, however, are asking for a considerably lower level.

The Government seem to be preparing the way to go it alone, if the EEC does not agree to a formula. That would be a grave mistake. By pushing for a higher level, the Government may make EEC agreement impossible. What is the scientific evidence — I stress scientific evidence as distinct from scientific judgment — upon which the Government are relying to support that higher level?

In putting forward its proposals, the European Commission says:

> "Scientific views on this subject are by no means unanimous and are still in a state of rapid development."

Conservative Members referred to scientific judgment. I remind them of the fact that scientists from both the National Radiological Protection Board and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said that the caesium contamination from Chernobyl would take about 60 days to clear. The fact is that 540 days have now gone by since the Chernobyl disaster, and no scientist can say when the problem in north Wales, Cumbria and Scotland will be cleared up.

I ask the Minister, when he replies to the debate, to deal with compensation for farmers in those parts of the United Kingdom that are still designated as restricted areas. My hon. Friends the Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) have sheep farmers in their constituencies. I ask the Minister to give a categorical assurance that if the Government intend to raise the level there will be no cuts in the compensation that is paid to farmers and to say that they are totally committed to paying compensation at the level that has already been agreed.

11.44 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): This has been an important and interesting debate. The attendance in the Chamber throughout the debate reflects the Opposition's concern and the concern and uncertainty that is felt on the Government Benches.

I should like to thank the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), both of whom have spoken in support of the case outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). I am tempted to say that their presence this evening has given something of a Celtic flavour to the debate. I hope that we can say that the same is true of Welsh lamb after the current round of negotiations. I fear that we shall lose that flavour if the Government have their way in the negotiations in Europe.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): No chance.

Mr. Davies: I appreciate that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy feels strongly about this matter.

The key issue that we are debating is the Government's contention that scientific opinion clearly states that the level of 5,000 bq is an acceptable level. The Government further state that that level should be accepted as the norm and that opinion is united in support of that. However, I believe that the Minister is aware that scientific opinion both here and in Europe is deeply divided about this matter.

The European Commission is recommending a 75 per cent. reduction in the level recommended by its scientific advisers, but political opinion is also deeply divided. Germany, Denmark and Italy have adopted a view that is different from the view advocated by Britain and France.

The hon. Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) queried the basis upon which the Opposition approached this debate. They asked whose scientific advice should be accepted. However, the issue that we are resolving this evening is not a scientific issue, but political. Governments are elected and, in a democracy, Governments are responsible for their actions. Those Governments must receive and consider scientific advice but, at the end of the day, the judgments are political. The issue is not whether we accept the view of scientist A or B, but the impact of the scientific recommendations on the health, welfare and economic well-being of our communities. That is the political judgment that must be made.

The article 31 group, which is at the heart of the debate, is clear about the role that it has been asked to perform. The scientists admit that they are laying down carefully considered guide levels for measurable radioactivity, but above those levels politicians must decide to take action based on the consultative and regulatory functions that are laid down in the draft legislation. In their report the scientists say that, in the final analysis, practical application of the advice they give will not be made solely on consideration of the risks to health. They appreciate that there are broader considerations.

However, the Minister made it clear that the Government are prepared to ignore the warnings and that they see no reason why the scientists' recommendations should not be implemented in their entirety. Even the Commission in the explanatory memorandum that is before us states:

> "scientific views on this subject are by no means unanimous".

If scientific opinion is not unanimous, whose opinion would the hon. Members for Bolton, North-East and for Daventry receive, given that they refuse to believe that the judgments are political? This is at the heart of the matter.

The Government are prepared slavishly to accept scientific evidence and opinion when there are good grounds for doubting the validity of that evidence. It is something of a novelty for this Government to accept scientific evidence as though it were cast in stone. They usually regard facts as, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, a hindrance to the pursuit of their policies.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Nonsense.

Mr. Davies: The Minister is a member of the Foreign Office team. The Foreign Secretary is probably the individual most suited to address his mind to the quality of mutton and dead sheep.

Let us consider the issue of nitrate pollution. In 1985, when addressing the quality of water supplies, the Government gave the assurance through their spokesman in another place that quality standards would not be set on the basis of existing levels, but must follow from a scientific determination of levels needed to protect the environment. The Government claimed that they would accept advice on the scientific levels and implement them. It would have cost them £200 million to accept that advice and, needless to say, they chose not to do so and are now being taken to court by the European Community. Therefore, it is difficult for us to accept that the Government slavishly follow scientific advice at all times.

The Government are refusing to see through research at Liverpool university, which is being funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on the effects of radiation and the consequences of Chernobyl. They will not wait for the results of that research. They have a record of accepting the shoddy way out. Whenever they have been called upon to make a judgment, whether on acid rain, environmental pollution, water quality, the quality of our bathing beaches or the quality of our air, they have taken the shoddy option. They are now showing, yet again, that to that litany they are prepared to add the pollution of our food supplies.

The Government are asking for the support of the House. I do not think that they have proved their case, and hope that hon. Members will vote against them.

11.52 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I have only a short time in which to answer the points that have been raised, which we certainly appreciate, on this important issue. The proposed levels are still being discussed by the Council of Ministers, and if agreement is not reached the Council still has the option to extend regulation 1707 for a stated period while it reaches agreement on arrangements for future emergencies.

I cannot overstress two points. First, we are discussing standards to be applied in an emergency, and they are not the same as routine, long-term standards. Secondly, it is important that a first response to an emergency should be sufficient, but not over-reactive, and therefore we wish to apply the best current scientific thinking to setting practical emergency standards.

There has been a curious attack — an anti-scientific mood — in some of the Opposition speeches, including that of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). I draw his attention to the words in the proposal:

> "The Commission is satisfied that as far as the principal object of this Regulation—the protection of public health—is concerned the scientific advice offered to it is probably the most thorough available anywhere in the world."

Of course, the point is accepted that scientific knowledge is still in a state of rapid development.

The scientific judgments are based on unanimous and consistent recommendations by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. The World Health Organisation is looking into the matter, as are the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations scientific committee on the effects of atomic radiation.

Several hon. Members have referred to the discrepancy between national standards established after Chernobyl and still in operation and the standards the Government are seeking to establish in the new regulation. That discrepancy arises only in relation to caesium isotopes. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said, the EC post-Chernobyl standards for caesium isotopes were set with deliberate caution because uncertainty about the presence of other, more dangerous, nuclides. Although the Community standards established at that point in EC regulation 1707/86 applied only to imports from outside the Community, many countries applied national standards based upon them because we had to protect not only our own consumers but our valuable export trade in lamb and sheepmeat. It was therefore necessary for United Kingdom standards to reflect the international position.

One tends to forget that about 22 per cent. of our lamb and sheepmeat goes into exports 21 per cent.of it to the EC. One hesitates to think what might have happened had we not taken the action that we did, which was announced by the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), on 20 June last year, when he referred specifically to the need for reference to international standards.

That very point underlines the importance of establishing sound scientifically justifiable standards in case of any future emergency. The standards for the caesium isotopes proposed by the Euratom article 31 group reflect the latest scientific opinion, informed by the experience gained after Chernobyl. Of course, they still have to be accepted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) raised several points. I shall try to answer one or two of them. The regulation will affect all trade in food marketed in the European Community. There are no exemptions for East Germany, the Eastern bloc or any other country, as my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) said.

The East Germans could not afford to trade in any meat or other foodstuffs that did not comply with agreed EC levels——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 187, Noes 127.

Division No. 37] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*

Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, James
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *[illegible]tretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7183/87 on maximum permitted radioactivity levels for foodstuffs, feedingstuffs and drinking water in the case of abnormal levels of radioactivity or of a nuclear

accident; and urges the European Community to assure a common standard of health protection by adopting a rational set of scientifically based Intervention Levels for foodstuffs.

Pontefract District Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.9 am

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful for this opportunity of presenting to the House the serious financial position of the Pontefract district health authority. I must inform the Minister and the House that my hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) associate themselves with my remarks, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield hopes to draw the House's attention to the problem in his area as soon as it is possible and convenient.

The serious financial constraints facing the Pontefract area health authority arise from a package of cuts totalling £1,652,000 that has already been required this year. Those cuts are likely to remain for the duration of the short-term programme. In addition, there is considerable doubt about the unit's ability to maintain this level of cuts next year.

Two near miracles were achieved in Pontefract in the early summer. On Monday 10 August the emergency and casualty department of Pontefract general infirmary was closed for 12 hours between 9 pm and 9 am each day. That serious decision was taken for a hospital whose catchment area includes major industries—mining and chemicals—and two major motorways. The surprise was that within two or three days the hospital was able to announce its reopening, because it had been able to find some doctors to staff the unit—doctors that it had been unable to find for months before.

The second miracle was the admission by the Minister that the Pontefract general infirmary was seriously underfunded and consequently run down. No one suggested that it was an inefficient hospital. No one could; there were figures to prove that it was efficient. In England, we now spend £724 per case, and in Yorkshire the figure is £662, but in Pontefract we spend only £580, which is well below the national average. We have not an inefficient authority but a seriously underfunded one.

Let us examine the figures. For 1987-88, £25,198,000 was the revenue allocated in the budget. That represented much less than the authority's projections. Its budget was for £26 million. So, from the first day of the financial year, there was a shortfall of £802,000. Recognising that it had a major problem, the health authority started closing wards, delaying appointments and generally cutting back on staff.

We are not discussing a hospital situated among leafy suburbs; it is in an area of high unemployment, where people suffer from chronic chest complaints and major industrial diseases, and where it is difficult to recruit young doctors. Unfortunately, the measures taken did not achieve the economies required to bridge the gap between the health authority's projections and the revenue offered. Yet the hospital was not inefficient, and it was spending a fifth less per case than the national average.

In case the Minister thinks that this is special party-political pleading, I shall make two points. My mailbag is crammed with letters not only from patients and their families complaining about hospital waiting lists, but from local industrialists. I have them here and they are available for perusal by any hon. Member, and certainly by the Minister. They all recognise that the cuts have gone too

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

far. I have letters that I hope to present to the Minister from 47 patients and members of staff of the Castleford and Normanton hospital. The operating theatre there is about to close. The local newspaper, the *Pontefract and Castleford Express* regularly highlights the problem in front-page headlines. In letters to the press, a local general practitioner asks if we are to expect improvements only after we have the poor sleeping on mattresses in corridors in the manner of Third-world countries.

I recently had a letter from a Methodist minister, and it is worthy of quotation. It is from the Rev. John B. McCarthy, the superintendent minister of the Castleford Methodist circuit. The letter says:

> "As Hospital Chaplain at the Castleford & Normanton Hospital in the Pontefract Health Authority I write to express my deepest concern at the proposals which will result in a grave deterioration in the health and welfare of the people in this area. I have ministered in Castleford, Pontefract and district for twenty four years, during which time I have visited the local hospitals regularly, and for the past two years have been a hospital chaplain. The standard of nursing in our hospitals is of the highest quality, and during the past two years in particular I have been deeply moved by the ready testimony of patients at Castleford to the excellent care and encouragement they have received from the hospital staff.
>
> I can only make a plea that such a high quality of nursing should be continued by maintaining the wards at the Castleford & Normanton hospital. In the present climate of fear and anxiety which affects everyone, but particularly the older members of the community, I believe it is essential that we should have confidence in our hospital service, and I plead with you to exercise your influence to build up this confidence.
>
> For the sake of those who need helping most please do all you can to encourage Her Majesty's Government to direct more money to support the Health Service in this community."

I have many such letters from people who are not at all involved in politics.

The matter does not end there. Last Thursday the doctors in the area took an unprecedented step. As far as I am aware, it was unprecedented, although such steps may have been taken elsewhere. They published in the local newspaper an article which has no political bias, but which expresses great concern. It says:

> "People of the five hospitals (Served by the Pontefract District Health Authority). Divisions of geriatrics. Are you aware of the proposed cuts planned for your hospital service? The Health Authority's . . . budget is overspent by £805,000 — but we are efficient. Pontefract spend: £580 per case; Yorkshire spend: £662 per case; England spend: £724 per case. No more money is available. Drastic cuts are inevitable. Emergencies will be treated but the waiting time for Routine General Surgery, Orthopaedics and Urology will escalate.
>
> Effects of cuts after 1 year:
>
> (1) General Surgical waiting lists will double to more than 2,000.
>
> (2) Orthopaedics—present waiting time 8 months—after cuts will rise to 22 months.
>
> The hospital service is at the mercy of the politicians."

The advertisement was referring not to me; it was referring to the Minister and the Government that she represents. The advertisement goes on to say:

> "Are you prepared to accept this inadequate service? We look to you the community to take action."

It says that people should tell their councillors and Members of Parliament, and concludes:

> "This advertisement has been inserted and paid for by the Consultants at Pontefract General Infirmary."

Those consultants are apolitical. Authorities and hospitals are inefficient, but the inefficiencies in Pontefract hospitals are the result of the sloppy, inefficient thinking of the Government and the greed of some of the consultants. The Government stand for free enterprise, and as part of that stance they encourage the opening of local private hospitals. A new hospital called Methley Park was opened on the edge of my constituency three years ago. The secretary of that hospital, Mr. J. Whitfield, was a Member of Parliament for Dewsbury. When the hospital was just an idea, doctors and consultants in the area were invited to become shareholders. Many did, and that compromised their integrity. Their desire for money compromised their medical ethics.

The directors' report of 31 December 1985 revealed that in the first two-year period the hospital lost £547,674. The chairman of the hospital suggested that all concerned should market it. They tried very hard and, as the Minister will be aware, before the last election the Government made money available to shorten hospital waiting lists. The Pontefract area received about £90,000 to £100,000. The health authority produced a plan whereby the Pontefract general infirmary would take 660 patients off the hospital waiting list. Unfortunately, that was not acceptable to the consultants. Therefore, the health authority produced another plan whereby the private hospital would perform only 302 operations for the same money. The consultants who refused to perform operations at Pontefract were the same consultants who performed those operations at the private hospital. That is a serious situation.

The health authority was put in the position of being blackmailed. It had no option but to agree. I hope that serious consideration of these matters will be brought to bear in future.

Services are beginning to crumble in Pontefract. The result of recent decisions is that the waiting list will increase by 1,300. In other words, it will nearly double. It must be remembered that earlier in the year 300 were taken off the list when 600 should have been removed from it. I shall attempt now to bring my remarks to a conclusion because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) would like to intervene in the debate for a few minutes.

We shall lose 64 beds at the Southmoor hospital. The geriatric unit at the Pontefract general infirmary is to close. I could continue on that theme, but instead I shall put some questions to the Minister. Does she stand by her statement in her letter of 26 August 1987 that the Pontefract area health authority is underfunded? Does she accept that health care in my constituency has reached a dangerous level? Does she accept that consultants should not be encouraged to become shareholders in hospitals near the catchment area of their prime employer, the National Health Service? Will she consider establishing a judicial inquiry into the procedures that were implemented at the meeting of the Pontefract district health authority on 12 October 1987? Great concern has been expressed in local circles about the validity of the vote.

I ask the Minister to investigate why the procedures of consultation with the community health council and other interested bodies, including local authorities, were not implemented before a decision was taken. Most importantly, will the Minister give serious consideration to provide extra funding to enable the authority to withdraw its decision to introduce savage cuts in patient care?

I should like to know whether Methley park hospital received any funding from the business expansion scheme.

Finally, will the Minister please consider my request to visit Pontefract and investigate the serious issues to which I have referred?

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose*——

12.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on winning the ballot and gaining the opportunity again to raise on the Adjournment the important matters that involve the Pontefract district health authority. I met the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) in Sheffield on 14 September to discuss Pontefract and Wakefield's respective financial positions. I know that Bryan Askew, the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority, has done likewise on several occasions, and most recently on 16 October 1987. With those meetings and this evening's debate, I hope that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford feels that he is being given every opportunity to represent his constituents, with whom I feel rather familiar.

Bryan Askew and I have said that a major cause of the tight financial position of some districts in Yorkshire and elsewhere has been their success in treating ever increasing numbers of patients. This increased productivity is excellent but local management has continually to balance it against the expected growth in income. Yorkshire districts on the whole are doing just that and are to be applauded for all their efforts in this direction. I wish particularly to put on record my admiration for the steady and sensible efforts of Roy Widdowson, the chairman of Pontefract, and George Barnes, the district general manager, who try to keep local Members well briefed.

It is the responsibility of all health authorities, as with other organisations, to work within their budgets. There was a statutory obligation not to overspend, and I accept that in Pontefract this may have required some difficult decisions to be taken and priorities to be reassessed, but to the authority's credit it has sought to do this in a sensible and rational way. I am advised that the measures taken for this year, 1987-88, should not significantly affect the volume of patient care. The proposals for 1988-89 will need to be worked out in detail and where appropriate they will be subject to consultation. I take note of the hon. Gentleman's questions and I look forward particularly to responding to his invitation to visit Pontefract. I have no doubt that I shall be treated with the greatest courtesy that is typical of Yorkshire people, especially if he promises to come with me on the day.

The track record of the Health Service is one of continuing success, and sadly that is all too often overlooked by the critics. Some 6·5 million in-patients and more than 37·5 million out-patients were treated in England last year and that is an all-time record. I am sure that we would all like to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of the doctors, nurses and the staff of the Health Service which those figures demonstrate.

We are now involved in the biggest hospital building programme ever seen in the Health Service, worth more than £3 billion. We are employing over 11,300 more doctors and dentists and more than 51,000 nurses and midwives than in 1979. We have new and better services, such as the computerised call and re-call schemes to ensure that women at risk will be screened for cervical and breast cancer, and we are the only country outside Scandinavia to make national progress in that way. Yorkshire's first breast cancer screening centre will be at Huddersfield, with several more centres opening to provide a countrywide service by 1990. We have been making the reduction of waiting times for hospital treatment a major priority. We are providing £50 million over two years, which should lead to an additional 100,000 people on the waiting lists being treated this year and a similar number next year.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): May I ask a question about funding?

Mrs. Currie: I may answer the hon. Gentleman's point in my next sentence.

Pontefract district health authority is receiving over £82,000 from the waiting list fund this year to carry out 725 extra operations on people on its waiting lists during 1987-88. The specialties involved are urology, gynaecology and orthopaedics. The waiting list in the Pontefract DHA fell by 350 cases in the six months to March 1987. The number of urgent cases waiting more than a month has also fallen quite dramatically. The number of non-urgent cases waiting more than a year rose by 70, but that represents a relatively small proportion of the total waiting list. The figures do not reflect the additional operations to be carried out with money from the waiting list fund. It is also worth putting on record the important fact that the Yorkshire regional health authority intends to carry out work on increasing health promotion. It hopes to increase its budget on that from under £300,000 to nearly £3 million over the 10-year planning period.

Mr. O'Brien: The procedure on closing hospitals means that there should be consultation with CHCs and other community interests. What procedures have been carried out in the case of the closure of the Wardle Aldam hospital in the Pontefract district area, where the decision was taken to close the hospital without consultation? Will the Minister ensure that DHSS guidelines are carried out in our area?

Mrs. Currie: I am satisfied that the guidelines have been followed. Any permanent change, if the CHC disapproves, must come to Ministers and go through the appropriate consultation procedures. However, temporary changes are entirely within the purview of the district health authority, and that is a matter of fact.

If we consider what has been happening in Yorkshire and Pontefract in a little more detail we find that the gross revenue spending for Yorkshire has risen from £313 million in 1978-79 to an initial revenue cash allocation this year of £786 million. We expect, therefore, that it will have an increase of some 27 per cent. in real terms over the earlier figure. That is quite dramatic. Capital spending in Yorkshire has also increased dramatically to more than £70 million. The total released by land sales is also commendable and the figure since 1978-79 is £8 million.

It is also worth putting the growth in Pontefract on record. I want to make comparisons with the year 1982, when the new district health authorities were formed. Last year Pontefract health authority treated 22,765 in-patient cases which is a 14 per cent. increase over the 1982 figure. It dealt with more than 117,000 out-patient attendances, a 13 per cent. increase over the 1982 figure and it dealt with over 20,000 day-patient attendances, a 78 per cent. increase over the 1982 figure. That is hardly a

[Mrs. Currie]

"grave deterioration in the health and welfare of Pontefract people."

as stated by the Methodist minister referred to by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford.

More staff are employed—especially more front-line staff—and there is more money. In 1982-83, the figure for Pontefract was just about £20 million. This year the initial cash allocation is £28·25 million and I am sure that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford will realise that that is a substantial increase.

Capital spending in Pontefract has also shown an improvement, and there are more improvements to come. Pontefract has already benefited from increased capital spending with the completion of the new geriatric and psychiatric unit at Pontefract general infirmary in 1981 which cost £2 million. A long list of projects that are under way or shortly to start also includes the day surgery unit of £1·7 million, which has already been started, the intensive treatment unit and coronary care unit costing £0·7 million, which will be started this financial year, new accident and emergency department and out-patient facilities, replacement wards for Pontefract general infirmary, which are to start shortly, and a long-stay unit for the mentally ill which is planned to start in 1990-91.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Lady will recollect that there was some difference between us about Sheffield's total allocation. The regional health authority confirms that the allocation was £25,188,000 for this financial year. Is the Minister saying that that is wrong and that it is £28 million? If that is the case, the local authority does not know about it.

Mrs. Currie: My advice is that the initial cash allocation for this year was £28 million, as I have just said. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that a health authority spends money from several different pockets, which may include proceeds from land sales or the special initiatives that I have mentioned. That is the figure that is being spent.

In all, some six major schemes costing over £9 million are due to start this year or next, with further development later. That is where the point about what might be meant by underspending arises.

The regional strategic plan provides for Pontefract to receive an extra £6·9 million of revenue after allowing for inflation by 1993-94 to enable the authority to develop its own services for its own people. The extra money therefore recognises that work currently undertaken in other districts on behalf of Pontefract will be taken over by Pontefract. That cannot be done overnight. It depends on how the new more efficient facilities are brought on stream and how they function and on the achievement of the region's target for cost-improvement programmes, which I know that the hon. Gentleman will actively support.

The Government and the regional health authority recognise that, in order to look after its own people locally, the health authority will require additional resources in future. It does not mean that people are being prevented from seeking treatment now, but it does mean that they are having to travel too far and are receiving that treatment in old facilities which require replacement. That might also explain the sharp difference in the cost per case. If the complicated cases cannot be dealt with in Pontefract, they must go somewhere else and that will affect the cost per case in Pontefract. The figures are not comparable.

However, I have looked again at the performance indicators that I showed the hon. Gentleman when I met him in Sheffield, and it is worth putting them on the record briefly. They are only a guide to areas that need to be investigated, but they at least demonstrate that there may be patterns of work that could be tackled.

The gap between patients in general medicine beds in Pontefract is 2·9 days which is among the worst turnover intervals in Britain. It means that beds may be lying idle for long intervals between cases. The annual number of patients per obstetric bed is among the lowest 10 per cent. in the country. That is not because of the length of stay is unduly long. Other explanations suggest themselves.

If we look at the occupancy of beds, we find that for nearly all the main specialties, with the exception of gynaecology, Pontefract is well below the England averages and sometimes very much below. In general medicine fewer than 70 per cent. of beds are occupied. That is less than it used to be. In general surgery only 66 per cent. of the beds are occupied and that is much the same as it has been for many years. In ear, nose and throat, only 39 per cent. of the beds allocated to that specialty are occupied and that is a drop on previous years. Those are the figures for 1986.

Those figures are not the whole truth. I am sure that local investigation is required to discover the underlying reasons, but there is clearly scope for tackling the questions. Nor is it a matter of doing loads of day cases instead at the moment because most specialties do not do very many, while the larger numbers in general medicine and general surgery have not changed much in recent years. We expect that that will improve as the new day surgery facility comes on stream.

I hope that I have managed to convince the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends that Pontefract is benefiting considerably from national initiatives and local efforts. It is to be congratulated on its progress and——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-one minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 29 October 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 5 November.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate [23 July.]
Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 5 November.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL
(By Order)

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 November.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 November.

ABERDEEN HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

1. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the likely proceeds to the Exchequer of the privatisation of water authorities in England and Wales.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): While the Government regularly publish plans for total privatisation proceeds over the next three years, they never reveal estimates for individual privatisations.

Mr. Nellist: Given the inevitable collapse of share prices, thus prefacing the third world economic recession, what guarantees can the Minister give that the water industry will not go the same way as British Petroleum —undervalued and underpriced—and lead to a second massive flop in the Government's attempt at electoral bribery?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor recently described an Opposition Member as "the surviving dinosaur". I can see that that hon. Gentleman was not alone.

Mr. Nellist: Just answer the question.

Mr. Lamont: I will answer the question. Water is not due to be privatised for several years. I am confident that when that moment arrives we will obtain good value for the taxpayer. We intend to press ahead with our privatisation programme, especially with regard to the water industry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have some very important questions on the Order Paper. We are not helped by interruptions from sedentary positions.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Severn-Trent water authority, which includes Coventry, is one of the authorities most excitedly in favour of privatisation?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is quite right. It has been made clear that the management of the water authorities strongly support the Government's plans.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister have a reserve price valuation for the water industry? Does he agree that if in his estimation that price is not reached it would be in the best interests of the nation to withdraw from the sale of water?

Mr. Lamont: As yet, the main legislation with regard to the water industry has not gone through the House. It is due in the 1988-89 Session. In asking questions about the precise price of the flotation of the water industry the hon. Gentleman is, perhaps for the first time, being a little quick.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does not the prospect of water privatisation offer the chance to millions of investors of share ownership which market uncertainty may have denied them in British Petroleum? Is this not an excellent prospect for the British people?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is quite right. There are good industrial arguments for its privatisation. It is abundantly clear that there is ample room for improvements in efficiency in the water industry.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Minister exempt Wales? The measure has no friends in Wales. It will be unpopular and it will not work. Will he understand that we need Wales to be exempted and that we need major investment for the creation of manufacturing jobs, not this charter for speculation?

Mr. Lamont: The answer is no. There has been a substantial increase in investment in the water industry. Under this Government it has gone up by over 30 per cent., whereas under the Labour Government it fell by 35 per cent.

Disposable Incomes

2. **Mr. Forth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in real personal disposable incomes over the past year.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): In the year to the second quarter of 1987, real personal disposable incomes rose by 3½ per cent.

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging answer. Will he compare the recent growth in disposable incomes with that under the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point. The real take-home pay of a man on average earnings with a family of two children has risen by 22 per cent. under this Government. Under the previous Labour Government it rose by just ½ per cent.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that in 1979 an average of 45 per cent. of real disposable income was payable in debt? By 1986 that had risen to 73 per cent. and this year is hitting 80 per cent.? Is that not one of the main contributory factors to the crash on Wall street, the stock exchange and everywhere else?

Mr. Lilley: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read *Tribune* more closely and he will see that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said:

> "There is a lot of evidence to show that most of the borrowing is being done not by individuals but by companies."

Private Shareholding

3. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures on the extent of private shareholding in the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): At the beginning of this year the number of shareholders in the United Kingdom stood at 8½ million, almost three times the 1979 figure.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend in a position to announce whether the sale of BP will proceed?

Mr. Lawson: No, Sir. Most of the procedures that I described to the House on Tuesday have now been completed, but I have yet to receive the Bank of England's assessment in response to the joint approach to the Bank this morning by the Treasury and Rothschild on behalf of the underwriters. I hope to make my decision later today and I will, of course, be glad to inform the House of that decision in whatever way is convenient.

Mr. Sedgemore: Will the Chancellor give the House details of the blazing row which took place yesterday between the Treasury and the Americans over the BP flotation? Will he say whether he expects repercussions on Wall street? If the flotation is not 100 per cent. successful, who will be to blame?

Mr. Lawson: There was no blazing row. The causation flows in the opposite direction to that indicated by the hon. Gentleman. It was not the BP flotation that caused the crash of Wall street; it was the slide on Wall street that led to the gross under-subscription of the BP flotation.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that instead of opposing wider share ownership, we should set about —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not read.

Mr. Hind: Will my right hon. Friend note the wise words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), one of the Opposition spokesmen on the subject——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Do not quote either, please. The hon. Gentleman should paraphrase.

Mr. Hind: To paraphrase, the hon. Gentleman said that the country should come to terms with share ownership and regard it as a good thing. Perhaps Labour Members should take his advice on the subject.

Mr. Lawson: Although my hon. Friend is unable to quote the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), I am able to do so. It is one of the few privileges afforded to Ministers. Among other things, he said:

> "We should take share ownership seriously as a means of spreading economic power and giving people a stake in the enterprise they work for."

I quite agree.

Mr. John Smith: Is it not clear that the BP share sale has been a total flop and that, in addition, it will be deeply damaging to the interests of BP? Will not BP now be saddled with the most unwilling shareholders in financial history? Should not the Government take an opportunity to announce that the sale is to be abandoned permanently, not to excuse underwriters but to protect the interests of Britain's greatest company? Will the Chancellor take this opportunity to confirm—he denied it on Tuesday—that he has to pay for the rights issue from BP at 330p and that he will have to hand over the money tomorrow?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman raised the last point on Tuesday and, as he knows, he is wrong. On the other matters concerning BP, I think that it would be right for me to make no further comment until I have decided whether or not the sale should go ahead.

Mr. Colvin: Bearing in mind the traditional links between the Labour party and the trade union movement, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to welcome the concern shown by Opposition Members about the state of the stock market? Surely that is living proof—if it were required—that there are now more shareholders than trade union members in this country.

Mr. Lawson: I do, indeed, welcome the interest in the stock market shown by Opposition Members. I hope that as time goes by it will become a more educated interest.

Privatisation

4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer that proportion of total Exchequer revenue in each of the past three years has been attributable to the proceeds of privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Privatisation proceeds have risen from 2·1 per cent. of total Consolidated Fund revenues in 1984-85 to 3·9 per cent. in 1986-87.

Mr. Lloyd: Do not those figures reveal the dilemma in which the country has been placed by the Government's stupidity? On one hand, the Chancellor depends on privatisation to fund public expenditure. On the other, with the Americans breathing down his neck and threatening not to fund further privatisations, the Chancellor knows very well that the BP issue will create real difficulties for the Government in future privatisations. The Government's incompetence has led them into great difficulties.

Mr. Lamont: Privatisation has made a useful contribution to revenues. The Government's estimates will be published in the usual way in the autumn statement. On BP, it would be extremely unwise if I added anything to what my right hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the BP share offer goes ahead—as Conservative Members confidently expect it to, and as the vast majority of hon. Members believe it should—the taxpayer will have got an extremely good deal? Has my right hon. friend heard any criticisms from Opposition Members in the past few weeks to the effect that all that we are trying to achieve with this privatisation is to line the pockets of our friends in the City?

Mr. Lamont: I have noted my hon. Friend's remarks, as, I am sure, have Opposition Members. It is, of course, true that if the sale proceeds, the proceeds of £7 billion will be fully realised.

Mr. Beith: Is not that fact weighing too heavily with the Chancellor? Is it not rather profligate to treat capital asset sales as a means of funding current expenditure? For the rest of the day, will the right hon. Gentleman take care to attach more priority to the need to encourage wider share ownership, rather than discouraging it by his treatment of investors who applied early for BP shares?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman seems to want to have it both ways. On one hand he says that we should not privatise, while on the other he says that we should pursue a policy of wider share ownership.

Mr. Beith: No.

Mr. Lamont: I am sorry, but that is how it appears to me and to most of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my right hon. Friend tell us which Administration was the first to consider it right to sell shares in BP, whether the shares were underwritten and at what price they were sold?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is revealing a closely guarded secret, which is that in 1977 the Labour Government decided to dispose of BP shares at a price equivalent today to 100p per share. The great difference is that whereas we want to pursue an objective of wider share ownership, Labour did not. The Labour Government did it purely and simply because they wanted to raise money.

Unemployment costs

5. **Mr. Battle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside region.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Battle: Even taking into account the minimal drop in unemployment figures in areas such as mine, is the Chancellor not prepared to accept that, if lost taxes are added to benefits paid in areas such as Yorkshire and Humberside, the cost of unemployment to the Exchequer is more than £6,000 per person? Is he not prepared to accept that that works out at nearly £900 per household and that—*[Interruption]*—if the total for the whole country is worked out——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask a question.

Mr. Battle: It cannot be heard because of the interruptions. Is the Chancellor not prepared to accept that the total cost to Britain is £19 billion, which is more than the Government are prepared to spend on the Health Service and that both the unemployed and the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough.

Mr. Major: During the hon. Gentleman's question unemployment undoubtedly fell rather more, for he will be aware that, both nationally and in his constituency, unemployment is now falling quite rapidly.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that growth and investment in manufacturing in Yorkshire and Humberside are contributing significantly to a reduction in unemployment?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The growth in the economy generally, including manufacturing, has been startling this year. It has made a material contribution to jobs.

Council of Ministers (Monetary Matters)

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about European monetary matters.

Mr. Lawson: These matters were discussed at the informal meeting of the Community Finance Ministers which I attended in Denmark last month.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the European monetary system is a powerful factor in monetary stability in these uncertain times?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. He has made that point on a number of occasions. The EMS has contributed greatly to exchange rate stability among the countries that are members of that grouping. We are now engaged in a more ambitious attempt at a wider degree of exchange rate stability, involving not merely European currencies but sterling the dollar and the yen, within the context of the Louvre agreement.

Mr. John David Taylor: Will the Chancellor confirm that he will not enter into discussions calling for the United Kingdom to join the European monetary system at this critical time, because such membership would restrict the United Kingdom's right to vary its interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman is correct on his last point. He will see that member countries of the European monetary system vary their interest rates from time to time and have a considerable ability so to do.

Interest Rates

7. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present level of interest rates.

16. **Mr. Fatchett** ased the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lawson: Bank base rates are 9½ per cent.

Mr. Marshall: The Chancellor continually states that this country has a strong, sound economy. Does he agree that that is also true of West Germany and Japan? Why are our interest rates 3·5 per cent. and 6 per cent. higher than theirs? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that lower interest rates would give our industry and economy a much needed boost? Will he therefore substantially reduce interest rates now?

Mr. Lawson: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I reduced interest rates only last week. As for comparisons with Germany and Japan, I would make two points. First, although the rate of inflation is low in this country, in Germany and Japan it is pretty close to zero. That, of course, enables them to have lower interest rates. Secondly, the strength of the British economy is indicated by matters which I should have thought were important to the hon. Gentleman: we have the fastest rate of economic growth and the fastest decline in unemployment of all the major nations.

Mr. Fatchett: Further to that reply, when British industry is faced with historically and comparatively high interest rates in real terms, why has the Chancellor not taken the advice of British industry — the CBI, for instance — and reduced interest rates? If he did so, he would protect the real economy and jobs in British industry.

Mr. Lawson: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the CBI is content with the conduct of British economic policy under this Government. At the time of the election it was scared stiff that there might be a change of Government, leading to the disastrous economic policies of the Labour party.

Mr. Latham: Although my right hon. Friend will prudently decide the matter, will he confirm that the conditions which required a rise in interest rates in August no longer obtain?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend the courageous Chancellor of the Exchequer agree that, although it may be helpful for interest rates to be reduced, British industry is more bullish and optimistic than it has been for 15 years?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is clearly correct. The point that he raised was shown in a series of surveys by the CBI, the most recent of which was published only this week. Of course, one of the things about which British industry is confident, quite apart from the Government's general economic policies, is the fact that we now have a period of much greater stability in exchange rates than we had in the past. It is true that, in recent days, as a result of the financial problems in the United States, there has been some pressure on the dollar, but I believe that, despite that, we can secure a greater degree of stability in exchange rates—we must seek to do that—than we have had for many years.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Chancellor will know that, despite last week's 0·5 per cent. cut in base rates, interest rates have been at an unprecedentedly high level throughout the lifetime of the Government. Now that the Government have abandoned monetarism, which was the supposed reason for that level, why does he not take this opportunity to stop dithering, cut interest rates, help industry, business and mortgage holders by doing so, and also help to calm the markets?

Mr. Lawson: I shall see to it that interest rates are at whatever level is appropriate in the conditions. As for this Government's record compared with that of the last Labour Government, I have to tell the House that bank base rates, which are now 9½ per cent., were 12 per cent. when we inherited the conduct of this country's government from the Labour party.

Mr. McCrindle: If, as now seems likely, we are heading for a reduction in interest rates—welcome though that may be in many ways — is my right hon. Friend concerned that, in turn, it may also lead to an increase in the availability of credit? As some commentators believe that that is already at a particularly high level, has he any steps in mind to control it?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to point to the general buoyancy of financial conditions some little while back. That was one of the main reasons why I thought it right to increase interest rates by a point on 6 August. However, since then, particularly in the events of the past fortnight, I think that it is clear that the rather frothy state of the financial markets has come to an end. There is now likely to be a dampening effect on economic activity, including credit activity. Therefore, it was appropriate to reduce interest rates by ½ per cent. last week. The conditions to which my hon. Friend referred are indeed different from what they were earlier.

Public Expenditure

8. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning total for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

14. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning total for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Major: Following the decisions taken by the Cabinet this morning, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be presenting his autumn statement to the House next Tuesday.

Mr. Patchett: If the Government's revenue is rising so fast, will the Minister explain why the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 cannot be implemented because of a lack of funds?

Mr. Major: The Act of 1986 was originally passed upon the premise that it would be brought into action over a period. A part of that Act was brought into operation earlier this year.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister agree with the advice that the CBI gave recently, which was, and I want to quote accurately——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unfortunately the hon. Lady cannot do that.

Ms. Ruddock: The advice of the CBI was that, if business is to have the infrastructure that it needs to reduce its costs, cuts in public expenditure should be reversed. Does the Minister agree with that?

Mr. Major: With great respect to the hon. Lady, that is not the advice of the CBI. I suggest that she reads what the CBI had to say about the economy just a few days ago. It was very confident.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend confirm —[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] I am not.

Will my right hon. Friend please confirm that the management of public expenditure has been one of the success stories of the Government and in no small measure has enabled the nation to create 1 million new jobs since 1983?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that prudent control of public expenditure in recent years by the Government, and proper management of the Government debt, has led to the country being in a strong economic position? Will he confirm that he is able to give some help to the American President in his tackling of the American public sector borrowing requirement?

Mr. Major: I can certainly confirm that, first, strong control of public expenditure has been a significant feature of the Government's economic policy. The strength of our economy over recent years shows how wise that has been, and I think that that may be particularly so at present. As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I think that the American President can do without advice from me.

Mr. Holland: Will the Minister give an assurance that when he and the Chancellor are preparing the autumn statement they will consult their counterparts abroad? This is because, if President Reagan manages to cut the federal deficit by $23 billion next year, this will have a powerful deflationary effect on the world economy. It could reduce the United States rate of growth by 1993 by 10 per cent. below its trend rate and raise European unemployment to 24 million by that year. Why does the Chancellor not admit that the real budget needed is a budget to expand the European economy, and that himself, Chancellor Kohl and M. Chirac should be doing that, thereby increasing United States export trade and sustaining the dollar?

Mr. Major: I think I might usefully remind the hon. Gentleman that we have the fastest rate of growth in the industrialised world. He might just care to bear that in mind. As for the remainder of his remarks, I am not entirely sure that that arises on the subject of public expenditure in this country.

Mr. McLoughlin: When the Chancellor publishes his statement, will he draw the attention of the House and the country to public expenditure levels in 1978 compared with those today, bearing in mind that that was the time of the Lib-Lab pact? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are able to spend as much as we do on the public services because of the way in which the economy has been run by the Conservative Government?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. In recent years there has been a very substantial increase in resources for the Health Service, the education service and law and order, and a substantial increase in capital spending compared with the substantial cuts into which the Labour Government led us between 1974 and 1979.

Privatisation

9. **Mr. McAvoy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proceeds from privatisation sales in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An estimate of the proceeds of privatisation will be published as usual in the autumn statement on Tuesday.

Mr. McAvoy: In launching the BP offer the Minister said that it was yet another step on the road to popular capitalism. Given that more than 8 million prospectuses have been issued but only 200,000 people have applied for shares, does he agree that that road is a dead end?

Mr. Lamont: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is to make a statement later, and as the matter is still being considered, it would not be appropriate for me to say anything at this stage.

Mr. Dickens: Following the great success of privatisation, cleaner emissions from power stations and lead-free petrol, is not my right hon. Friend missing a rare opportunity to privatise fresh air?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend always wishes to push our programme further forward, but I think that that matter would require a little consideration.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Financial Secretary explain, first, why he has wasted £20 million of public money advertising the sale of BP shares which no one wants to buy? Will he confirm that the estimated cost of the advertising is £100 per successful applicant? Does he recall his statement on 25 September that he expected the sale to make a further major contribution to extending share ownership, and his statement of 15 October that the sale would be another step on the road to mass popular capitalism in this country? Given that no one wants the BP shares, and that 40 per cent. of shareholders have already got out of the privatised companies, what is left of popular capitalism now?

Mr. Lamont: A full statement of the cost of the sale will be laid before the House in the usual way. Clearly, some of the costs are not known at this stage. That will be fully explained to the House.

With regard to the advertising cost, I make no apology for that. We wanted to advertise the sale and to spread share ownership. It would have been quite wrong not to make that attempt at that time and as the market then appeared.

As for the quotations that the hon. Gentleman gave, I am naturally extremely sad that this will not be an opportunity to widen share ownership. Nevertheless, widening share ownership is a wholly admirable and laudable aim and we are determined to go on with it.

Company Investment (Rates of Return)

10. **Mr. Jack** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the net real rate of return in the company sector.

Mr. Lilley: The net real rate of return of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies in 1986 is estimated to have been 8·9 per cent. This is the highest level of prifitability recorded since 1973.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that that excellent result shows the fallacy of criticism of our economic policies by the Labour Benches and the validity of the recent CBI report on the economy? Does he further agree that the key to those good results is the retention of profits within companies, occasioned by the Government's successive reductions in corporation tax?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of profit, which is the lifeblood of industry and stimulates its pulse and fuels its investment. He is also right to point to the fact that investment is rising along with profitability, and the DTI survey shows investment intentions up 8 per cent. this year and next.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister agree that, despite the good figures that he gives for manufacturing industry, there is 7 per cent. less investment in manufacturing industry now than there was in 1979, and that areas such as the one that I represent still have enormous problems in building up industry? Despite all the wonders of which the Minister tells us, there is still less investment in manufacturing now, and the prospect of even less in the future.

Mr. Lilley: I am glad that the hon. Lady welcomes the improvement in profitability. Unfortunately, she is not unanimously joined in that by other members of her party. She will be pleased to know that profitability in manufacturing has also increased substantially, and that is the pre-condition for growing investment. Profitability in manufacturing is also at a record figure, only previously achieved in 1973.

Invisible Earnings

Mr. Redwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of invisible earnings in the United Kingdom; and how it compares with the levels five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United Kingdom's invisibles surplus, which was £2·1 billion in 1977 and £1·7 billion in 1982, is estimated to have been £7·7 billion in the year to mid-1987. That is the largest invisibles surplus of any country in the world.

Mr. Redwood: What surprisingly good figures the Financial Secretary has produced. Does he agree that those figures show that the service industries are important generators of jobs, wealth and income, and that they are an important part of industrial recovery, because strong services help industries?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is entirely right. As regards his point about employment, 2 million people are now employed in financial services and 1½ million in hotels and catering — an important part of the invisible earnings industry. That amounts to 15 per cent. of total employment, demonstrating that, exactly as my hon. Friend says, the invisibles are making an enormous contribution to recovery in this country.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are not profits from insider dealing a form of invisible earning? Why did the stock exchange surveillance department refuse to give me the names of the 30 people who speculated in Matthew Brown shares on the day before the S and N bid was announced? Why cannot those names be made public so that the general public will know who were the criminals who broke the law?

Mr. Lamont: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman gives me the details that he wants and I shall investigate them. I do not know to what he is referring.

International Monetary Fund

12. **Mr. Cash** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington.

Mr. Lawson: Considerable progress was made on a wide range of issues. The Louvre agreement was reaffirmed, and I set out ways in which a more orderly system of managed floating of exchange rates could be developed. There was continued emphasis on the special needs of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries, including further discussion of both my initiative to ease the burden of their bilateral official debts and the parallel proposal by the IMF to enlarge the concessional structural adjustment facility. There was also full support for an early and substantial increase in the capital of the World Bank.

Mr. Cash: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he also confirm that it displays a significant contrast between the craven position that existed under the Labour Government in 1978, when they had to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund, and the position now, when the fund seeks and takes advice from the Government — from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Lawson: In answer to the remarks that my hon. Friend makes, I am glad to say that one of the benefits of the strong economy that we now have and the wide respect in which we now stand throughout the world is that we are able to play a major part in the international financial discussions that go on, both as between the industrialised countries and in helping the poorest and most heavily indebted countries. That is indeed a striking contrast to the Labour Government, when it was they who had to go for assistance.

Mr. Beith: Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that if he presses ahead with his proposals for debt relief for the poorest African countries, including interest relief for those that are not large debtors, he will have our support?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support and that of his party. I am glad to say that I have also secured much more substantial support from other quarters as well.

PRIME MINISTER

Westland plc

Q1. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what has been the total Government contract expenditure committed to Westland since January 1986.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): The work of Westland Helicopters Ltd. for the Ministry of Defence in support of the existing helicopter fleet is worth some £60 million per annum. Negotiations are nearing completion for eight new Sea Kings, worth over £25 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 9 April that orders worth over £300 million are planned for an initial batch of 25 utility version EH101 and 16 Lynx helicopters.

Mr. Dalyell: On 27 January, at column 657, the right hon. Lady assured my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that she did not know about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry over the disclosure until after the inquiry had reported. Will she confirm that Mr. Charles Powell did his duty as a civil servant and kept the Prime Minister fully informed about the disclosure?

The Prime Minister: The question that the hon. Gentleman has put on the Order Paper is about Government contract expenditure committed to Westland since January 1986. On the other matters, I have answered in detail and stand by what I have said.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is it not the case that the first flight of the prototype of the Anglo-Italian EH101 augurs well for that aeroplane, as was the case with the collaborative Puma, Lynx and Gazelle before it? For the future of Westland, is it not also important that we should take part in expanding European participation in space, as Westland Aerospace has an important contribution to make in that area, which is of great significance for British industry?

The Prime Minister: We hope that the development of the EH101 will proceed satisfactorily so that the orders can be fully and properly negotiated. With regard to work on space, I have nothing to add to what I said previously. As my hon. Friend is aware, we give a subscription of about £100 million to the European Space Agency. At present we simply could not do any more than that because the amount of taxpayers' money that goes to research and development is very considerable. At present, further money is coming from the private sector. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Can we concentrate on these questions and not on those who are wearing fancy dress?

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I attended the memorial service for Lord Soames at Westminster abbey. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Prime Minister recall that during her visit to Scotland last month she made the absurd claim that there was little if any popular demand for a devolved Scottish Parliament or Assembly. If the right hon. Lady is still stubbornly refusing to accept the fact that at the general election she was resoundingly rejected by 76 per cent. of Scottish voters who all voted for parties committed to some form of Scottish Assembly, will she now consider putting her claim to the test by, for example, having a referendum on the constitutional future of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will remember the occasion of a previous referendum on the constitutional future of Scotland. Many of us on both sides of the House believe that an Assembly such as the hon. Gentleman and others propose would be the first step towards separatism, which would not be popular in many quarters.

Mr. Ashby: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she upholds the principle of free speech, and that that principle is not restricted to those with Marxist views, but applies also to those opposed to such views?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed. We see a great deal of free speech during Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Kinnock: When the financial markets at home and abroad are unstable, and when Britain has one of the highest real interest rates of all the developed countries, why do the Government not use their power to secure significant cuts in interest rates, rather than an inconsequential 0·5 per cent.?

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for judgment, which has to be made at the time. I think that the right hon. Gentleman would be the first to understand that several factors are necessary in combination to deal with the present position. First, we need a decision on the United States budget deficit. That is perhaps the most important single factor, and I welcome the talks that President Reagan is holding with Congrees about cutting the deficit, because early and decisive action on that is vital. Measures beyond anything previously envisaged, in both scale and content, would do more than anything else to bring back confidence.

We are entirely prepared to play our part, in concert with other nations such as Germany and Japan, to consider further matters. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hopes to make his decision on the BP issue later today. Those three developments would be very effective if we could arrange for them to take place fairly close together.

Mr. Kinnock: It is those very three matters that argue so strongly for a substantial cut in interest rates, especially when such a cut would aid President Reagan's efforts to stabilise his external deficit. They would also ease the downward pressure on markets, increase our international competitiveness and cut costs for British industry and British households. British real interest rates are now 53 per cent. higher than those in Japan, and 25 per cent. higher than those in Germany. As the Prime Minister says, this is a time for judgment, and that judgment should be a big cut in interest rates.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has already made a reduction in interest rates of 0·5 per cent, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. I have said what I believe to be the most important factor for the return of confidence in the markets, but I feel that it will be more effective if we make our decisions in accordance with it and achieve as much co-operation internationally as possible.

Mr. Kinnock: No one will quarrel with the argument for international co-operation, but does what the Prime Minister has just said mean that we must wait for what she calls a return of confidence before we get the cut in interest rates that the economy truly needs?

The Prime Minister: It means that I expect the right hon. Gentleman to know that decisions on interest rates cannot be announced to the House of Commons during Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House what fee the underwriters of the BP issue agreed to accept in payment for the risk that they agreed to take?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made his own point. As he knows, I cannot say anything further about the BP issue. The procedures that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set before the House on Tuesday are well under way, but they are not yet completed. My right hon. Friend hopes to be in a position to announce his decision today.

Mr. Maclennan: With regard to the response of the international finance markets to the United States deficit problems—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maclennan: —is the Prime Minister prepared to encourage the German and Japanese Finance Ministers urgently to relax their fiscal policies to assist the United States in the process of reducing its budget deficit?

The Prime Minister: I have said already that I think that co-operation is important. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in regular touch with his opposite numbers in both the United States and Germany, and in Europe in general.

Mr. Budgen: Amid all this talk of international co-operation, will my right hon. Friend remind all Governments of her renowned scepticism of the European monetary system and of her view that attempts by Governments to control exchange rates are extremely expensive and in the end impossible?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend reminds the House very effectively of the view that we have taken about the European monetary system. That view has not changed. I believe, however, that the Louvre accord has been of very considerable value, especially in recent weeks.

Q3. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duffy: Following the Prime Minister's exchanges with my right hon. Friend, is she aware that we have been waiting for at least three years for Washington to correct its budgetary deficit? Does she not think that the best earnest on behalf of international confidence would be for someone to promote initiatives, and preferably leadership, on behalf of international financial stability and an easing of credit? Is the Prime Minister prepared to take such a step, or is she content to see Thatcherism eventually equated with Reaganomics?

The Prime Minister: May I remind the hon. Gentleman —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"] Yes, we have free speech in this House, too. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that Opposition Members have been urging us to follow the deficit policy of the United States and to increase it? They have urged us to do that, both in this House and in speeches outside. Only now are they beginning to realise that the policy of sound money that we have followed is the one that has kept sterling strong throughout this crisis.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is well aware that the parks and farms of Kent are now covered in very heavy fallen trees. Will she consider using her prestige to call together the many organisations that use the countryside to consider the possibility of creating a properly organised voluntary programme to help to clear up the beleaguered south-east of England?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that the part of the country that my hon. Friend represents was particularly badly hit by the storm and that many trees were damaged and lost. I know of his interest in voluntary work. I understand that the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is already looking at what volunteers can do, with local authorities, to help. It is in close touch with the Countryside Commission's Task Force Trees. I am sure that we shall be able to get some very useful work done, both in clearing and in replanting trees.

Q4. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: In view of the Government's obsession with internal trade union matters, why is there not to be a postal ballot of all Conservative members in the country to decide who should be party chairman? In view of the difficulty of finding someone to do the job, is the right hon. Lady aware that her old mate, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), is very keen and very anxious to carry out that job? Is he on the short-list?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether I am answerable from the Dispatch Box for Conservative party matters. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the chairman of a voluntary party is elected, but I shall not follow the example of the Labour party by taking on the office of chairman of Conservative Central Office myself.

Mr. John David Taylor: Is the Prime Minister aware that an isolated rural school in South Armagh — Cladymore primary school — has been closed by the Minister responsible for education in Northern Ireland, not only against the wishes of the parents, but against the unanimous decision of the regional education authority? Is she aware that that regional education authority is controlled, not by elected persons, but by the nominees of her Minister? Does she understand that such decisions alienate the people of Northern Ireland from the present dictatorial system of Government by the Northern Ireland Office, and will she at least consider the introduction of some democratic control and answerability in matters of local government such as education, health and social services?

The Prime Minister: The strict answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is, no, I was not aware, but, of course, I will inquire. He cast doubt on direct rule, but I do not think that the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland would agree. They welcome it as the best possible thing in the circumstances. A major Education Bill will be brought before the House, and the right hon. Gentleman may wish to table some amendments to it.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Employment Bill.

Motions on data protection orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 4 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill, followed by remaining stages of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill.

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (2nd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Economic Consequences of the Collapse of the Financial Markets".

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER — Debate on Government initiatives on crime prevention on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Licensing Bill.

[*Debate on 3 November*:

Draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Social Work) Order 1987.

Draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987.

Draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987.

Draft Data Protection (Miscellaneous Subject Access Exemptions) Order 1987].

Mr. Kinnock: The Leader of the House will recall that on Tuesday the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he hoped to be able to reach a conclusion in his negotiations with the BP issue underwriters and the Bank of England by Thursday. May we have a categorical assurance that the Chancellor will tell the House what that conclusion is since it is vital that the House of Commons is among the first to know? When will that take place today? Will the right hon. Gentleman make available Government time early next week for a debate on the Chancellor's decision on the BP share issue?

As the proposed changes in housing benefit and income support will damage the interests of at least 7 million people, will the right hon. Gentleman give us an opportunity to debate those changes in a full day's debate on each of the relevant regulations? The Leader of the House will recall the Conservative party's election pledge:

> "Child benefit will continue to be paid as now, and direct to the mother."

Is he aware that yesterday, in a long radio interview, the Secretary of State for Social Services refused to guarantee that that pledge would be honoured? May we have a statement next week to reassure hon. Members on both sides of the House and families throughout the country that child benefit will continue to be paid as a universal, non-means tested benefit paid direct to mothers?

The right hon. Gentleman will know of the Policy Studies Institute report on inequality in employment in Northern Ireland. The Government will be publishing a White Paper early in the new year. Will the right hon Gentleman ensure that the House has an opportunity for an early debate so that hon. Members can make known their opinions on that subject?

In view of the continued and justified disquiet on both sides of the House and in the scientific and industrial communities about the Government's refusal to make a proper commitment to the European civil space research programme, will the Leader of the House ensure that the Minister of Trade and Industry comes here next week to make a full statement about the matter instead of contenting himself with the inadequate answers that he gave during Trade and Industry questions yesterday?

In light of the welcome news this morning, may I congratulate the Leader of the House on his success in preventing the constitutional impropriety that would have arisen had the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry become the chairman of the Conservative party? I hope that the Leader of the House will not take it amiss if I offer the suggestion that as a reward on behalf of the country for his considerable endeavours he should get that job himself?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure whether that is a reward. However, I am very content with the job that I have at present. I will not add anything to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said about the chairman of the party, which is entirely a matter for her.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that he hopes to make a decision on the BP share issue later today. He will, of course be glad to inform the House in whatever way is convenient and at the earliest opportunity. I do not believe that we can settle exactly when he will make the announcement until we know that he has made his decision. We will have discussions through the usual channels.

Mr. Kinnock: Will there be an oral statement?

Mr. Wakeham: The Chancellor is very very willing to make an oral statement if that can be arranged.

I believe that many of the points about social security raised by the right hon. Gentleman could be dealt with in the debate on the Social Security Bill next week. The best way to deal with the orders would be by discussions through the usual channels.

In response to the right hon. Gentleman's points about child benefit, I do not believe that there is any misunderstanding about the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. That matter may be referred to in next week's debate on the Social Security Bill, if necessary.

I have taken on board the point that the right hon. Gentleman made about the inequality of employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. I will refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

There is nothing further that I can usefully add to the comments of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Trade and Industry yesterday in answer to questions or to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said except that I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will find an opportunity to report to the House after the ministerial meeting on 9 and 10 November.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is it not a little strange that in a modern society succession to the throne is by the eldest male heir rather than by the most suitable heir? Would it not be better if it were either male or female—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can ask a question of that kind.

Mr. Marlow: Is it possible to ask a question about succession to the Government?

Mr. Speaker: We will move to the next question.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): With regard to the very important matter of the BP share issue, the Leader of the House has just said that the Chancellor will make his decision known in whatever way he thinks appropriate. Does the Leader of the House, who was present throughout Question Time, recall that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, not once but three times, gave a commitment that the Chancellor would make a statement to the House, and that the Prime Minister also gave an undertaking that the Chancellor would make a statement to the House? Will the right hon. Gentleman give a commitment that the appropriate procedure in this instance would be for a statement to be made to the House on the Chancellor's decision about the BP share issue?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that I made it clear to the Leader of the Opposition that the Chancellor would be glad to inform the House in whatever way is convenient to the House at the earliest opportunity. If that is an oral statement, the Chancellor will be content to choose that method.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): May I remind my right hon. Friend that last week I requested, in the most kindly fashion, that he remember his undertakings? This week may I request him to recall that Procedure Committee reports for over two years are still outstanding and that the House should be given the chance to debate some of them? Does he accept that we should be getting on with that early in this Parliament rather than later?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that first I would ask my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who was a distinguished Chairman of the Committee in the last Parliament, to come and see me to talk about the outstanding reports so that we could decide the best way to proceed. I think that that would be sensible.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It may be that in the next week or so we shall have the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on British Airways and British Caledonian. Will the Leader of the House undertake that before the Secretary of State makes a decision on that report the House will have the opportunity to debate its contents?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I can give no such undertaking.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will my right hon. Friend find time, possibly next week, to discuss the important question of the ritual slaughter of animals? Apart from the cruelty involved, is it not fundamental that the laws of England should apply to everyone equally and that exceptions should not be made?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that hon. Members and many people in the country feel strongly about the issue on both sides of the argument, but I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the Leader of the House take the opportunity of expressing our sympathy to the relatives of those who died yesterday in the tragic accident on the M61 motorway in Lancashire? Will he draw to the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport the desirability of making a statement when major tragedies such as this occur? Will he also advise him of the desirability of conducting automatically an inquiry into such events? An inquiry would take place after an accident at sea, in the air or on the railways. Will the Leader of the House also draw the Secretary of State's attention, without prejudging this incident, to the importance of recognising whether speed was an important factor and to whether the police are able to control high speeds on motorways when repairs are being undertaken?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly draw those points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in expressing our condolences to those bereaved by the tragic accident and in sending the injured our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The accident is being investigated by the police, and the Department of Transport's vehicle inspectors are examining the vehicles involved. My right hon. Friend will consider all the reports carefully to see what lessons can be learnt.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that earlier today my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) that he might be able to move amendments to the Education Bill? In that context, can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Bill will be extended to cover Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wakeham: I feel embarrassed that before replying I must check my answer to the first question which my right hon. Friend has asked me.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): In connection with the horrible accident on the M61 near my constituency, will the Leader of the House impress upon the Secretary of State for Transport the importance of giving us a chance to debate road safety with a view to making constructive suggestions such as that which I made to him after the last horrible motorway accident about enforcing speed limits and the excessive number and weight of lorries on motorways which cause an enormous number of roadworks which are inherently dangerous?

Mr. Wakeham: I have taken on board what the hon. Lady has said. I will ensure that the matter is referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Did my right hon. Friend note that yesterday no fewer than four pro-life private Members' Bills were presented? If, as is possible, all four are deliberately talked out rather than voted down, will my right hon. Friend consider, for future purposes the possibility of Government time being given to an abortion reform Bill, as happened in 1967?

Mr. Wakeham: It is best to wait until the Bills are debated in the House and see how we get on. I should not want to give any intimation that the Government are likely to depart from their normal practice of not giving additional time for debating private Members' Bills.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman state when, at long last, the Scottish Select Committee will be formed? Will he guarantee that the matter will not be left to one side as other Select Committees are formed, and that all the Scottish parties will be represented on the Committee? Does he agree that the present impasse is no way to treat important Scottish business?

Mr. Wakeham: I want to get on with the formation of all the Select Committees as fast as possible. Considerable progress has been made through the usual channels and I am hopeful that the Committee of Selection will consider these matters very shortly. Who goes on the Committees is a matter for the Committee of Selection and not for me.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make a statement to the House about the imminent takeover of Matthew Brown Brewery, in the north-west of England, by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries? That takeover will neither be in the interests of the consumer nor for the betterment of the reputation of the brewing industry, in which I have had a long, though not vested, interest. Will he ensure that this unique matter, which has arisen due to the problems on the stock market, is brought before the House and that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announces that it will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend, but I shall refer it to him later today.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that those of us who want reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act are reliant on a private Member's Bill that is shortly to come before the House? May I press him on the same subject on which I pressed him last week? When can we debate the report of the Procedure Committee? If the House resolves to carry the report, will extra time be given to that private Member's Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what I said to the hon. Gentleman last week.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): My right hon. Friend will have read that next week the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is likely to report to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry the results of its deliberations on the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian. Since that merger would make British Airways ten times larger than the rest of the British scheduled air carriers put together, will the House be consulted before a final decision is made?

Mr. Wakeham: The matter will be decided by my right hon. and noble Friend in accordance with his statutory duties. I do not think that I can say anything further at this stage.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): With regard to next Wednesday's Bill about urban development corporations, may I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to a report in *The Independent* today concerning exchanges of correspondence between the auditors of the London Docklands development corporation and its replies? In view of the fact that, if my memory serves me correctly, the auditors were appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, or at least that he is responsible for the operations of the LDDC, will he ensure, through his right hon. Friend, that all the documents relating to this matter are laid before the House before the debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend and do what I can to meet the hon. Gentleman's anxieties.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Will my right hon. Friend say whether there will be an early debate on the problems of the hosiery and textile industry? As he knows, it faces many problems relating to the cheap imports that are flooding in from abroad and restricted access to markets in the United States and elsewhere. A debate on this urgent subject is overdue.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the matter, but I cannot say when a debate will take place. I shall certainly bear the matter in mind.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Does the Leader of the House intend to proceed, as he said last week, with a debate on the growing crisis in the health services, particularly in the west midlands and Wolverhampton, where thousands of lives are at risk? I impress on the right hon. Gentleman the fact that we should have a debate very soon.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that that is an important matter and that hon. Members on both sides of the House have comments to make on it. However, I cannot promise a debate at the Dispatch Box today.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate, or at least a statement, soon on the appalling problems and genuine needs of haemophiliac AIDS victims and their families?

Mr. Wakeham: I will refer the matter to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House take steps to arrange a debate on the need for equal opportunities in employment in Northern Ireland, so that the people of Northern Ireland can be represented fully in the House by their hon. Members? Until such time as we move to a federal situation, can we ensure that every region of the kingdom is treated equally in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: If the answer the hon. Gentleman wants is that procedures in the House are likely to change in the near future, I cannot give him an encouraging reply. However, discussions can certainly continue and when there is a general agreement no doubt we can do something.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Notwithstanding what my right hon. Friend said to the Leader of the Opposition, whose interest in the matter is relatively new, may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 187 on Britain's role in space, which is signed by 48 of his right hon. and hon. Friends?

[That this House is convinced that an expanded British space programme would mobilise technical and scientific skills within the nation to a common purpose of great long-term strategic and industrial importance for the United Kingdom; believes that the creative and engineering genius of the British people should find expression in the major role in Europe's joint space effort; and urges Her Majesty's

Government to support the plans of the British National Space Centre for the United Kingdom to pursue an enlarged space programme wholly within Britain's technological and financial resources and fully commensurate with those of her leading European Space Agency partners.]

It would be good if the Government would listen to the views of Select Committee Chairmen, former Ministers and rapporteurs at the Council of Europe and the Western European Union who understand about such matters before our Ministers go to The Hague to the European Space Agency Council.

Mr. Wakeham: I can assure my hon. Friend, who I know has long been interested in these matters, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Trade and Industry will take on board all the points that have been made before he attends the ministerial meeting on 9 and 10 November.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Mindful of the Prime Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on Tuesday concerning the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the statements of the Leader of the House this afternoon, can the Leader of the House give an assurance that those Conservative Members who are showing a reluctance to serve on the Committee will be reminded firmly of their obligations to the House and the people of Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, in all friendliness, that I do not believe that my hon. Friends who represent Scottish constituencies need any lectures from him on conducting their duties as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the televising of Parliament? If there is a positive vote, the public will be able to see demonstrations such as the two childish and ill-co-ordinated demonstrations that the Opposition have put on this week. Arguments having left them, they are reduced to demonstrating. With television, the public will be able to see that only the Conservative party has any real arguments to put forward to them.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes a powerful case for bringing television cameras into the Chamber. I have given an undertaking that there will be a debate, and I stick by that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Gentlemen who have been rising.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made on the Shelter report entitled "Pits and Mortar" regarding the sale of former National Coal Board houses and the several thousand still owned by the board which are being sold off to absentee landlords? Will he also arrange for a debate on the coal industry in view of the large number of closures threatened by the board in the past few weeks? Perhaps he can get one of his people to explain why pits are being threatened with closure having sustained a temporary loss of a few million pounds, when the Government have been straining every nerve and fibre in the past few days to save the stock exchange which has lost £100 billion.

Mr. Wakeham: Although I shall not be able to arrange a debate for next week, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will find an opportunity to make his points, and we shall find an opportunity of putting the correct position.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Will the Leader of the House consider arranging for Ministers to come to the House from time to time to make statements about some of the nationalised organisations and the conduct of their chairmen? For example, British Rail is considering the purchase of 100 locomotives costing £100 million from America, when Britain has lost thousands and thousands of engineering jobs. Should not Ministers be more accountable to the House on such policies?

Mr. Wakeham: I reject any suggestion that my right hon. Friend has not fully discharged his duty to the House. However, I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to him.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Let me focus the attention of the Leader of the House on a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh). Would it be proper if the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs were frozen while other Select Committees came forward from the Committee of Selection? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs will not be allowed to drift into suspended animation?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no desire to see the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs drift into suspended animation. As with all other Select Committees, I would like it to get on. However, these are matters for the House and not for me.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): When can we have a debate on war crimes matters and, in particular, on the Government's failure, after many months, to complete investigations concerning 16 people known to be living in this country and alleged to be serious war criminals? They include Antonas Gecas, who lives in Edinburgh. May we debate, too, the Government's incredible refusal to release documents concerning Barbie, though his trial has ended, and Waldheim, even though there can be no conceivable risk to intelligence or security matters now that the documents have been in the Public Record Office for 40 years?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what was said to the hon. and learned Gentleman very recently. However, I know of his deep concern and interest, and I know that if he has evidence, as opposed to allegations, he will ensure that it is made known in the right quarters.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): As the Prime Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) a few minutes ago suggests that she has learnt nothing and forgotten everything about recent election results in Scotland, and as a properly constituted Select Committee on Scottish Affairs could perhaps apprise the Government of the real interests of the Scottish people, is the Leader of the House aware that the majority party in Scotland would be quite willing to take up its place on the Select Committee even if the minority parties, among which I include the Conservative party, are not?

Mr. Wakeham: I propose that the House should deal with these matters in the traditional way, and I fear that that means rejecting the hon. Gentleman's advice.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for an urgent debate on the cash crisis at Edinburgh's hospitals—in particular, the Royal Edinburgh hospital in Morningside where the doctors, nurses and other staff are under tremendous pressure, and where patients are suffering considerable hardship and their relatives considerable distress and worry?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add to what I have already said about a debate on the Health Service. However, the hon. Gentleman's subject seems to be a perfectly reasonable one to raise in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member, may I say that if he wishes to take part in the serious business of the House he should come here appropriately dressed? He was a distinguished chairman of the Greater London council and I do not think that he would then have approved of such attire.

Mr. Banks: May I say, Mr. Speaker, that you are most fetchingly dressed yourself? I might add that my dress represents a perfectly legitimate peaceful protest and I hope that the House will always tolerate peaceful protests.

I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 179 concerning Britain, the Commonwealth and the African National Congress.

[That this House welcomes the positive developments which have taken place in the recent period in relations between the African National Congress and a range of representative opinion in Britain, including the British Government, as highlighted by the meetings between the President of the African National Congress and the Foreign Secretary, the Opposition, the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress and representatives of British industry; recognises that these contacts reflect the central role which the African National Congress will play in any resolution of the conflict in South Africa which was one of the key conclusions of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group; therefore deeply regrets the statement of the Prime Minister in Vancouver in which she described the African National Congress as a 'typical terrorist organisation'; believes that this is a totally false description of the African National Congress; and believes that such a statement can only damage relations between Britain and the black majority in South Africa as well as with the rest of Africa and the Commonwealth.]

The Prime Minister's statement that the ANC is a terrorist organisation gave great offence to every Commonwealth Head of Government. If the right hon. Lady believes that the ANC is a terrorist organisation, is she considering expelling its representatives from London? If she is not, will she apologise? I understand that today the United Democratic Front in South Africa has broken off all diplomatic relations with the British Government until an apology is made. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot give that undertaking, will he arrange for a debate at the earliest possible moment on the position in South Africa and the ANC

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise an early debate on South Africa, but it is, of course, a subject to which we shall return from time to time. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sometimes says things that are uncomfortable to listeners, but that does not mean that her comments are not perfectly justified and true.

BILLS PRESENTED

LICENSING

Mr. Secretary Hurd, supported by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Moore and Mr. Douglas Hogg presented a Bill to amend the Licensing Act 1964. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 40.]

Points of Order

4 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Reference was made before the recess to people wearing different forms of attire, especially during the summer. I asked what was and what was not permitted. It is high time that the cheap remarks about people engaged in a peaceful protest ended. Those people have been drawing attention to the forms of brutality used against the ANC by not only Botha and his regime but hon. Members. Those remarks should end, especially because last night many Members in the Chamber were dressed like penguins. I make no special point, except that I do not regard that form of dress as normal. Some would say that it was fancy dress. There are people in the House who, for reasons of custom, have sat at the Table—and here I am including you, Mr. Speaker—in what some would describe as kinky clothes. There are people who come to the Chamber dressed as barristers. I make no special point about this. We tolerate it. But it is high time we reconsidered what all those people, including you, Sir, do. We should consider the views of those of my hon. Friends who have decided to do something on behalf of people outside the Chamber who are fighting for their lives.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that it would help. I am concerned, as I think is the whole House, about the dignity of Parliament. I am not against peaceful demonstration, but we proceed here in the Chamber by words rather than by demonstration.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice. It is clear to the House that Her Majesty's Stationery Office is encountering difficulties with its new machinery. Last night, early-day motions were tabled and accepted by the Table Office, not least one, of which I was the principal sponsor, which opposes the British Airways-British Caledonian merger. My early-day motion has not appeared on today's Order Paper.

This is not the first time since the House reassembled after the summer recess that early-day motions have either not appeared or appeared with incorrect spelling and names inadequately added, although those names were presented to and accepted by the Table Office. Even when the early-day motions have been printed, the total shown has not tallied with the number of names appended to them.

May we please have your protection, Mr. Speaker, so that correct early-day motions tabled within the time limits imposed to enable them to appear on the Order Paper the following day and accepted by the Table Office do appear on the Order Paper? Will you give an assurance that the problems of the Table Office will be overcome shortly and that the Order Paper will return to normal?

Mr. Speaker: Her Majesty's Stationery Office is not a Department of the House. I have been in touch with the Minister responsible for it to draw his attention to the fact that the printing of our Order Paper has been very unsatisfactory. I have his assurance that he will do what he can to correct the problem. I understand that the difficulty is concerned with new technology which is being run in. We hope that it will rapidly improve.

Mr. Winnick: This Parliament has many connections——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not called the hon. Member. Is this an intervention or a point of order?

Mr. Winnick: It is a point of order, Sir, which is devoted to a previous point, but not concerning dress.

This Parliament has many connections with the Commonwealth, as you know better than most. Would it not be appropriate to make the point, when delegations come here and we send representatives to Commonwealth countries, that one does not accept that the ANC is a terrorist organisation? It came into existence in 1911 and for most of its life was totally opposed to acts of violence. The ANC resorted to violence when the South African authorities decided that they would not allow constitutional advance——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the very point that I was seeking to make earlier. In this House we proceed by argument rather than by demonstration. The hon. Member's point is plainly a matter of argument and one that it is legitimate to use in debate.

Orders of the Day

Scottish Development Agency Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 October] That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: I have not been able to select the amendment on the Order Paper in the name of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

4.5 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate. The Government brought on this important business after 10 o'clock last Wednesday night. The Bill did not begin its proceedings in the House until 11.15 pm. It is unacceptable and offensive to the Opposition that a Bill of such importance, dealing with the extremely important Scottish Development Agency, should be put down for debate at that time. If the Government felt that the Bill would somehow slip through with the minimum of debate, they obviously completely misjudged the position. I say to Ministers and to those who arrange the business that Opposition Members will not accept that type of behaviour in dealing with Scottish business.

The Minister of State introduced the Bill last week with a rather dreary and complacent speech. I do not complain about that because I did not expect anything else. Important points were made by the Opposition, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). We expect full answers today to last week's and today's points. There can be no excuse for not getting full answers because the Minister has had a whole week to consider our points.

We understand that the Government originally intended to have a debate on the Scottish economy today. We are told that, because we exercised our legitimate right to discuss the Bill at some length, that debate is to be taken from us, as though we have to rely on the Government's favour to have debates on important matters affecting Scotland. We are supposed to behave in an acceptable way when considering Scottish business or, as a kind of punishment, we shall not be allowed to have the legitimate debate on the Scottish economy and other aspects to which we are entitled. That is unacceptable. If the Government believe that they can deal in that way with Scottish business, they will face considerable difficulties for a good deal longer than just this Session.

Of course I welcome the Bill and the fact that it increases the Scottish Development Agency's borrowing limit. Opposition Members appreciate the contribution that the SDA has made to the Scottish economy since the agency was established 12 years ago. I pay tribute to the work done by George Mathewson as chief executive of the agency. He did a remarkable job. We wish him well in his new appointment. I know Mr. Ian Robertson well, and I welcome him to his new appointment and wish him well in his work for the agency.

The agency has done a considerable job for the Scottish economy. Of course, it cannot provide all the answers to Scotland's economic problems. When the Bill which established the agency was before the House, the Government of the day—I piloted the Bill through the House—were criticised for making exaggerated claims about the agency. I did not make exaggerated claims about the agency, nor did I claim that Scotland's economic problems could be solved by the establishment of the agency. That was never our intention. We believed that if the tide was running generally in favour of the Scottish economy, the SDA would be able to make a considerable contribution to the solution of Scottish economic problems. We also believed that, even if the tide was running against the Scottish economy, as it has been doing for the past eight years or so, the agency would nevertheless be able to do an extremely useful job for Scotland.

In a sense, the boot is now on the other foot. Conservative Members voted against the Second Reading of the Bill to establish the Scottish Development Agency. Whenever a problem arises in Scotland, they are only too happy to rush to the SDA for assistance. Indeed, in some respects, they regard the agency as the only effective instrument for solving Scotland's economic problems. That view was not taken by the Labour Government when they established the agency. Nevertheless, over the years, the agency has proved itself to be extremely important.

Given that, by itself, the agency cannot solve all our problems, it is essential to consider the economic background against which it operates. We are faced with the immediate problem of the collapse of the stock exchange and financial markets in other parts of the world. I do not know what the Chancellor will say in his statement today about the BP privatisation, but I hope that no action will be taken by the Government to bail out underwriters. I would not shed a single tear if some underwriters were severely punished by the collapse of the stock market. In fact, it would be a salutory lesson to them and many other hangers-on in the City, many of whom have made a killing in recent years from previous privatisation measures.

Of course, there is also the problem of what a continuation of the financial crisis in the world's stock markets will mean for the real economy in this country and elsewhere. We must be concerned about the developments of the past few days and their long-term effects on the British economy and other economies.

We have seen a failure of major industrial nations effectively to tackle major economic problems on a world scale. I do not know whether it is due to the ineptitude of the present United States Administration, the failure of the Japanese Government to act quickly and strongly to reverse some trends in their trading positions, or whether it is the abject failure of the British Government to provide any lead, either domestically or in the world setting. We are paying a high price for the failure to take essential steps to deal with world economic problems over the past few years.

Another factor is the appallingly high unemployment in Scotland at present. I acknowledge that there has been some improvement over recent months, but there has been nothing like the improvement that the published figures would have us believe. I have not believed the published figures on Scottish unemployment for a considerable time. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) has produced some telling statistics and arguments on the matter. The unemployment unit still calculates unemployment figures on the basis that operated before the Government made various adjustments to massage the figures. I shall quote figures from my constituency to demonstrate the extent to which published figures now hide the reality of unemployment in Scotland. In Govan, in July, the published figures were 6,092, and the unemployment unit's figures were 7,439. The difference is between 19·6 per cent. on the published figures and 23·9 per cent. on the real figures. Of course, I am sorry to say that the male unemployment rate in my constituency is considerably higher than that. There are parts of my constituency in which the male unemployment rate is about 50 per cent. That is absolutely appalling. The Government should be ashamed of themselves for bringing the Scottish economy to such a low level.

Scottish employment and manufacturing are in a fragile state. Our manufacturing base has been eroded. We now face a severe manufacturing balance of trade deficit. Of course, much of it has been hidden from view because of the uncovenanted benefit of North sea oil which, in any case, is a wasting asset.

Against that background, one would have thought that any Government who are sensitive to the real needs of Scotland and other areas that suffer from high unemployment would bump up — not reduce — their regional assistance. The changes in regional aid that were introduced on 29 November 1984 are having catastrophic effects on the amount of Scottish regional development grant. Of course, to some extent, the position was masked by transitional arrangements. The impact of the November 1984 changes is only now beginning to be felt. On the Government's own figures, in 1986-87, Scottish regional development grant was paid to the extent of £170 million, although there was some deferment of payment. The Government's provision for 1987-88 is only £69 million. This year, when the changes are beginning to bite in the fullest way, we shall suffer a reduction of £100 million in regional development grants to Scottish industry. That must be an extremely serious factor for Scottish industry.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is threatening us with a further review of regional aid; that is, a further downward review, not one to remedy some of the disastrous effects of the changes that have already taken place. Presumably, since he will not be chairman of the Conservative party, he will have even more time on his hands further to damage the Scottish economy. That is all part of the background.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Did my right hon. Friend notice that the CBI said this week that it is seriously concerned that the trend that has been evident in Scotland—that more jobs are being lost than being gained—will continue for many years?

Mr. Millan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that. I have noted that the CBI on the whole is well disposed to Government economic policies but that even it recognises the disastrous effects those policies have had on unemployment and the continuing danger that unemployment will worsen, rather than improve. That is all part of the background against which we have to consider the SDA, the Bill and the Government's attitude towards the SDA over the past few years.

We expect answers from the Minister on all the points we have made about regional aid. We do not want anodyne assurances that nothing will happen or that, if anything does happen, it will be for the best. We have had those assurances before. When the Government were elected in 1979 one of the first things they did was to slash regional aid. After the 1983 election there was a further reduction and it appears that we shall have the same again.

Against that background, one would have thought that any Government or Secretary of State concerned with the health of the Scottish economy would increase the budget available to the SDA, which is the one instrument that is available to the Government to pick up some of the pieces created by their economic and financial policies. As my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden pointed out last week, in recent years the Government's commitment to the SDA, even in terms of its gross budget, in real terms has been reduced, not increased. The grant in aid by the Government to the SDA, according to the 1987 accounts of the SDA, was again reduced in 1986-87 to a figure of £87 million compared with the figure of £91·4 million in 1985-86. Even in this extremely difficult period the SDA budget has been reduced by the Government, and certainly the grant-in-aid to the SDA has been substantially reduced. As my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said, this is completely unacceptable.

There is no doubt that the agency could spend additional money effectively and that worthwhile projects are being turned down because of a lack of finance. I am sure that all Labour Members will be able to give examples in their own constituencies of projects being either turned down or the time scale being changed because of the lack of finance. If the Government were serious about their efforts to improve the Scottish economy, they ought to be significantly increasing the budget of the SDA instead of reducing it, not only in real terms but in cash terms.

I share the disappointment of my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden about the comparatively small proportion of SDA expenditure that is directed to direct industrial investment. I appreciate the point made about direct expenditure attracting significantly greater quantities of private investment. I welcome that because, if spending £1 can produce £10 worth of benefit, it is better to spend that £1 than to spend the whole £10 out of public funds. Nevertheless, this is a disappointing feature of the SDA — expenditure and activities. Compared with the expectations that those of us who set up the agency had, it is certainly disappointing.

I welcome the emphasis that the SDA has put and continues to put on high technology. In case the Government get too euphoric about what has happened either in Scotland or in the United Kingdom, I point out that if one looks at the problem of import penetration in manufacturing over the past 10 years, the pattern in the high technology industries has been considerably worse than in the low technology industries. Whatever we have done in high technology in Scotland or elsewhere, other countries have done it more successfully. We are losing out in terms of import penetration in high technology, not only to low-cost countries in the far east but to our major industrial competitors. Although I welcome the emphasis on high technology and the efforts that the SDA has successfully made in the area, we should not get too euphoric about this because Britain is falling further and further behind.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): In the right hon. Gentleman's comments about high technology, is he including aerospace and avionics? The output from

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aerospace and avionics was £7·75 million last year, of which £4·75 million was exported. How does he equate that with his comments?

Mr. Millan: I will not weary the House by giving chapter and verse, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that what I have said is from an impeccable source, the *Midland Bank Review* of August 1986. I support the aerospace industry not least because Rolls-Royce is the biggest employer in my constituency. I have always supported Rolls-Royce and the aerospace industry, with rather more enthusiasm than have the Government.

One criticism I have of the SDA is that quite often it has been rather less enthusiastic than it might have been about some of our older industries. It has rather given the impression that new or high technology is the name of the game. It is important to look after older industries as well as high technology. In terms of high technology providing new jobs in my constituency, that has not compensated for the considerable reduction at Govan Shipbuilders.

I welcome the success of the GEAR project. I launched the GEAR project, but when I read accounts of it, I wonder whether that is so because so many others claim credit for that. It was launched by the Labour Government and it has been a considerable success. The SDA 1987 annual report made the point that even with GEAR, the east end of Glasgow is still swimming against the tide of high unemployment. Area initiatives, marvellous and important as they are, cannot do the whole job against the background of an economy that is suffering from misguided economic policies, as ours has been since 1979. Of course I would like to see more of them and more money spent on them.

The Government's commitment to the inner cities is a piece of hypocrisy if ever there was one, considering what has happened about the rate support grant over the past eight years. One cannot achieve anything in the inner cities, however one defines them, without the co-operation of the directly elected local authorities. Initiatives such as GEAR have succeeded because there has been co-operation between the SDA and the elected authority as well as the Scottish Special Housing Association and other agencies.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On the subject of inner cities, will my right hon. Friend comment on the Secretary of State's refusal to allow Glasgow district council to borrow £10 million to build the new concert hall?

Mr. Millan: I have put down a question about that for the next Scottish Question Time but I hope that I shall not need to ask it because the Secretary of State will have come to his senses and given his consent. It is not even additional money. It is absurd to talk about the council rushing into things when it has been trying for 25 years to replace the concert hall. Now that there is a project it is disgraceful for the Government to refuse consent.

With regard to SDA involvement in my constituency, I very much welcome the Govan initiative. The lead agency is the regional council, but the district council, the SDA and Glasgow Opportunities are also involved and the project is beginning to have a significant impact. I also welcome other initiatives, especially the training of local people, because to derive the maximum advantage from local initiatives we must providee additional training for people living in the area.

I welcome the SDA's help in providing the Govan work space, with what is now the Elder park work space. Govan workspace has brought 430 jobs for my constituents. That is an extremely useful community business. I warmly salute it and the important role played by the SDA. I hope that the agency will take a similar role in other parts of my constituency, including the large dry dock and other facilities left vacant by the Clyde Dock Engineering Company's abandonment of its interest in ship repairs. I hope that important sites such as Linthouse will be developed with a genuine industrial and manufacturing capacity, as I am worried that at a prime riverside site such as Braehead there are proposals for major retail developments dressed up with certain ancillary features but not designed to provide the boost that the area needs.

I am an enthusiastic supporter of the garden festival. Most of the site is in my constituency, the rest in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart). It is shameful, however, for Ministers to make great claims about the festival when the SDA received not a penny of extra funding. The money had to come out of the agency's ordinary budgets which have been reduced in real terms in addition to reductions in cash terms for grant aid.

The garden festival will last only six months, so the important question is the long-term use of the site and the surrounding area. I hope that the Minister will pursue this with the SDA. The site was sold by the Clyde port authority to Laings the builders, which proposed to build a large number of houses and nothing else. It would be a tragedy if at the end of the festival everything was cleared away and we simply had a large number of new houses there, although it is important that we have some new housing as in many ways it is a prime site and much of it is suitable for housing. There is also a proposal, which I hope will never be abandoned, for a major tourist/leisure facility, but the rest of the land is in the hands of Laings.

It is my strong view, and I believe that the SDA agrees, that the future development of the site should be worthy of the unique nature of the site and retain as much as possible of the work carried out for the festival. The site must not be given back to Laings merely to build a huge number of houses, however desirable those houses may be. We must have a mixed development on the site and I hope that the Minister will do his bit to ensure that that is achieved.

Finally, I hope that the footbridge being erected over the Clyde to connect the festival with the Scottish exhibition site will be retained, either at the same location or nearby. It would be scandalous if money was spent on a footbridge which was simply taken away at the end of the festival. I believe that my views are very much shared by the SDA, but I hope that the Government will also play their part.

I have gone from wider considerations to some important constituency points and I hope that the Minister will provide answers on all those matters. I believe that the SDA has done an excellent job over the years, as the recent review acknowledged. We wish the agency every success in the future but we believe that it could do an even better job with greater commitment, especially financial commitment, from the Government.

4.36 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): In this debate, it is a privilege to follow the hen that laid this particular egg, in the person of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). I am glad to say, however, that we captured the chick young before it set off on its proposed delinquent course and have put it through a good school and to a good purpose. To start from the footbridge over the Clyde, I shall distinguish our approach to the Scottish Development Agency from that of the Opposition. The footbridge about which the right hon. Gentleman is so pleased is possible thanks to the private enterprise capitalist-generated money given to Glasgow as a tribute by Bell's in my constituency. It is not a matter of letting any old taxpayer foot the bill and not caring whose budget or whose services suffer as a result.

The right hon. Member for Govan, for whom I have the greatest affection, is a chartered accountant, but when he described the Minister's excellent speech as "lacklustre" it was a case of the pebble calling the diamond grey. The thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks was essentially that we should give the SDA more money. Personally, I am not keen on accounting or taxation. I understand neither and am reluctant to dabble in them. For an accountant to advise his client that he should spend more money without reference to where it is to come from, who else is to be put in debt and what company is to be bankrupted as a result seems strange professional advice. We are, after all, discussing a Bill that raises the borrowing powers of the Scottish Development Agency from £700 million to £1,200 million. Even in terms of the wealth of the Binns or Paxton estates, that is a lot of money.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Fordell.

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall come to that later: it is relevant to some of my illustrations.

I was disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) — [HON. MEMBERS: "You were asleep."] I can assure hon. Members that I heard the beginning of that speech. I took a conscious decision to become unconscious during the rest of it. It was long and boring. It was not even controversial, because nothing without content can be controversial. Although I have the greatest regard and admiration for the hon. Member for Garscadden, I must say that it was one of his worst, longest and most tedious speeches and clearly one in which he did not believe. As he lay spreadeagled, almost as grey as the right hon. Member for Goven, in the late hours of the night, it was clear that neither the hon. Gentleman's heart nor his mind had been recruited to his case.

Another thing that I find extremely upsetting is the general negativism of speeches made in the debate by Opposition hon. Members. Putting down 2,000 questions to Ministers is not intended to achieve accurate replies—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), who is a neurosurgeon, cannot spell "puerile", which contains the same letters as "neuro", there is something greatly wrong with the attitude of Opposition Members.

I was impressed by my hon. Friend the Minister's description of the Scottish Development Agency as now being an engine of capitalism. I noticed that that phrase was mocked by the hon. Member for Garscadden, as if capitalism were in some way a plague bacillus that was bad for employment, for Scotland, for wages and for our prosperity. That is a fundamentally wrong approach. But for capitalism, there would be nothing in Scotland and there would never have been an industrial revolution there. Capitalism is not a plague bacillus to be abhorred; it is a generous tonic and support that is to be encouraged.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Thatcherism."] Yes, we need more Thatcherism in Scotland.

When the right hon. Member for Govan proposed the Scottish Development Agency, it was to be a sort of tartan mascot of the National Enterprise Board. As the Minister correctly said, it was really intended to be a remote-controlled heather robot for nationalisation, smelling out any part of industry or commerce in Scotland that was moribund and bankrupt and feeding it with vast amounts of public money to keep vital signs of life going, whether the concern in question was good or bad.

If the same attitude had obtained when iron and steel were being developed in the last century in Scotland, when coal was suddenly seen by Victorian industrialists as viable and railways were being ploughed through the country so that Scotland at last had communications, and if that same attitude had been adopted by the national unions of cartwrights, haywainers and grooms, they would have said that the Labour SDA should keep alive for ever more the transport and industries of the past, regardless of the effect that that might have on development and commerce of the future.

I shall attempt to draw another analogy. If those who are trying to keep alive the lesser horned butterfly——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Oligotrophic moss.

Mr. Fairbairn: Oligotrophic moss, as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) correctly recalls. An enormous amount of employment in the north of my constituency—the area is now in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) — was frustrated because the Nature Conservancy Council said that if a fish farm was put in a loch that no-one ever visited, an oligotrophic moss that no one had ever seen, 600 ft below the surface, might be destroyed.

Dr. Godman: The hon. and learned Gentleman is too modest, for he is a botanist of some repute in Scotland. When he is not concerned with the oligotrophic moss, he scrutinises the Scottish thistle with vigour and passion.

Mr. Fairbairn: I did not hear the last word, but I am sure that it was an important botanical point.

If, in the days of dinosaurs, brontosauruses, lepidopterons, sabre-toothed tigers, mammoths and coelacanths, the conservationists—the Opposition—had wanted to stop everything and not allow the development of future species, none of the species they are now trying to protect would ever have developed.

It is exactly the same with Scottish industry. I come now to the living proof of that fact. Opposition Members constantly campaign on the issue of unemployment and call for more money to be spent to create industry and jobs. Yet, when 4,000 new jobs are to be set up in Clydebank in a private health care centre, they lose their interest in jobs, and their principles fly away. I grieve for the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), for whom I have the greatest affection. When the greatest prospect

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for Scotland of having a commercially viable, intentionally placed motor plant for the whole future of Scotland, Europe and the world is mooted, who comes along and frustrates the greatest opportunity that Scottish employment—not only in Dundee, Tayside or Perthshire—has had in a generation? The Trades Union Congress.

Along come the unions and say, "When it comes to my membership, my self-importance, my petty-mindedness, my Socialist principles, to hell with progress, to hell with Scotland, to hell with employment. We are only interested in ourselves." After all, it is English unions with English components factories that are trying to stop Ford coming to Dundee. If we are going to have nationalist divisions and all the nonsense about devolution, let us be clear about this. The unions would rather have Dundee laid in ruins and ashes than give up their wretched membership and interest. Those are Socialist principles at work, and the Scots should remember it.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The Labour party would do well to heed what my hon. and learned Friend says because English investors take note of what is happening in Dundee. Over the years investors have taken note of what has happened in Liverpool with the trade unions, and there is dereliction as a result. Scotland has a poor reputation for trade union relations. The English saw what happened at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and at Linwood years ago and it is not forgotten. All the good that the SDA has done over the past 10 years will be undone if the Labour party does not encourage the trade unions in Dundeee to buckle down. What is more — *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. This is an intervention. It should take the form of a question to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who has the Floor. Will the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) please bring his remarks to a close?

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that many parts of England, including my own constituency of Stockport, which has a reputation for engineering that is second to none and where there are excellent industrial relations, would be only too glad to welcome Ford and give an absolute guarantee that there would be no trouble with the unions whatsoever?

Mr. Fairbain: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a lesson of principle of the greatest importance that when it comes allegedly to the sacred cow — as the Labour party presents it — of employment in Scotland, and when it comes to the prosperity of Dundee, the trade unions and the Labour party unite in saying, "Ah, but there is a greater issue—the sanctity of the false creeds and gods of Socialism." If it is a matter of 4,000 jobs in private health care, better no jobs and no private health care. If it is Ford in Dundee with a single-union agreement or Ford in hell with a multi-union agreement, what is the choice? Better to have no Ford in Dundee, no employment and none of the huge spin-off benefits to Dundee, where the waterfront scheme and the Ford scheme are funded and supported by the SDA. Better to have none of them. Let this get home to the Opposition and the people of Scotland. When it comes to a choice between the things that they pretend they are fighting for and the tenets that they pretend they are not fighting for, the tenets come first.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Would the hon. and learned Gentleman care to reflect that the last time a Conservative Member made such comments about Dundee — it was the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) — the Dundee and Tayside chamber of commerce had to remind the hon. Member that comments made in the House are widely read? Thus hon. Members should take great care when they speak to ensure that they do not threaten the well-being of Dundee and Tayside.

As the hon. Member in whose constituency the plant will be established, I should like to say that the fact that there is a single-union agreement at that plant is the least reason why Ford will be established in Dundee. If the hon. and learned Gentleman were to consult his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, he would understand that a financial package was successfully put together by Locate in Scotland to ensure the establishment of the Ford plant in Dundee. Trade unions have rights and they are being taken into account by the TUC disputes committee. It would serve the interests of Scotland and Dundee well if hon. Members on both sides of the House understood that, left those matters to be discussed by that body, and concentrated instead on congratulating the Scottish economy and Locate in Scotland on capturing that plant for Dundee.

Mr. Fairbairn: I fully appreciate the hon. Gentleman's embarrassment, because he is caught between Scylla and Charybdis. The remarks that are constantly made that would cause foreign companies not to invest in Scotland are always made by Opposition Members. In his speech, the hon. Member for Garscadden constantly said that this is a rotten country with terrible industrial problems. I am saying that the Labour movement, the Labour party and the trades union movement should say, "To hell with these stupid little rules that we have. Let us welcome this magnificent prize that the Government and the SDA have won for us."

Mr. Bill Walker: With regard to the comments by the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), does my hon. and learned Friend recollect that I went to the Dundee and Tayside chamber of commerce, after it made its statement, and it later apologised to me because I was telling the truth?

Mr. Fairbairn: I recollect that, but I shall move on.

Mr. McKelvey: The hon. and learned Gentleman apparently blames the decline of Scottish industries on the Socialist approach. Does he recall that there were excellent trade union-management agreements in the Massey-Ferguson plant in Kilmarnock, which was debated in the House on many occasions? There was no reason to move the plant from Kilmarnock. We lost 1,800 jobs and the economy of Kilmarnock was almost ruined. The fault lay in international capitalism, because Massey-Ferguson felt that it would make more money by moving the plant to France. Incidentally, that did not work out well, because in the end the jobs were lost in France as well. The people of Kilmarnock see international capitalism as the cause for the loss of jobs.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am absolutely delighted that they do. I understood that it was international capitalism, in the form of Ford, which was bringing this mighty prize to Scotland. The Labour party and the trade union movement are trying to stop it coming. I do not see how the workers can blame international capitalism for what is happening in Dundee.

The SDA has been transformed under the Government, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, into a company that is essentially an investment bank for prospectively or currently successful and expanding industry. Some 80 per cent. of north American firms, when asked where they would locate in Europe, said in Scotland, provided we won the election, and they were right. Four hundred firms were asked what they thought was the most successful, convincing, professional and commercially responsible development agency in Europe. Of those, 80 per cent. said the Scottish Development Agency, as now transformed.

I find it rather odd that the hon. Member for Garscadden should say:

> "I am delighted to see any signs of growth, movement and inward investment in Scotland, such as Compaq at Irvine, Ford in Dundee"—

if it comes——

> "or the big development in Livingston wth Japanese capital by the Shin-Etsu Handotai company mentioned in the press today. I shall be delighted to see it come. However, we are entitled to protest against the way in which the arrival of an electronics company is sometimes used as an alibi for almost everything else that is happening on the Scottish industrial scene." — [*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 853.]

That will not encourage inward investment. That is saying, "OK, I'm glad that the patient's temperature has gone down by 1 deg, but he is terribly ill and unlikely to recover."

Those remarks contrast phenomenally with the positive and immensely successful tour of the United States and Japan which has just been concluded by the Secretary of State for Scotland with officials of the Scottish Development Agency and other business men. There were some complaints about the Secretary of State's absence the other night, when he was in Japan and I was fearful that he might have been talent-spotted, so I was happy to see him back.

I wish to emphasise the Minister's comments. We are competing not with the past or with unemployment figures, but with our fiercest international competitors and we cannot artificially subsidise industries which have no future. Not a day passes but the enormous, burgeoning prosperity of Scotland is re-emphasised — Butlins, Clydebank, Thorn, Compaq, Livingston, and the exhibition centre. Here I pay great tribute to the right hon. Member for Govan.

The city of Glasgow has been restored since the Government came into office. When I first went there as counsel 30 years ago, the city was in a mood of depression. It is now in a mood of hope, pride and magnificence, and the term "Glasgow is miles better" is now a proper description of the city.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): How many Tory councillors does the city have?

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman will remember that, during that period, we had a Tory council.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) mentioned important smaller activities, such as rural commerce, development and protection. I ask the Minister to pay great attention to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries about the effect of rating and planning and the interpretation of the Scottish Office circular about development in the countryside, which varies from one part of Scotland to another. Some people take it to mean that they should have no development, while others take it to mean that they can do what they like.

I have often said that I would like the Scottish Office to encourage the Scottish Development Agency to facilitate the transformation of our farmsteadings and country buildings into private dwellings and small commercial enterprises.

Mr. David Marshall: What about country castles?

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall come to country castles next.

In that simple way, we would both preserve one of the most important and neglected parts of the Scottish heritage and being vitality and population to rural areas.

Now, at last, let me deal with castles. There are, in the care of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, an enormous number of buildings which cost a vast amount to keep, with no roofs, a small lawn around them, a sign saying "Please keep off the grass" and 50p admission at the gate. If those buildings had roofs, it is clear that people would be living in them.

I can give plenty of examples: Linlithgow palace, Craigmillar castle and Aberdour castle. Let us take Aberdour castle. There it is, a building with a roof and another parquet floor being put down, although it is entirely empty, just so that some Ministry of Works posters can be put on the wall. To me, it seems obscene and absurd that what could be a dwelling house for people is allowed to be a charge on the public purse.

Fordell castle is protected by the Secretary of State for Scotland, because it is an ancient monument and contains some very important works of art. Had I not bought it for £100, restored it and lived in it, the castle would, like all the others, be an empty shell of no interest to anyone and a vast charge on the revenues of the Property Services Agency and the Scottish Office.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that many people in Scotland, particularly those in rural areas, would be delighted to see every castle and great mansion razed to the ground? As they stand, they are testaments and monuments to the slavery of working people and their families.

Mr. Fairbairn: I hope that everyone in Scotland is listening. The reason for building houses such as the one in which I live, which was built in 1210, was not so that certain people could rule the peasants, as the hon. Gentleman imagines, but so that the peasants would have somewhere to hide and their neighbours would not cut their heads off.

I can give Socialism a good example of the value of Fordell castle. During the miners' strike, at 11 o'clock on a Sunday night, two families—10 people—came to the castle from High Valley fields because they were seeking refuge——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): They were my constituents.

Mr. Fairbairn: Indeed they were the hon. Gentleman's constituents and perhaps I should not mention what they said about their Member of Parliament. They had always

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voted Labour, but they were coming to the house of a Tory Member to seek refuge from the persecution of other members of the National Union of Mineworkers. For a week, the castle provided them with that refuge.

Mr. Douglas: Nonsense.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Member tempts me to tell him what those people said, but I think that it would be indiscreet for me to do so.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, as all these buildings are under statutory protection, to arrange for them to be put to proper and intelligent use for the benefit of the countryside and the Scottish people. If Opposition Members really think that it is popular in Scotland to destroy our heritage, which I have been trying for 30 years to reprieve, they should say so loud and clear before the next election.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fairbairn: No. I have heard one interruption by the hon. Gentleman, and I do not believe that the next one will be much more intelligent.

I recently had to stay in Scotland with four English Members of Parliament—one from the midlands, one from the west country, one from Kent and one from the north. They had not been to Scotland before. I took them all over Scotland, and they were astonished that we had any complaints or felt jealous of those living in the south of England. After all, we have £127 spent on us for every £100 spent on an Englishman, every £80 spent on a Cumbrian, and every £70 spent on a Welshman. We have three international airports within 40 miles of one another. We have the best system of road and rail transport, except for occasional difficulties, making the English transport system look decadent and outdated. We have a tourist industry that makes the Lake District, Dorset and Devon look like a desert. We have excellent facilities. We have 80 per cent. of the inward technological investment, 40 per cent. of EEC grants, and the majority of regional aid for only one eleventh of the British population.

We also have more employed people in Scotland today than have ever been employed in Scotland, with a smaller population. *[Interruption.]* Yes, we also have more unemployed, and I shall give Opposition Members a typical example. Every day, on the front page of the Dundee *Courier and Advertiser*—which is still civilised enough to put its advertisements on the front page—we read, "Situations wanted: two; situation filled: one; situations vacant: probably 500." Turning to the back page, we see the technical vacancies.

During the election, at a meeting in Crieff, six youths who were attempting to disrupt the meeting shouted, "What are you going to do for jobs?" I said, "I shall tell you exactly what I will do. I will give you a list of the jobs available, and I will have you taken to the industrial estate in Perth." Five of them were taken on, and they had never applied for a job before. I think people should be rather cautious about their concepts of unemployment. How many people who are registered unemployed are working in the black economy? How many have taken early retirement and a golden handshake and are working in the black economy? I think that it is high time that the Government's attitude was brought forward.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): In view of the extravagant claims made by the hon. and learned Gentleman, may I refer him to the most recent labour market quarterly report produced by the Manpower Services Commission in Scotland, which is an arm of the Scottish Office? The hon. and learned Gentleman asserts that more people are employed in Scotland than ever before. Let me remind him that in March 1985, 1,906,000 Scots were at work. In March 1987, the figure is 1,879,000. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman not appreciate the reality of the plight of the jobless, instead of making ridiculous claims about employment and unemployment north of the border?

Mr. Fairbairn: I do appreciate the plight of the jobless. If any Opposition Member can tell me that at an election meeting he obtained jobs for five people who had never applied for jobs, will he please stand up, and I shall give way.

There is a grave danger that Opposition Members will give the rest of Great Britain—especially English, Welsh and Irish Members of the House—the impression that they constantly girn, and therefore are eventually not to be listened to. We now have an excellent and distinguished Lord Chancellor, perhaps the most distinguished legal brain since Lord Simmons to sit upon the Woolsack. I have not heard one word from any English Member of Parliament, any English peer, or any English judge or barrister, about the appointment of a member of the Scottish bar as head of the English judiciary. Just imagine what the position would have been if Lord Havers had been appointed Lord Advocate. There would have been nothing but gurling and complaining and people saying, "Och, keep him out o' our wee patch."

Mr. Favell: As an English lawyer, may I say that I greatly respect the new Lord Chancellor. He is most welcome, and the legal profession looks forward to working with him. Furthermore, we have great respect not only for Scottish education as a whole but for Scottish legal education in particular.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged for those tributes, which I have not heard from any Opposition Member, whatever his nationality.

Mr. David Marshall: The hon. and learned Gentleman expresses delight at the appointment of a Scot to the highest legal position in Britain. Why does he not express the same delight at the continuing appointment of Peter Fraser as Solicitor-General for Scotland?

Mr. Fairbairn: The two positions are not comparable. The hon. Gentleman will remember the great difficulties that arose after the first world war. The opinion, not of the late Lord Clyde, but of his grandfather, was that no person could occupy two offices. As prosecutions were conducted in their name and not in the name of the Crown, they could not be seen to be unable to undertake prosecutions.

When I listened on Wednesday night to the speeches of Opposition Members — [HON. MEMBERS: "You were asleep."] When I listened to the speeches of those Opposition Members that I had the misfortune to be unable to sleep through, I was reminded of Thomas Carlyle's remark about his mother-in-law: that she had lost the power of communication but unfortunately not the power of speech.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) to comment on speeches that he slept through during last Wednesday's debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. However, may I remind the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that although this is a Second Reading debate and one can range quite wide, there has already been a very wide examination of the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am most obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Employment on Clydebank is opposed by the Labour party on doctrinal grounds. Employment at the Ford plant is in jeopardy because of the Labour party, again on doctrinal grounds. Growth in Scotland is 4·6 per cent. compared with 3·2 per cent. in England. It is a record third year for both parts of the kingdom. Thanks to this Government, Scotland is now the trail blazer.

As originally conceived, the only purpose of the Scottish Development Agency was to give spivs such as De Lorean the opportunity to put their spoons into public funds. Under this Government, real industry has been established and developed, and in rural areas there has been the clearance of ugliness. However, the Opposition's message is that they have nothing to offer Scotland. This Government have given Scotland everything that it wants, and more.

5.20 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to make my maiden speech as the Member of Parliament for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde. I should like to spend some time considering my predecessor, Mrs. Anna McCurley. She was a striking and popular Member of Parliament. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House hold her in high regard and have some fondness for her. I share that regard since I had the pleasure of working with Mrs. McCurley when both of us were elected members of the Strathclyde regional council. At that time she demonstrated her tenacity and independence in representing her constituents. She continued to display those features during her time as a Member of Parliament.

Mrs. McCurley was the first Member of Parliament for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde when the constituency was created by boundary changes. Early in her career as a Member of Parliament she was described by *The Scotsman* as outspoken and formidable. She ensured that this new constituency became well known not only in the House but in the country.

I have said that among her many qualities Mrs. McCurley showed a good deal of independence. That is particularly witnessed by the fact that she was no blind supporter of the Government in either their actions or their philosophy. Indeed, she abstained from supporting the Government in 1984, when her plea to the Government not to pull the plug on Scott Lithgow seemed to be ignored. For these and many other reasons I must say to the House that while Mrs. McCurley was a member and supporter of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, I make no apology for the fact that I am proud to be one of the main reasons why the Government cannot now man it.

Above all, Mrs. McCurley was gracious in defeat—more gracious and honest than the Government in this continuing debate. It has been said that this debate is unnecessary and time-wasting. That is utter nonsense, because it is the Government who have caused the controversy. I agree that the Scottish Development Agency should have an increased borrowing capacity, but I am gravely concerned that the way in which this Government are directing the SDA will mean that my constituency will receive less assistance from that body than it has received in the past. Last week the Minister of State told the House that the Labour Government had created the SDA to be interventionist. It was his vain and proud boast that under this Government it has been transformed into an engine of free enterprise.

The point at issue for me and my constituents is the radical change of direction, whereby the abandonment of the sensible interventionist policies that were embodied in the Labour vision that created the SDA has led to the abandonment by this Government of constituencies such as mine.

Renfrew, West and Inverclyde is a varied constituency, stretching from the banks of the Clyde, with its traditional and still vitally important industries, through rural areas which have their own serious problems of transport and, for some, isolation, to the comparatively new community of Erskine. In each of these areas there is high unemployment — devastating and tragic in its consequences.

I was not elected solely by the unemployed. No, I was elected because people of all incomes and standing voted for me. Although they may work and own their own homes, they want decent standards of education, better health care and further education and jobs for their children. Those are the matters that concern me and my family. My constituents are also concerned about these matters. Above all, they have found Government action and the views embodied in the Minister of State's speech last week offensive to their sense of fairness, because his comments about the SDA described the Government's strategy of polarisation, of division between the haves and the have-nots, of creating a divided society which the electorate in Greenock, Gourock, Inverkip, Wemyss Bay, Kilbarchan, Houston and Erskine utterly reject.

This polarisation of the SDA away from the needs of the community, which was implicit in the words of the Minister of State, is also central to the Government's strategy in their document, "Scottish Homes," which attacks the safe tenure of thousands of my constituents. It is this polarisation between those on no or low incomes and the best off, which is central to the thinking behind the wicked and iniquitous poll tax, which will discriminate against many thousands of my constituents. That tax so offends the sense of fairness of our people that I know many of my constituents who, even though they may benefit financially, realise that their society will take yet another moral step backwards and see that the tax is a further attack upon local democracy and local councils, which are attempting to maintain essential services in the face of increasing vicious assaults from the Government.

The Minister of State said that the Bill confirms the Government's commitment to the continuing process of improving the Scottish economy. That would be laughable were it not transformed into human tragedy and waste in the lives of so many of my constituents who have become and remain unemployed. I will not give the House a litany

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of factory closures in my constituency. That would be as long as, if not longer than, those in many other parts of Scotland, although I am delighted with the news that Compaq today said that it will double its work force sooner than expected because of the skills in our community. That is good news and I welcome it.

I finish by telling the House about one community in my constituency which I have not yet mentioned. Linwood is not simply the area I represent, but the community in which I live. It is an area grievously injured by a massive level of unemployment inflicted by the Government. It is a community where the pride and the stamina of my people have survived despite the Government, despite low incomes, no jobs and lack of development. It is a community with such need that I hold it up to the House as a prime example of the failure on a catastrophic scale of the free enterprise approach about which the Minister of State boasts.

I say to the Minister, to the House and to my people that I will fight for all my constituents and for their children. I warn the Minister now that my constituents do not want a fast-buck society—the instant reward. They do not want a Government who think only of the present. That is why they elected me, a member of the Labour party —the party not only of the present, but of the future.

5.28 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): It is my pleasant duty to congratulate the hon. Member for Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on his maiden speech. He instantly captured the respect of the House by paying a generous tribute to his predecessor, Anna McCurley. She was held in great affection and regard on both sides of the House, and although we welcome the hon. Gentleman, we mourn the loss of Anna McCurley and hope that she will be back among us soon—even though we cannot predict exactly which Scottish constituency she may next represent. The hon. Gentleman made an impressive maiden speech. He spoke with great commitment and eloquence, skilfully tailoring his speech to the edge of controversy. If he was not controversial, he was certainly not uncommitted, and he made clear to the House the anxieties of his constituents. I hope that we will hear again from him soon.

A week ago, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) dismissed my intervention in his speech when I tried to draw his attention to the considerable increase in the financial limits of the Scottish Development Agency which the Bill represents. He tried to imply that it was an increase only in the borrowing requirement and that it meant a reduction in the agency's spending power. But the Scottish Development Agency's external financial limit includes borrowing and spending, and the Bill will authorise an increase of about 71 per cent.

That is a substantial increase in public moneys given to a specific agency of Government, and it should be clear to Opposition Members that those moneys, whether borrowed or spent, are then not available for spending for other purposes in Scotland, such as on schools and hospitals, or for spending on equivalent purposes in England. The moneys are taken from businesses and taxpayers in Scotland, but they are also taken from businesses and taxpayers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Those hon. Members who seem to regard a 71 per cent. increase in the development agency's spending and borrowing as of little account should set the increase in the overall context of industrial support in Scotland. This year, industrial support in Scotland will be about £124 million. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said, that means that the increase represents not only Scottish money but the application of English money. A glance at the annual territorial analysis of public spending shows that spending in Scotland is on average about 27 per cent. higher per capita than spending in England. Spending on industry, energy, trade and employment is about 90 per cent. higher per capita in Scotland than it is in England. For every £5 spent on industrial support in England, about £9·50 is spent on industrial support in Scotland.

The money about which we are talking is not simply Scottish money. It is predominantly English money raised from English taxpayers. That is why it is right for us to consider whether the resources allocated to Scotland are being allocated effectively and whether they are being allocated unfairly when one considers the regions of England which have similar, or worse, structural problems and unemployment rates. The north-east of England is one such example.

We must examine how the allocation of resources discriminates against regions such as the north-east. In 1986-87, about £107 million was paid in regional selective assistance in Scotland, whereas only £100 million was paid in the north-east. Spending on old-style regional development grants was almost twice as high in Scotland as it was in the north-east of England. Yet in 1986 Scottish unemployment averaged 15·7 per cent. and unemployment in the north-east averaged 18·5 per cent. There is a clear element of discrimination here.

I do not suggest that comparable development agencies should be set up for every region of England. There would be no point in having a development agency for every region simply competing against each other, but if this generous provision continues, and Opposition Members continue to criticise it, we in the north-east will have to see how it compares with the resources available to our agencies.

We shall examine carefully equivalent agencies such as the urban development corporations of Tyneside and Teesside and our promotional outfit, the Northern Development Company, to see what resources they have per capita compared with the resources available in Scotland. We shall continue to keep the resources that are made available in Scotland under critical review. Few hon. Members have considered the way in which the SDA carries out its functions.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied with the financial support that has been given to the Teesside urban development corporation?

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Lady will know that next week the House will debate a Bill to increase the financial support for the Teesside urban development corporation.

Miss Mowlam: But is the hon. Gentleman satisfied?

Mr. Fallon: No. I will not be satisfied with the support given to the urban development corporation if it continues to be far outweighed by the per capita support given to the

SDA, and I hope that the hon. Lady will join me in my call for a much more even-handed approach to the allocation of public resources.

No Conservative Member disputes the importance of at least some functions of the SDA. Of course a development agency should clear away the debris of the past. We have such an agency in England — English Estates—but Scotland is treated much more generously. For land purchase in the whole of England, English Estates has a budget of about £2·6 million. The SDA, which serves only 5 million people, has a budget exactly double that amount. We in the north-east also need an agency to promote our region and to secure fresh, internationally mobile investment for the north-east, just as the SDA and Locate in Scotland try to attract investment to that country. But there is a great difference in the resources allocated. This year, the SDA will spend about £13 million on promotion and publicity. The Northern Development Company has £1 million to spend. No Scottish Labour Member can argue that resources are being allocated equally.

Another primary function of the SDA is derelict land clearance, to which it will commit £38 million this year. That represents one third of the amount spent on land clearance in Britain in a country whose population is only one tenth of the British population. Let us have no criticism of the resources being provided by the Government to Scotland. Instead, hon. Members on both sides of the House should ensure that those resources are effectively managed and efficiently applied.

I wish to consider three aspects of the Scottish Development Agency's work and the conclusions of the review group. First, the development agency should clear away the old industrial landscape and help to build more factories, refurbish the environment and carry out the environmental work that public agencies have always done. Secondly, the SDA should do its best to compete against other agencies to attract international investment. But when one considers the third function of the development agency — that of directing public investment—the questions begin to accumulate.

When we consider the figures we find that the Scottish Development Agency has made a number of rather serious misjudgments. More than 1,000 of the companies that it has backed over the past 12 years have gone bankrupt. Indeed, the review group report states that the overall rate of return on investments made in the period 1980-85 is estimated to have been about 5·4 per cent. for head office investment and negative for small business division investment. In other words, the SDA, in choosing suitable small business investments for our money, has been making a loss on that money for the past five years.

I believe that much greater clarity should be given to the development agency's investment function. Indeed, I am somewhat suspicious of the agency's aim, about which I read in its latest annual report, to increase the aggregate money income of Scotland's residents. To increase the aggregate money income of Scotland is one thing, but to do it by taking money from England and investing it in risks and enterprises which the Scots are not prepared to risk money on themselves is quite another thing.

There is a general lesson to be learnt. Scotland's residents are residents of the United Kingdom and have as much interest as the rest of us in reducing such misallocation of public money, in reducing the role of the state in risk taking and investments of that kind and in encouraging the expansion of the market sector. Scots also have an interest in lowering the proportion of gross domestic product taken in public expenditure. I remind the House that that proportion, 48 per cent., is very much higher in Scotland than it is in England.

In short, the SDA, through the investment function, is investing English taxpayers' money in risks that the Scots are not prepared to back themselves. If that were not true, we would have had some calls to privatise the SDA. Therefore, it must be true. Instead of depending on quangos such as the SDA and civil servants to take risks for them with English money, the Scots should be looking much more to their own financial institutions and asking why they are not bearing a higher proportion of the risk themselves.

Why as Conservatives do we license such a body in Scotland when we have not been prepared to support the introduction of similar bodies in equally hard-pressed regions of the United Kingdom such as the north-east and north-west? If we are to continue to support such an agency from the Conservative Benches, we must apply at least three conditions. First, the resources allocated to the SDA should not be disproportionate to the resources allocated for similar genuine public purposes in other regions of the United Kingdom.

Secondly, those resources should be used more effectively than if they were applied for the same purpose in other ways through other agencies. We should expect greater value for taxpayers' money from the SDA than we would otherwise expect from spending by Government Departments.

Dr. Moonie: Would the hon. Gentleman like to see a reduction in spending in Scotland or an increase in spending in the regions of England?

Mr. Fallon: I would certainly like a reduction in the proportion of GDP taken by public spending in all parts of the United Kingdom as a whole. I would certainly like a much more even-handed approach to the application of public resources. I very much regret the fact that public spending in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is so very much higher per capita than it is in England.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): There is almost an implicit threat in the hon. Gentleman's comments. When he requests a more even-handed approach, is he reflecting his own views or those of the Scottish Office?

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Gentleman should not anticipate me. I will consider the Scottish Office's approach in a moment.

I have said that Conservative Members should continue to support the existence of and resources allocated to the SDA provided that the agency fulfils three criteria: its resources should not be disproportionate; the resources should be used more effectively than resources allocated in other ways; and the purpose and management of the agency should continue to be kept under very strict review.

I notice that the review group established by the Treasury and the Scottish Office made some scathing criticisms of the management of the agency. It is simply not true to say — as Opposition Members have said throughout the debate—that the agency is doing a good job splendidly. Opposition Members have been a little

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taken in by the annual report. The review group did not reach that conclusion. Far from it. Paragraph 2.36 of its report states:

> "We have found that the Agency's stated corporate priorities do not relate well to its functions, its organisational structure or its approved budget headings and that its planning and budgeting are not well linked. Nor is there a good tie-up between the Department's planning and the Agency's planning. The Agency's budget prioritisation system . . . suffers from serious shortcomings. The Agency has not devoted adequate effort to assessing the impact of its activities and its financial systems do not provide adequate management information."

I would not have thought that that was an outstandingly clean bill of health from the review group. I hope that my ministerial colleagues will give the commitment that they will continue to keep the management of the agency on its toes and under review.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful if we made it a condition of any additional funding for the agency that some of the serious criticisms that he has just brought to the attention of the House are corrected? Would it not be rash to pledge more resources to the agency when its control procedures are as weak as the review group has reported? How would my hon. Friend react to that suggestion?

Mr. Fallon: I am sure that my ministerial colleagues at the Scottish Office will apply that consideration when they decide how additional resources should be exercised by the agency. I am sure that we will hear how the recommendations of the review group—and there are substantial recommendations in the report—will be put into effect and how they will be monitored.

I hope that I have made it clear to the House that, speaking simply for myself, I have doubts about the SDA. However, I am prepared to trust the word of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Scottish Office. My hon. Friend the Minister of State described the SDA last week as an "engine of free enterprise". It would seem to me that it is an engine of free enterprise liberally lubricated by public money. If my hon. Friend says that it is an engine of free enterprise, we look forward to seeing how it performs.

My ministerial colleagues have taken—as we would expect—a very pragmatic and constructive view of the operation of the agency. They are all very pragmatic and constructive people. I hope that they will seriously consider some of the criticisms.

Mr. Maxton: Would the hon. Gentleman like to say a word or two about his erstwhile political ally and ideologue the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and say whether he expects his hon. Friend to support the Bill?

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend's name is among the supporters of the Bill and he must justify not simply to the House but to himself the very pragmatic and constructive course that his view of public investment is taking. I am sure he will do that.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the clear message contained in his comments is that Scotland, relative to his region, the north-east, and to mine, the north-west, is in a privileged position? Scotland is doing well compared with the rest of the United Kingdom but more support from the Front Bench would not come amiss.

Mr. Fallon: I agree. The entire two-day debate could be condensed into two words—"Thank you".

Mr. Bill Walker: Before my hon. friend completes his interesting and stimulating address, will he comment on the Scottish National party view that all funding of Scottish expenditure comes out of Scotland and that Scotland does not enjoy a better position than the north-west and north-east of England?

Mr. Fallon: I have never been able to understand that argument. Soon we shall have the latest review on annual spending and members of the SNP, like us all, will be able to assess Scotland's relative position.

I have said that Ministers take a pragmatic and constructive view of the Scottish Development Agency. They accept that the agency must continue to exist and they accept the purposes which the agency has laid down for itself. I ask my hon. Friends to pay attention to three serious points. First, the review group recommended that the agency should re-examine its advisory services for which it does not charge. I should like many more of those services to be considered for charging. Secondly, it should be obvious to everybody that the agency's small business lending and investment operation must be examined more carefully and, as the review group said, be subject to much stricter commercial disciplines. Thirdly, it is self-evident that a higher proportion of the agency's activities should be self-financing.

Ministers have an obligation at least to consider those criticisms. After all, they are not simply Ministers in the Scottish Office but Ministers with obligations to all United Kingdom taxpayers from whom the agency is so generously funded.

5.53 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I join the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) in complimenting the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on his formidable maiden speech. It was a sign of great things to come. However, I could not agree with the rest of the speech by the hon. Member for Darlington. He and I went to the same university, but the fact that he seems unable to distinguish between the total financial limit of the Scottish Development Agency and the annual current grant does nothing to enhance the reputation of the institution we both attended.

When the hon. Member for Darlington was at St. Andrews he had a reputation for being an independent and moderate Conservative. I hope that that reputation does not damn his political career. I am sorry that he has fallen for the free market, laissez-faire stance which is the vogue on the Conservative Benches.

The hon. Gentleman asked about Scottish expenditure. Tories conveniently forget that they refer to identifiable public expenditure figures but we in the Scottish National party are also interested in expenditure which is not identifiable. We include items such as commuter subsidies in the south of England, an aspect which the Institute of Economic Affairs in a paper entitled, "Manufacturing—Two Nations" described as being more significant than the entire regional aid budget for the United Kingdom. We include house purchase subsidies, which are balanced towards the English economy because of higher earnings and higher house prices. We include defence expenditure. About £3 billion additional expenditure on defence alone goes to a narrow region of the English economy. We could also include London weighting, but I shall leave the broader questions for another day.

If the hon. Gentleman conducts an exercise on the overall Scottish budget and calculates revenue and expenditure, he will find that Scotland's current budget position is in a £3·5 billion surplus. That represents a great subsidy from the Scottish economy to the English economy.

There is some consolation in the otherwise unsatisfactory framework of our debate which had to be adjourned last week: we have been able to read in the *Official Report* what the Minister said when he opened the debate. Indeed if it had not been for the *Official Report*, I suspect that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) — who has left the Chamber, leaving us sadder but no wiser—would not have been able to refer at all to last week's proceedings. We shall now be able to pin down the Minister exactly. Last week, he said of the SDA:

> "In recognition of that, and the increased effectiveness it has achieved in the use of its funds, we have been able to increase its budget in real terms since coming into office."—[*Official Report*, 21 October; Vol. 120, c 844.]

From that it seems that he was talking about Government expenditure on the Scottish Development Agency, yet we know from parliamentary answers that the Scottish Development Agency's budget has decreased in real terms by 15 per cent. over this Government's term of office—from £104 million to £89 million.

Even in terms of gross expenditure, including the agency's own resources, there has been a marginal decline in real expenditure. The Minster must tell us exactly how he can justify his original comment.

There is a consistent trend in Government economic policy. When confronted with inconvenient statistics, they do not confront the problem, they change the statistics. Employment statistics are an example, as are the Minister's weasel words claiming an increase in the SDA budget when a decrease has occurred.

The decrease in the SDA budget takes place against a backcloth of radical cuts in the total United Kingdom regional aid budget. Over the last 10 years the decline in real terms of total regional aid expenditure in Scotland has been about 55 per cent. The Scottish economy has growing problems. Conservatives talk in glowing terms about successes in the Scottish economy, but that is not the overall picture.

For example, the latest statistics for the first quarter of 1987 show that the index for industrial production and construction in Scotland stood at 98·6, using 1980 as the base when the index was 100. The equivalent figure for the United Kingdom was 111·6. How can that be described either as an improvement relative to the United Kingdom or an improvement in absolute terms? The Minister must explain.

Despite its best efforts, the Scottish Development Agency has not been able to transform the Scottish economy's prospects. As evidence of the SDA's missed opportunity, I shall turn to its annual report. It shows that nearly four times more money was spent last year on its operational management than on total investment. Nearly 54 per cent. of its net expenditure was spent on environmental improvements—new land and buildings —but 2 per cent. only of its budget was spent on net industrial investment.

Thus, in a year when Scotland lost thousands of jobs in the oil, shipbuilding and engineering industries, the SDA spent the bulk of its time and money on landscaping and similar projects. But that was not the agency's fault. At the end of 1985 the former chief executive of the agency said that he could effectively spend twice his budget on viable projects in Scotland if the Government were willing to provide the funds.

In his speech last week the Minister said:

> "The agency is now increasingly applying to the development of indigenous companies the targeted approach that has brought it success in the attraction of inward investment."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 843.]

That is a welcome development. But how does the Minister think that the SDA will achieve that worthy objective when in the past 10 years the percentage of its budget spent on net industrial investment has declined from 25 per cent. to a meagre 2 per cent.? How can it restructure the Scottish economy to the benefit of indigenous companies? It is all very well for the SDA to carry out targeted surveys and sectoral reports, but what can it do with those reports without the budget that will lead to industrial investment from indigenous companies? The Minister mentioned food processing and engineering as part of this sectoral approach, but there are many other opportunities, in biotechnology, educational supply, transport equipment, mineral resources and timber. The SDA is interested in those sectors in which Scotland has an important natural advantage. Those sectors would benefit from an adequate budget to enable industrial investment to take place.

We in the Scottish National party call for the SDA's budget to be increased by at least £50 million so that it can invest in such industries and seriously attempt to restructure the Scottish economy.

We know from the agency review of last year that the meagre industrial investment that it currently carries out has brought great success. The review estimated that in the period 1981-85, 10,000 additional jobs have resulted from that meagre investment, at a subsidy rate of about £1,000 per job. That is an excellent record, and surely it shows that the budget should be vastly increased.

Another point that many hon. Members raised, on which the Minister should give us a specific reply, related to the rural development schemes. What has happened with regard to PRIDE—projects for rural industry and development enterprises—and DRAW—development of rural workshops — over the past few months? This subject was raised by the hon. Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), for Dumfries (Mr. H. Monro), for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and myself. What funding will be available for the continuation of these schemes? Is the Minister prepared to deny the rumour that is currently circulating, that grant aid for these schemes is about to be withdrawn and substituted by a loan scheme? Furthermore, will he give an assurance that the companies that undertook studies to see whether they qualified for these schemes, only to find that the schemes had been stopped, will be given priority when new applications are made?

I agree with the remarks of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), that it is extremely unfortunate that last week this important Scottish business started at 11 pm. I further agree that it was unfortunate that Scottish Members who wanted to discuss that

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

important business had to sacrifice a wide-ranging debate on the Scottish economy. However, there is not only one explanation for the confusion over last week's debate. In particular, I mention comments that were made in *The Scotsman* on 23 October. Government sources claimed that when the timetable was being worked out before the summer recess, the shadow Foreign Secretary asked for the SDA debate to be moved from yesterday afternoon to Wednesday night in a straight swap for a debate on disarmament. The Government Whips agreed to the switch, on condition that the SDA debate ended at 1 am.

I do not know whether Government sources are perpetrating a foul calumny on the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), but I say to Labour Members that it is very difficult to protest against the system, even when there is ample evidence that it is not providing proper time for Scottish debates, only to discover that the Labour Front Bench may be part of the arrangement by which such an eventuality occurred.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I caution the hon. Gentleman, early in his parliamentary career, that it is very dangerous to draw on comments in *The Scotsman*, or any other newspaper, that are described as "Government sources", particularly with regard to discussions that have occurred, whether they be between the Government, the Liberal party, the Labour party or any other party. We are aware of a history of Government sources telling deliberate lies to show themselves in a better light. A similar situation arose in the Scottish Grand Committee with regard to the day on which the Liberal party had the choice of business. The Liberal party was betrayed on that day and the same attributed Government sources put out lies to the newspapers on that occasion.

Mr. Salmond: I accept that a foul calumny may have been perpetrated on the right hon. Member for Gorton, but, if so, I would have expected the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), when he wrote to *The Scotsman* about other matters in the same report, to have put the record straight. The right hon. Member for Gorton still has an opportunity to write to *The Scotsman* to clarify that important matter.

The central difficulty that we face, despite the general agreement between the 62 Opposition Scottish Members on the direction the SDA should take—this is evidenced by the lack of numbers on the Government Benches—is how we can bring our majority will to bear on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the numbers of Members on our Benches. May I point out to him that one fifth of Scottish Conservative Back-Bench Members are here, as is one fifth of the Labour party's representation.

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Gentleman worked that out without a calculator.

Mr. Salmond: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out the weakness of the Conservative Back-Bench contingent. He may consider that the departure of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) represents a strengthening of his team.

The point that I was making was how to bring the majority will of Scotland to bear on the Government on the SDA issue and on every other. Until we can answer that question and solve that problem, there is little that we will be able to do about the Scottish economy or any other matter facing our country.

6.8 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this debate, which is of importance for Scotland and its economy.

I shall follow convention and pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Gerald Malone. He earned a reputation as a Member who worked hard and industriously on behalf of his constituents and the House. Like myself, he is a Scottish solicitor and I understand that he is taking some interest in that profession. I gather that he has added another string to his bow by becoming involved in journalism. He is still interested in his political career and I wish him well in all his careers, but it would be dishonest of me to say that I wish him a speedy return to the House.

The constituency I am proud to represent makes two significant contributions not only to the Scottish economy but to the economy of the United Kingdom. It is the oil capital of Europe. The contribution made by Aberdonians and those based in Aberdeen plays a considerable part in the Chancellor's ability to reduce tax rates and masks some of the more fundamental and real problems in our economy. That is because of the contribution oil makes to the Exchequer. It is also one of the major fishing ports. About three quarters of the total amount of fish landed in this country is landed in the north-east of Scotland and a substantial proportion of that is landed in Aberdeen. I hope that in future debates on that issue I shall be able to make a speech because that, together with most of the other industries in Scotland, is suffering at the moment.

Today we are considering the Scottish Development Agency Bill and I want to say something about the considerable contribution that the SDA makes to my constituency. I am advised that about £92,400 per 1,000 head of population is invested in Aberdeen, South by the SDA. That is one of the highest rates of investment in any constituency in Scotland. It is a tribute to those who created the SDA—it has been mentioned often that it was a creation of a Labour Government—that although the Government have made at least two attempts to interfere in the real work of the SDA, it still exists and makes a valuable contribution.

On the matter of the contributions, there are some anomalies and I will give examples. In my constituency the SDA made an investment in market research and studies to the tune of about £517,000 in 1985-86. I assume that the market research and studies are an attempt to identify new areas for job creation. However, in another part of my constituency Aberdeen university, which has existed for about 500 years, has been starved of funds by another Government-funded agency, the University Grants Committee. Just yesterday the senate of Aberdeen university took a decision in relation to a paper. If that paper is implemented, it will mean the loss of 150 jobs in my constituency. It strikes me as anomalous that we should have an agency charged specifically with the task of creating employment but also have another Government agency such as the UGC, which is the direct responsibility of the Government, obtains its funds from the Government and whose policy, if implemented in

Aberdeen university, will result in the loss of those 150 jobs and the closure of at least six departments. I am sure that we shall return to that subject again.

On lands and buildings in my constituency the SDA, again in order to provide job opportunities, contributed about £5,185,000 in 1985-86. It made a valuable contribution in terms of advance factory units and so on. However, the Government, as a direct result of their policy of privatisation, privatised the only remaining shipyard in the east of Scotland, Hall Russell shipyard. Because of the Government's policy towards shipbuilding, particularly in relation to defence but also in relation to the merchant fleet, the future of that yard is hanging by the slenderest of threads. About 500 jobs are at risk. The yard is currently waiting expectantly for the Government to make a decision on a tender submitted for the building of the St. Helena ferry. We have been waiting for a considerable time. The yard's future depends on the outcome of that tender. I appreciate that the Secretary of State for Scotland does not have direct responsibility for that but I urge the Government, through him, to make an early decision on that tender and on the 500 jobs.

The SDA has made a substantial contribution to the national hyperbaric centre in Aberdeen. It is a centre intended to provide jobs and develop life-saving techniques for the vital North sea oil industry. The Grampian region is no different from any other part of the country where the Health Service is under great stress with a shortage of doctors and nurses. However, there is a particular problem in Aberdeen—the lack of a specialist heart unit, despite considerable demand. Patients from the Grampian region have to travel to Glasgow for urgent heart operations and there have been deaths in the process. I call on the Government to look at that matter. I am aware that a review body has been established and that it is likely to report in the near future. However, I urge the Government to consider sympathetically the demands of the Grampain health board and others who have asked for a specialist heart unit in the Aberdeen area.

I have given specific examples of the Government's approach where there appears to be a lack of coherence. As I have said, the SDA is charged specifically with the function of creating jobs but because of Government policy we see a loss of jobs. It is difficult to understand what the Government's policy is except that it appears that what the Government giveth with one hand they taketh away with the other.

The Bill is intended to increase the financial limit of the SDA to £1,200 million. I understand that to be a borrowing limit. I have to ask; why so little when so much needs to be done? I note in the explanatory memorandum that we are advised that the Bill will have no effect on public service manpower. I have to ask the simple question: Why not?

6.16 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): My first pleasant responsibility is to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) on his maiden speech. I also wish to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) since I am the first Labour Member to have an opportunity to do so. The two maiden speeches from Labour Members have emphasised commitment to their constituencies and a firm advocacy of their constituency's roles and opinions. I trust that we will hear from both of my hon. Friends in further debates, not only on issues such as the SDA and the Scottish economy but on other matters in which they have an interest. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South brings to the House a considerable knowledge of oil and oil-related matters, and we welcome the opportunity to hear him.

We have heard several speeches from Conservative Members who have now left the Chamber. I want to say a word or two about the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and his intervention in relation to a matter affecting the miners' strike in my constituency. He is fairly eclectic in his remarks, as we might expect from some lawyers. However, I remind him of a conversation in relation to the incident. I told him over the telephone to keep out of my constituency because he knew very little about what was happening in the village. If he had intervened, he would have made matters worse. Thankfully he was gracious enough to accept my strictures and to acknowledge the courtesy of parliamentary procedure and left me to deal with the matter. Happily the matter was resolved. Much of it had nothing at all to do with the miners' strike.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not want to score points off the hon. Gentleman, but it was not me who intervened. His constituents, who told me that they had always been Labour supporters, sought sanctuary in my house.

Mr. Douglas: It will not benefit the House to prolong this matter.

I want to deal with what I consider to be the economic rationale both of this measure and of the Scottish Development Agency. Labour Members question the virtues of the market to deal with matters affecting the economy, be it structural imbalance or industries falling into decline and difficulty.

The philosophy behind the establishment of the Scottish Development Agency recognised the need for a source of countervailing power against the pull of the south-east and London. That was allied to regional policy as a whole. We had to consider how we might tilt the balance against the over-centralisation of activity in the south-east and the midlands.

We argue that the market is unfair. For the benefit of those graduates of St. Andrew's who remain in the Chamber, let me deal with the matter simply. Let us suppose that one person has an income of £100 a week while another has an income of £1,000 and a third an income of £20,000 a week. If those incomes are doubled —magically or otherwise—the effects on each person's expenditure will be different. The man with £100 might spend more on food and the man with £1,000 more on luxuries. The man with £20,000 might invest the lot.

If this were to happen in the economy as a whole, there would be a redistribution of resources.

Conservative Members—especially the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) — rage against the "disproportionate" amount of public expenditure that Scotland receives because that amount is quantifiable in terms of Government statistics. However, those statistics do not include the redistribution of income and wealth by, for example, the doubling of house prices in London in three or four years. Government statistics may not quantify such factors but they represent a change in the balance of purchasing power throughout the United Kingdom. That is what the so-called market does.

[Mr. Douglas]

We argue that that is extremely unfair. It creates not only an imbalance in terms of expenditure but huge social diseconomies that are very difficult to quantify. The Government do not give comparable figures for the social diseconomies of London and the south-east. Government statistics are compiled in relation to what the Government can identify as expenditure.

Page 64 of the SDA report states:

> "growth has been unevenly distributed within the United Kingdom, with the rapid expansion occurring in the South-East of England leading to shortages of skilled labour and housing."

That is the work of the market that so many Conservative Members support. There is a shortage of skilled labour and housing in London and the south-east and there is unemployment in Scotland.

How can the Government say, "We want the SDA to be an engine of free enterprise"? Incidentally, one of the Minister's hon. Friends misquoted him as saying that it should be the engine of capitalism. If the SDA is to become the engine of free enterprise, God help us.

The SDA was established in 1979. Since then we have seen a massive sea change in the international economy. There are three elements to that change. First, as has become poignantly manifest over the past few weeks, there is a division between financial operations and real investment. Financial operations do not necessarily create real investment. The division has been exacerbated by recent technological revolutions. There has also been division between primary and secondary producers. Over the past 100 years the close relationship between those who produce raw materials and those who produce manufactured goods has broken down. There is no real explanation for that, but it is nevertheless true.

Thirdly, there has been an expansion of what we loosely call services. We are not talking about hotels and catering alone. There is a whole range of services relating to finance and banking. Indeed, the administration of the computer industry is in itself a service.

Those three elements have strengthened the need for an interventionist agency such as the SDA. I fear for the agency's future if the Government intend to stand back and use it as an instrument of free enterprise.

In our debate last week I made a somewhat fanciful interjection about the number of photographs of Sir Robin Duthie in the annual report—

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): He is a perfectly respectable-looking man.

Mr. Douglas: That is a matter of opinion.

We need a little deeper thinking. If the agency becomes tied too closely to the Government's policies, it will not do its job for Scotland. One can take different views of what should happen to Scotland and where we should be going in terms of economic and political development. Let me refer to an interview in a recent issue of the *Financial Times* with Professor Jack Shaw who was recently appointed to Stirling university. The piece was entitled "The special case for Scotland". Professor Shaw argued against the creation of a Scottish Assembly, saying:

> "The trouble with a Scottish assembly is that you don't actually add to your significance that way. It would actually reduce our significance as viewed from London."

That is one view. The opposite view—that taken by the nationalists — is that we should be completely independent.

I argue that the three elements to which I referred increase the need for a Scottish Assembly. We need a focus for political deliberation in Scotland allied to the agency as a source of countervailing power against the House and the dominance of the City of London. If we do not have that, the relative decline of Scotland will increase. I recognise the force of the independence argument. I do not think that we need to go that far but my experience of the past few years under the Conservatives suggests to me that we need not only economic levers in organisations such as the SDA but a political debating chamber in Scotland where we can emphasise and articulate the needs of Scotland in a Scottish context.

The agency has done a good job, despite the comments of the hon. Member for Darlington. I know that time is short and that it would be wrong to read in full the report of the review body. However, the review body gave the agency a reasonably good bill of health:

> "Most of the considerations which led to the SDA's establishment remain valid . . . We recommend that there should be no change in the statutory purposes, functions and powers of the SDA."

The report continues in that vein.

There are few of the SDA's functions and operations that the private sector would like to, or could, take up. Indeed, if one examines the litany in annexe 9 of the report, one can find none. A major function of the SDA is land reclamation to make up for the devastation and destruction caused by the market in the late 19th century. The same applies to its work in Glasgow.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) should make up his mind. This is the first time that he has had his name on a Bill in the House, and it is supported by half of the Scottish Tories. There are only five Scottish Conservative Members. The hon. Gentleman should not just sit there full of humbug. If he supports the Bill, he should reach the logical conclusion and say that Scotland needs a legislative assembly with real economic powers to oversee the agency's activities.

There has been increased Labour representation in Scotland. The CBI's report on 1 October 1987 to the National Economic Development Council is called "Maintaining the Momentum of Britain's Recovery". Table 3 refers to the change in manufacturing production between 1976 and 1986 and gives the following figures: Japan, plus 56 per cent.; the United States, plus 34 per cent.; Italy, plus 15 per cent.; the Netherlands, plus 20 per cent.; West Germany, plus 18 per cent.; France, plus 5 per cent.; and the United Kingdom, minus 2 per cent. The report states:

> "Without an internationally competitive manufacturing base, the prospects for reducing unemployment outside the south-east are remote. Whereas Southern Britain gained virtually one service industry job for every one lost . . . the rest of the country has gained only one for every four or five manufacturing jobs lost. The growth in self-employment over recent years has also been concentrated in the South.
>
> The manufacturing and service sectors are interdependent, to the extent that the distinction between them is meaningful at all. By some estimates, around a quarter of the output of the service sector is dependent on manufacturing industry. Consulting without clients is not a particularly rewarding pastime and whole industries have grown up providing services which were previously undertaken in-house by manufacturers (e.g. catering, workwear)."

That is what has happened to the United Kingdom, especially Scotland, despite the SDA's efforts. We want more of the SDA, not as "an engine of free enterprise" but as an engine of purposeful intervention controlled in Scotland by a Scottish Assembly.

6.32 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I should like to associate myself with the tributes to the maiden speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) and for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). I am sure that we can look forward to more excellent contributions by them.

I represent an area that has been significantly and directly affected by the activities of the Scottish Development Agency. Through the Dundee project, the SDA has formed a close productive partnership with local authorities — the district and regional councils — the private sector and trade unions. That partnership has given us a glimpse of the SDA's potential. It has shown us in a concrete way what can be achieved when public and private investment are linked—not in a purely financial relationship but in a planned programme to transform a city's economic face.

A series of initiatives has brought us well down the road towards transforming the city' face. A project in the Blackness area has transformed a part of the city which was characterised by industrial and urban decay. New businesses and enterprises have come into the area. Housing improvements have been carried out. People have moved back and there have been widespread environmental improvements. All these changes have been brought about by the determination of the SDA and the Dundee project to intervene, invest, originate ideas and bring life back into that part of the city. Had it been left to free market forces alone—as is the Minister's wont—the area would have continued decaying and the people would have been abandoned. Fortunately, the SDA, through the Dundee project, intervened and saved the area.

There have been many other projects in Dundee. The new technology park was successfully launched some years ago and has been well established by Ford's decision to locate its latest plant there in the face of fierce competition from around the world. A new £30 million waterfront development scheme will bring much-needed service jobs to the city. Some 1,100 service jobs will be provided, as well as 400 jobs during the construction stage. The development will provide leisure and recreation facilities of the first order for the Dundee people. In addition, there will be a tourist attraction of national significance in the form of Scott's Discovery and the new heritage centre.

There is also the "City of Discovery" campaign, which was begun on the SDA's initiative. Moving Scott's ship back to the city was a publicity initiative of the first order which can only be applauded. The fireworks display held from the back of a moving train on the railway bridge during the bridge's centenary celebrations was another major coup, which has helped put Dundee back on centre stage in Scotland. All these welcome developments have flowed from the partnership between the SDA and local public and private sectors. They vindicate in a concrete way the original decision by a Labour Government to establish a Government agency which would intervene in and help to direct the future shape of the Scottish economy.

Much has gone wrong with the original concept of the SDA. We should not allow ourselves to be blinded by the success of Locate in Scotland—welcome though it is in attracting inward investment—to the dangers of over-dependence on foreign investment. Flags go out and there is general rejoicing when multinationals decide to invest money, to create employment, and to strengthen and widen our economic base, but the reaction is very different when the multinationals decide, for their own reasons, to uproot their businesses and pull out of Scotland, leaving workers and whole communities behind to face the economic consequences.

The Secretary of State for Scotland does not need to be reminded by me of the Caterpillar decision to abandon its work force for no sound economic reasons; nor will he need to be reminded by me of his abject weakness in the face of that decision and of his inability either to check or to control these capricious decisions by multinational companies to undermine the Scottish economy.

The answer is not to mortgage the future of the Scottish economy by leaving it mainly or wholly in the hands of multinational companies. The answer must be to strengthen and diversify our economy by investing in our indigenous companies, enterprises and industries. It is those companies that will provide the firm backbone of sound, stable and long-term economic growth.

Fulfilling precisely that role in the Scottish economy should be the SDA's major task. Investment in indigenous industry should be, but I am afraid is not, the agency's key role. The agency has an investment arm, but it has a woeful record compared with what was first hoped for. The local experience for Dundee and Tayside suggests that the agency takes much the same short-term view of investment as the private sector has traditionally taken. Until recently, Tayside regional council's industrial office knew of only a handful of locally based companies which had ever received any direct equity investment from the SDA. In Tayside, only seven local companies have received direct investment from the SDA, and indeed, in Dundee, only one such company has done so. Therefore, it seems clear that the agency's investment policies simply do not begin to meet the needs of emerging Scottish entrepreneurs and other people who have ideas and who live in Scotland. If they were given the right kind of encouragement by the SDA, they would certainly strengthen the local economy.

Mr. McKelvey: As a former Dundorian, I welcome the money that the Scottish Development Agency has pumped into Dundee to the tune of around £40 million. Although I recognise my hon. Friend's point, will he consider that, if and when the SDA is to get more funds, areas of its choice, which have almost become pet projects, will give way to areas of deprivation, such as Kilmarnock, which have received virtually nothing from the Scottish Development Agency?

Mr. McAllion: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). I would not describe Dundee as a pet project of the SDA, but I recognise that, because of a lack of funding, the SDA has failed to invest to the required extent in Scotland. It strikes me that the Government are more prepared to spend more money in Scotland this year on community programmes, which are basically aimed at keeping the long-term unemployed off the unemployment register, than they are to invest in the SDA.

[Mr. McAllion]

The new problem is a lack of investment in local Scottish indigenous industry. The Labour administration took control of Tayside regional council in 1986. It came to office believing that there was an investment gap in the local economy, as I have described. In fact, it commissioned consultants to produce a report and find out whether such a gap existed. The consultants, Coopers and Lybrand—the very same consultants commissioned by the Scottish Office to look at the SDA—looked at the problem and found that such an investment gap existed. Coopers and Lybrand recommended the confirmation of Labour's manifesto commitment to establish an enterprise board on Tayside to provide the kind of local investment that is required in Tayside to keep Tayside jobs for Tayside people. Tayside people have been let down dramatically by the Scottish Development Agency's failure to tackle the problem. Instead, it has concentrated its efforts on bringing foreign investment into our country.

The problem wish the enterprise board, which I believe is one of the most hopeful things that have happened in Scotland since 1986, is that no regional council can ever have the necessary resources to provide proper investment. Regional councils could have proper resources if the SDA backed them, and I certainly call upon the Minister to consider the matter.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to those hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate for raising my point of order at this stage. You will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that, earlier today, the Chancellor mentioned a desire to be helpful to the House by making a statement at a suitable time in the course of today's proceedings. Since then, a certain amount of time has elapsed. Inquiries have regularly been made through the evening. We have had no sign of whether or when the Chancellor intends to speak this evening. Naturally, many Opposition Members consider that 7 o'clock is a possible time for such a statement to be made.

As we are approaching 7 o'clock, it would be helpful if the Government business managers would state, either on the Floor of the House or through the usual channels, some firm time at which a statement will be made. It would assist Opposition Members who wish to take part in the Scottish debate. Conservative Members who have dining arrangements will also be assisted, no doubt, by some clarification of the matter. We are not trying to be difficult; we are trying to get an orderly resolution of the problem. Will the Leader of the House state when the Chancellor will speak? Can we definitely expect a statement this evening and, if so, when?

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain whether I can help in the matter. It is not within my power to say when the Chancellor will make a statement, but I shall hear the points of order.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the House will agree that it is a tragedy that, over the past week, the Chancellor has made BP the subject of a Whitehall farce. If we cannot put an end to the Chancellor, surely it is time to put an end to the farce and get a statement which will reassure investors in this country and abroad.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that you may not directly be able to help, but you may be able to safeguard the interests of Back Benchers and the House. The Chancellor's statement affects our constituents and the House. We ask you, if the Government dither, to do what you can in the interests of the House and of Back Benchers and in the interests of justice to those who have been placed in a difficult position in relation to the Government's share offer.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all recognise that this is a considerable issue which must be solved. Does it do the House or any hon. Member any credit to try to make political capital out of such a vast matter? It should satisfy the House that the Chancellor has said that there will be a statement tonight. Must we teach Opposition Members the difference between night and day? Let us leave the Chancellor to do what is right for the country.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the comments made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), the House is entitled to expect the Leader of the House to clarify the matter. Will you accept, Mr. Speaker, that, for the past seven years, the Government have allowed British industry to be sacrificed to provide the highest priority for the City of London? Is that sacrifice now to be in vain? Are the City of London's interests to be as disregarded as those of British manufacturing?

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The only people who have been trying to make political capital are Opposition Members. We have already seen that they had the chance of a Supply day last Thursday, which they refused. Further to that, is it not the constant case—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard other hon. Members in silence. Mr. McLoughlin.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is it not also the case, Mr. Speaker, that we have continually heard arguments from Opposition Members about a lack of time in which to discuss Scotland? When they have time to discuss Scotland, they try to bring in other issues. They show their contempt. They do not care whatsoever about Scottish issues and would rather put anything else before them.

Mr. Douglas: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all recognise your considerable difficulties. You are not responsible for how, when and by whom statements can be made. Through you, I remind the Leader of the House that he has responsibilities not only to the Government of the day but to the House. I invite the Leader of the House to give some idea of the Chancellor's intentions. It is not our intention to make capital out of the matter—political or otherwise. The difficulties arise because of the Chancellor's haste in trying to raise revenue out of this. We ask the Leader of the House to make a statement about the Government's intentions and, particularly, on when the Chancellor will go to the Dispatch Box.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): This is a complicated matter which needs proper consideration. During the course of the early part of this evening, we have been trying through the usual channels, and other channels, to see whether we can fix a time. I have received a message that the Chancellor is working on the expectation of being able to make a statement at 10 pm today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot do anything about this.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot see that it can be a point of order for me.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to clarify that the procedure that was established in the last Session will hold this Session, that once the Leader of the House has made a statement from the Dispatch Box in response to points of order made by Opposition Members, you will allow questions about that statement.

Mr. Speaker: If a statement is made, I will treat it as a statement.

Mr. John Smith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The statement made by the Leader of the House gives us a time. However, many hon. Members expected a statement to be made long before now. If there can be a guarantee that the statement will be made at 10 c'clock and that there will be no attempt to either not make the statement tonight or to make it at a later time, that will help us, disappointing though the response to requests for a statement has been.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members on the Opposition Benches have heard what the Government Front Bench has said. I do not think that there is anything further that I can add. I do not believe that further points of order can arise. We have an important Scottish debate in which a large number of hon. Members wish to take part.

Does the Leader of the Opposition wish to raise a point of order?

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The difficulty that arises, as I am sure you understand, is the choice of words used by the Leader of the House. I am sure that he is doing his best to help the House, but he did speak of an expectation that the Chancellor had of being able to make a statement. Given that we pursued the matter on Tuesday, that the Chancellor said that he would make a statement on Thursday and that we are now going through Thursday and have been told that there is an expectation that there will be a statement at 10 o'clock, I am sure that you appreciate the anxiety of my right hon. and hon. Friends, together with the hon. Members in other parts of the House, to ensure that that expectation is realised. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asked for a guarantee that a statement will be made at 10 o'clock. If the Leader of the House states that a statement will be made at 10 o'clock, that will clear up the matter and we can get on with this important Scottish debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House realises that I cannot say anything about the matter. It is wasting time. I will hear the hon. Member.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has raised the uncertainty of a 10 o'clock statement. The whole question of the stock exchange collapse is based upon uncertainty and a lack of confidence. We have witnessed today a series of events in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister and various others, including the Leader of the House, have added to the uncertainty. We were told first of all that the likelihood was that there would be a statement after Question Time. We were then told that the likelihood was that it would take place after the stock market had closed across the road. We are now told that the statement will not be until 10 o'clock. The Government have waited until Wall street has closed. In all this dithering and uncertainty, there is half a chance that the Government will wait until the Tokyo market has closed. It is time that they were decisive. The only way the matter can be cleared up is if the Government are decisive in their actions. All hon. Members know that.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made a very good point. The delay in making a statement is not only adding to the uncertainty but is a discourtesy to the House. It does not just affect the markets. Hon. Members have been pressing all week for a statement to be made today. To save all the discussion, why cannot the Leader of the House say firmly that the statement will be at 10 o'clock?

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have been waiting to make an important speech on the Scottish Development Agency. This is my maiden Scottish speech. Are Opposition Members in a blue funk about what I am to say?

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that you understand the scepticism of Opposition Members about the assurance that has been given. The Government have twice this week been less than frank in their dealings with the House and the promises they have made. The first occasion was when the Chancellor said quite plainly that he was anxious to hear the views of the House before he made any decision about the BP share offer. He has made no attempt to hear the views of the House on that. The second occasion was this afternoon, when we were told that the Government would inform the House about this in a way that was most convenient and helpful to hon. Members. The minimum requirement of all hon. Members is to know precisely when that statement is to be made, and that has not been fulfilled.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to make a small contribution to the debate that we have been enjoying on the Scottish Development Agency. Is it not irresponsible of the spokesmen on behalf of the underwriters on the Opposition Benches to demand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he make a statement at a time when he is considering a difficult and complex matter? It does no credit to the House to prevent the Chancellor from undertaking his responsibilities in a most careful and considered manner.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are not

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

responsible for the actions or inactions of the Government, but you are responsible for trying to maintain order in the House. Had the Government said through the usual channels that there would be a statement this evening and arranged a time, there would have been no need for hon. Members to raise points of order to find out what was going on, which has resulted in the speech of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) being delayed and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends from Scotland being prevented from taking part in the debate.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has to announce a simple decision—whether he will hold the sale. He is at loggerheads with the Prime Minister about the decision. They have not yet decided. It is not a matter of him having to sort out the detail of the statement. That is very simple. If Scottish Members are to have the opportunity to continue the important debate without further interruption, the Leader of the House has an obligation to you to give the guarantee that the House is seeking that there will be a statement at 10 o'clock as to whether the sale of BP shares will continue. The Leader of the House must help you out of your dilemma and give us that guarantee, Mr. Speaker.

Several Hon. Members: *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call further hon. Members, I repeat what the shadow Leader of the House has said. Many hon. Members from Scottish constituencies are anxious to take part in this important debate. After all, it is an adjourned debate. It would be a great pity for them and for their constituents if they were prevented from doing so because of points of order, that, frankly I cannot answer, and that the House recognises that I cannot answer.

Mr. Hind: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not irresponsible of Opposition Members to demand a statement at a fixed time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer is clearly satisfying requirements for consultation in the contract with the underwriters? If he did not satisfy that requirement for consultation, the situation would be far worse because it would involve litigation about the money that is owed, in which case it would have a great effect upon public expenditure. Therefore, it is wrong to demand that he give a statement at this stage of those delicate consultations.

Mr. Galbraith: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has said that he is anxious to make a speech in the Scottish debate. I await that contribution with bated breath. It would be a great help to everyone if the Leader of the House will make it clear that there will definitely be a statement at 10 o'clock. There will then be no further delay in our hearing the words of wisdom of the hon. Member for Stockport about Scotland.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that political capital is about the only kind of profit that anyone is likely to make out of BP shares. Shortly before the points of order were raised, it was being claimed on the news that the statement would be made tomorrow. If the Leader of the House cannot give a copper-bottomed guarantee that the statement will be made at 10 pm today, will he give an assurance that if it is not to be made at 10 pm he will return to the Dispatch Box at that time to give us a progress report? It is quite wrong that we should be kept in the dark about this.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that you cannot command the Government to make a statement to the House, but I understand that you are in a position to accept a dilatory motion at any time so that the matter can be debated. In the present circumstances, perhaps you would be prepared to say that if a statement is not forthcoming at 10 pm you will grant such a motion so that the issue can be aired on that basis. We should all prefer to have the statement, but it would set many minds at rest if you would make it clear that in your view the issue must be resolved today and not put off until tomorrow.

Mr. Nellist: Returning to my earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that when the Leader of the House came to the Dispatch Box his purpose was to give information, not to ask for your ruling on a point of order. In the four and a half years since I became a Member of Parliament, it has been your practice once a Minister has intervened in that way, to allow questions on that intervention on the basis that it constituted a statement. I wish to ask the Leader of the House a question if you, Mr. Speaker, will allow me to do so.

Mr. Speaker: If the Leader of the House does not answer the hon. Gentleman's question, I cannot do much about it.

Mr. Nellist: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask whether the Leader of the House can give a cast-iron guarantee that the statement that he indicated as a possibility in three hours' time will be made first in this Chamber. In recent days, the Chancellor has been wining and dining with the spivs in the City and sharing his thoughts with them, but the elected representatives of working people who will stand to lose most from the privatisation plan are the last to be informed of the arrangements. Can the Leader of the House say whether the Chancellor will be coming here at 10 o'clock, or will the statement be made in Threadneedle street?

Mr. John Smith: The Leader of the House can see the apprehension felt about this, at least among the Opposition. He intervened in our proceedings not to make a business statement but to pass on a message handed to him by an emissary from the Chancellor saying that there was an expectation that the Chancellor might come here at 10 o'clock. The obligations of the Leader of the House are to the House and in my submission those obligations are more important than any other in these circumstances. He can solve the whole matter quite quickly by making a business statement to the effect that there will be a statement at 10 pm tonight and that it will be to this House that the Chancellor intimates whatever decision he has arrived at. I think that I can say on behalf of the Opposition that if the Leader of the House can give an assurance that there will be a statement at 10 o'clock and leave the matter at that, we shall be happy to proceed with the business before us.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): It is obvious that the content of the statement is rather more important than the exact time at which it is made. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), with his usual perceptiveness, has reminded the House that the time in Washington and Tokyo is slightly different from the time in London. As we all hope that the statement will be put not just in a national but in an international context, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor may have very good reasons for not giving a precise time for his statement at this stage.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that we can carry this matter any further. I call Mr. Favell to continue the debate.

7.5 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I did not expect to make my maiden Scottish speech amid so much excitement or to be met with such transparent delaying tactics from the Opposition. It is a pleasure to address the House on this important matter. Having sat through the entire debate, I have learnt a great deal about the way in which the Labour party operates.

On the whole, the Scottish Development Agency has had a very good press and I doubt whether there are many political points to be gained by Conservative Members in attacking it.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the possibility of setting up similar development agencies in England, including the north-west?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate is about the Scottish Development Agency. It should not be taken wider than that.

Mr. Favell: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for guiding us back to the important matter before us, in which there is so much interest. I shall deal very briefly with my hon. Friend's point by saying that the Scots are privileged indeed to have £136 million per annum of United Kingdom taxpayers' money spent on attracting to Scotland investment which might otherwise have gone to the north-west of England, the north-east of England or elsewhere. That money comes from taxpayers throughout the United Kingdom, not just in Scotland. Indeed, it comes mainly from England, as my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) made clear.

What is all that money spent on? It is spent on loans, improvement of derelict land and the provision of cheap business premises. The agency is serviced by 700 employees, all anxious to advise and assist people to invest in Scotland and not elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I take it that the hon. Gentleman will not mind our circulating his comments, which are clearly an attack on the Scottish Development Agency, around all the constituencies in Scotland, especially those still held by Tory Members.

Mr. Favell: I am not attacking the Scottish Development Agency. It is a wonderful idea for Scotland. I am simply pointing out that it is a unique privilege enjoyed by the Scots at the expense of the English and the Scots should be grateful to the English for providing the money to pay for it.

Mr. Maxton: I wonder whether the hon. Members for Stockport (Mr. Favell) and for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) intend to force a Division and vote against the Bill in view of their great opposition to the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Favell: I repeat that I am not against the Scottish Development Agency. I am simply saying that the Scots ought to be grateful for it. I am happy for them. The United Kingdom taxpayer is pouring a lot of money into Scotland. The Scots should be particularly grateful because unemployment in the north of England is worse than it is in Scotland. In my area, the north-west, unemployment is worse than in Scotland, yet we do not enjoy the benefits of a development agency.

Recent statistics have shown that Scotland is more prosperous than any other region of the country, except East Anglia and the south-east.

Mr. Galbraith: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Scotland is not a region, but a country? Will he please refer to it as a country—not as a region?

Mr. Favell: I did not refer to Scotland as a region; it is a country. It is more prosperous than any region of the United Kingdom except for the south-east and East Anglia, and good luck to it. It is also lucky for Scotland that the taxpayers are still pouring money into the Scottish Development Agency. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) pointed out, public expenditure per head of population far exceeds that in England. It is one third as much again. So Scotland, with its development agency, enjoys a special privilege, not only because of those 700 employees all busily working for Scotland—so they should; that is what they are there for—but because they are provided by the United Kingdom taxpayer. Let Scotland not forget that.

What is more, the Scottish Development Agency—the largest owner of industrial land in Scotland—is providing cheap industrial land, which the rest of the United Kingdom cannot have. Funded by the taxpayer, it can provide business premises at a cost that is quite impossible in many other regions of the United Kingdom. Why should the Scots enjoy that special privilege? Scotland has gone through a difficult time——

Mr. McKelvey: Is the hon. Gentleman aware—he must be as it has been mentioned often—of the disparity in numbers between Conservative and Labour hon. Members who represent constituencies in Scotland? Seventy-six per cent. of the people of Scotland voted against the Conservative Government. Does the hon. Gentleman join us, considering that he thinks we are so well looked after, in saying that we would be better off if we were granted our own assembly with tax-raising powers?

Mr. Favell: I greatly admire and love Scotland. I visit it once a year or more. I like its people, its countryside and what it has contributed to the United Kingdom. However, if Scotland chooses to separate, that is a matter for it. I would be sad if it left. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, a Scottish Assembly is the first step on the way to a separate country. I have many Scottish friends; in Stockport, there are many Scotsmen and relatives of Scots. There are Scots girls who are married to English boys, and vice versa. To pretend that the rest of the United Kingdom does not like, support or give financial assistance to Scotland is rot.

Mr. McKelvey: The Government have wrecked Scotland.

Mr. Favell: Socialism is wrecking Scotland. Scotland's greatness was built on the back of free enterprise and of

[Mr. Favell]

entrepreneurs who travelled the world and brought wealth to Scotland. Its greatness was built through the great financial institutions that are still in Edinburgh, and that were decried by an earlier speaker, who said that they should be swept away. Scotland's greatness lies in the fact that it is a great tourist attraction. People come from all over the world to visit its castles, and to decry them is idiocy. In my part of the United Kingdom we should be only too grateful to have that sort of benefit.

I have found the squabbling over what is happening in Dundee with the unions at the new Ford plant very interesting. As someone who sits outside, I can issue a little warning. The onlooker sees all. Living as I do in Stockport I can see what has happened to Liverpool through trade union militancy. No one will invest in Liverpool because they cannot obtain co-operation from the work force. Scotland is not far behind with that type of reputation. Memories are still long of what happened on the upper Clyde and at Linwood. Gartcosh and Linwood would still exist if they had not been wrecked by trade union militancy.

Such people have only themselves to blame, and my message to Scotland is, "Stop bleating. The rest of the United Kingdom admires, your historical achievements, and the way in which you discovered and administered the empire."

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not keep attributing all these things to me.

Mr. Favell: As a fellow Yorkshireman, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can well understand your concern.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am a Lancastrian.

Mr. Favell: A little friendly rivalry never did anyone any harm.

My message to Scotland is as follows: "We in England admire the way that you discovered and administered the empire and built up your great banking and insurance institutions — in other words, your great pioneering, entrepreneurial spirit. We do not like your Socialist dependence, so roll up your sleeves and get on with it."

7.18 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am sure that most hon. Members will have been entertained this afternoon by English Members who have come along to lecture us, but I do not think that we have been informed about what is happening in Scotland.

I want to discuss comments made by the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Stockport (Mr. Favell). Considering the economic problems that we have in Scotland, it angers us more than a little to listen to two hon. Gentlemen who have been wheeled in to pad out the debate for the Government. The hon. Member for Darlington suggested that the Scots are doing so well that, to quote a famous Conservative phrase, we have never had it so good. I say to him that we have major problems, and the kind of lecture that he gave us does not go down well with Opposition Members or the Scottish people.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) spoke too, and, on reflection, I believe that he contributed more to the previous debate when he was asleep than he did this afternoon. Once again, Opposition Members are being accused of whining, girning and whingeing about our problems. However, in Scotland there are 330,000 people, most of whom elected Labour Members of Parliament to argue cogently and constructively on their behalf in the House. The English contribution to the debate is a disgrace, given that English hon. Members are treating with contempt the major problems that face those 330,000 people.

The debate has shown that we take the matter seriously. It is unusual to have two bites at the cherry, but because of the incompetence of the Government's business managers last Wednesday we have had two opportunities to debate some serious economic issues. It would be easy to gloat about that inefficiency, but the matters before us are too serious for that. The gulf between the real economy in Scotland and the financial economy that is supported by the Government has become enormous. The gulf between the Government's claims about Scotland and the plight of thousands of Scots on the dole queue has become enormous. The gulf between the aspirations of the Scottish people and the lack of interest shown by the Government is also enormous.

At the beginning of his speech, the hon. Member for Darlington said that Scotland was doing well out of regional development grant, selective assistance and many other things. In 1982-83, on figures supplied by the Library, Scotland received £343 million in regional development grant, adjusted to 1986-87 prices. This year it is expected that the sum will be £66 million. While the Government are trying to promote their enterprise culture in Scotland with little effect or political support, they must not obscure the fact that there has been a major dininution in the amount of cash injected into Scotland to tackle some of the problems that I have mentioned.

Major areas are associated with the work of the SDA. The Opposition support the SDA. However, I reiterate that is is not unqualified support because there are many things that we should like the agency to do that it is not doing. We should like to think that if it were properly funded and supported enthusiastically by the Government the SDA could fulfil a much more adventurous and exciting role in the Scottish economy. Many colleagues have mentioned investment. The SDA must also consider employment and industrial output, which is increasing but not much above the 1979 levels.

I should like to identify some of the factors that underline the seriousness with which the debate should be viewed, and to try to focus attention on the serious problems from which the people of Scotland are suffering and which we in this Chamber are seeking to express to the Government.

It was widely believed that in view of the general election result the Government would take the problems of Scotland seriously, but unfortunately it appears that because of the result they are pushing further ahead with some policies that are alien. It seems that the Government are disengaging themselves from Scottish industry. The financial facts suggest that. They seem to be disinterested. I see that the hon. Member for Stockport has decided that a cup of coffee is more important than listening to me. That is the level that we have reached in the Chamber. More importantly, the Conservative party is now identified as the party of disinvestment in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Has the hon. Gentleman read the report in the *Glasgow Herald* today of the Fraser of Allander Institute, which seems to contradict much of what he has just said?

Mr. McLeish: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads *The Scotsman* of 28 October, where there is a headline:

> "Business brisk although jobs lost".

I refer him to the third paragraph in the first column of the article and the top of the second column. Business reports in the press and speculation by universities show that they have mixed views about what is going on.

Dr. Godman: May I point out to my hon. Friend that a reading of tomorrow's papers will be gloomy, especially for people on the lower Clyde? I have just been told that Scott Lithgow is to announce within the next 24 hours another several hundred redundancies. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is thoroughly repulsive and offensive when English Conservative Members say that Scotland is a prosperous nation? Areas in Scotland such as the one that I represent are suffering grievously from unemployment. From tomorrow the problems will worsen.

Mr. McLeish: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention because it highlights and reinforces the necessity for a debate and the importance that we in the Opposition attach to it.

There are continuing job losses on a large scale. I should like to mention three or four areas that reinforce the dilemma. I refer first not to some ideologically motivated paper but to the "Labour Market Quarterly Report", which I believe Ministers in the Scottish team read. It shows a curious development over the past three years. While in the United Kingdom as a whole unemployment has been coming down—based on some spurious reasons—in Scotland there has been a small drop in unemployment. Today Conservative Members have claimed that the number of people in work in Scotland has risen. In fact, over the past three years the number of people in work in Scotland has dropped, whereas in England and Wales the number in work has increased. When one measures the diminution of employment in Scotland against England and Wales, it is clear that once again the Scottish Office does not have a great deal to be proud of. We are lagging behind.

Secondly, Conservative Members suggest that we are always talking about unemployment. Let us talk about training—effective training, not YTS or the new JTS. A recent business survey in Scotland shows that 35 per cent. of a large number of major firms argue that they have skill shortages. With 330,000 people on the dole queue in Scotland, they still have skill shortages. I ask the Minister who is to reply to the debate to comment on that problem.

The third aspect to which I should like to refer is long-term unemployment. I come back to the hon. Member for Darlington and his complacent, heavy-handed approach to sensitive areas in Scotland. There are 142,212 people who have been unemployed for more than a year. Are we just to write them off? Are we to see that against the background of the speeches that have been made tonight, or can we strike a chord with the Government so that they say, "Yes, there is a problem," and shake them from the complacency that grips them now?

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman tell me whether he was one of the Labour Members of Parliament who opposed the investment of about £300 million for a new private hospital to be built on the banks of the river Clyde? *[Interruption.]* Can you tell me whether you were in favour of that or against it? It seems that members of your party opposed that investment on purely political partisan grounds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I advise hon. Members who have not had much experience in the House that we refer to other hon. Members in the third person. The hon. Gentleman must not use the expression "you" in a way that implies that I have responsibility for things for which I am not responsible.

Mr. McLeish: I hope that I shall not need to respond as I was not asked about my views on that development on Clydebank. I was talking about young people——

Mr. Riddick: Answer.

Mr. McLeish: I was never asked about that subject.

The fourth matter to which I shall refer is young people. Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that in 1981 42 per cent. of all children who left school in Scotland found work? In 1986 the figure dropped to 25 per cent. Long-term unemployment, adult unemployment and the lack of training of young people show that the Government neither care nor have any policies to tackle those problems.

I should like to respond further to the intervention by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). CBI in Scotland, the business community, which is no great lover of the Labour party, said today that nearly one third of 120 firms that took part in a survey recently had cut their work force in the past four months and some 37 per cent. forecast that they would employ fewer people over the next four months. Is that the burning success of the enterprise culture that the Government speak of? We have a crisis in Scotland and I utterly reject the suggestion that Opposition Members are always trying to do down the country. We were sent here to undertake a task. We appreciate many of the significant developments which are taking place, but we must also advocate long-term structural employment. I say to the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is in charge of the Government Front Bench at present, that Opposition Members understand the changing industrial structure of Scotland. Like the Scots, we understand the changing employment patterns and the impact of new technology.

It was grossly insulting when, on a recent visit to Scotland, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster hectored and lectured the Scots on being out of step. It is the Government's current fashion to claim that Scotland is out of step with reality and with the Government. Would it not be more modest to suggest that the Government are completely out of step with the needs and aspirations of the Scottish people? When the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster comes up north again and enjoys his pint of beer —which he does according to recent press coverage—I hope that he will try to understand our problems in Scotland so that we do not recreate up north the debacle we have heard in some of tonight's speeches.

The Scottish Development Agency is one of our most important tools for the regeneration of the Scottish economy. Some people believe it has been emasculated and others believe that it operates without many friends on the Government Benches. The hon. Member for Darlington came as close as possible to suggesting two options — to take the SDA out of existence or to

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privatise it. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that the hon. Gentleman's comments do not reflect the Scottish Office view of the permanence of the SDA, as we believe that the agency should be supported.

We want the Ford development in Dundee and Japanese and American investment in our new towns. A few drops of rain will never turn a desert into a garden, but I hope that the Minister will take the message from the Scottish people and Scottish statistics, and listen to Opposition Members, and that he will accept that we must have an effective planned programme for investment, employment and training in Scotland. If he did that, he would have our support. But the Government continue to ignore with contempt the real needs of the Scottish people. Therefore, they will not receive our support.

7.32 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The debate is very interesting for several reasons. We have heard speeches from the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Stockport (Mr. Favell), who were not present for the earlier part of the debate. I make no complaint about that as, in my opinion, the amount of criticism that English Members receive for not religiously attending Scottish debates is overdone. The speeches made by both those two hon. Members this evening are significant because they make the Government's Front Bench declared position even more difficult to sustain.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made the important point that there is a potential crisis of confidence within the SDA, as a result of the Government's equivocation about its future. The contributions made by Conservative Members this evening will serve only to heighten that uncertainty and anxiety. If there is an ascendant tendency in the Conservative party and throughout the United Kingdom, the hon. Member for Darlington is more in tune with that tendency, which is making progress, than is the Minister of State. The lack of enthusiasm with which the Minister opened the debate was also commented upon.

There is a need to pose the question whether the SDA will survive during the next five years the new thrust of the coming men who have taken control of the upper echelons of the Conservative party — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) makes an intervention from a sedentary position. I look forward to his comments because he is another of the same tendency, although he has relatives in my constituency who are wonderful people. That does not absolve him from advertising in his register of special interests a predeliction for denationalisation and contracting out— which is significant in itself.

If these are the young men who are the future of the Conservative party, the SDA is right to be anxious about its own future.

The hon. Member for Stockport made a very bad speech. I do not often say that about hon. Members' speeches, but I think that that speech will read very ill in the *Official Report*. He may have left the Chamber to go and correct it. If so, we are grateful for small mercies.

The hon. Gentleman, and other hon. Members, must be careful about using statistics as holy writ as they appear to have been doing. Of course an argument can be made from the official figures on those in work and claiming benefit that, while the Scottish trends are bad, they do not compare all that unfairly with some in other parts of the United Kingdom. However, the bald statistics of unemployment are not in themselves a conclusive indicator to take when we are discussing the need for action on industrial regeneration and development. Social factors and environmental conditions are just as appropriate and important. We all know of localised areas, hidden within the national figures, which show Scotland as the worst affected in Europe—indeed, the European Community explicitly recognises that. However, Conservative Members may not recognise the special remit and important role of the SDA in environmental work and land reclamation.

For those reasons, as much as any others, we deeply resent the gratuitous attacks made by English Members. If we were debating Teesside, or even the leafy suburbs of Stockport, I would not glory in telling hon. Members representing those areas that they were better off than we are in Scotland. I hope I would appreciate that they, too, have problems, and seek to get together to solve them as best we can.

It is perfectly legitimate for the people of Scotland to give a higher priority to industrial development and regeneration. If we had a Scottish assembly—in which case the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood would not be trammelled with Scottish business in this House —we would give such matters much higher priority. I accept that the public purse is not unlimited, but we would make it a priority to achieve industrial and environmental regeneration in Scotland—certainly if we had the kind of assembly that we feel is necessary to meet the needs of our time. The tone of the debate took an unfortunate turn when English Members contributed. I say that not because they are English, but because they are ignorant.

Other hon. Members have said that we should acknowledge that the agency is in new hands. Let me therefore refer to Ian Robertson, the new chief executive, and Professor Neil Hood, the director of Locate in Scotland. We wish them well in their new functions in future. In my view, if the agency did not exist in Scotland, we should have to take steps to create it.

This debate is principally about financial allocations and limitations. However, it is not only about money, but about the style and approach adopted by the agency since 1975. Its present approach is based on partnership, and that sits comfortably with my party's political philosophy. I appreciate that one of the things that have bedevilled the SDA since its inception is the changing economic climate. Plainly, that has a bearing on what it does. However, there has also been a change in political climate. There have been speeches on the Left-wing side of the argument, such as that from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who clearly wanted a much more interventionist agency. That received the inevitable knee-jerk or Pavlovian response from the Conservative Benches that this was unfettered Socialism and therefore, by definition and in principle, to be rejected out of hand. Conversely, the Minister of State, when he opened the debate, talked about the free engine of capitalism, which was his perception of what the agency should be doing. That in turn was rejected by Labour Members as out of hand.

It may be said that this is a typical Liberal position, but I believe that there is a very positive and sensible intermediate stage. Indeed, the agency has adopted such an approach in practice, and it has patently been successful. A sensible measure of partnership provides a balance between public funds and private money. However, such a partnership is important for more than just economic reasons. Those of us with constituencies north of the border have all witnessed how the SDA can provide a focus for all sorts of different agencies— voluntary organisations, statutory bodies, such as the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland, local authorities and, indeed, individual entrepreneurs. It can come in and seize the opportunity to crystallise a development as no other agency or organisation easily could. I think that the style of partnership achieved by the agency is splendid. It should be promoted and built upon.

The flexible, innovatory and pump-priming role that the SDA has had since 1975 gives it the opportunity to make an impact over wide areas of interest which are of crucial importance to the economic life of Scotland. They include the key functions of creating jobs and dealing with urban decay. The Prime Minister, trailing her handbag around the urban wastelands of Britain, has got it substantially wrong—as experience has proved—if she believes that every £1 of public money can be expected to generate £10 of private investment. We have seen from the SDA's operations in the Leith project and many others that, while it is true that public money can seed private investment, substantial urban regeneration cannot possibly be taken on with such a ratio. If the Prime Minister expects the SDA to deliver on that basis, she will almost certainly be disappointed.

I was sorry that the Minister of State did not say a bit more, as he had the opportunity to do, about the support for indigenous companies. When we are discussing job creation and the eradication of urban decay, indigenous companies can become rather lost in the argument about introducing new companies and inward investment. One of my most positive experiences in my previous incarnation as a solicitor was helping to set up a community business. No hon. Member has said anything about community businesses, but the SDA has played a positive role in seeding and promoting such businesses. Community businesses are non-profit-making charitable trusts, companies limited by guarantee, which provide jobs from within the ranks of the unemployed. Again, such enterprises need to be seeded by professionals who can give a lead. However, I believe that there is a great future, and unrealised potential, especially in urban areas, for the development of community businesses.

I began by talking about job creation and urban decay because I recognise that the main burden of work must fall in those areas. However, it would be silly of me not to acknowledge—especially representing the constituency that I represent—that vast tracts of Scotland suffer from problems which, which they may not be of the same magnitude in relative terms are no less great for that. Substantial problems face those who live in rural areas.

There is confusion about the provision of assistance in the Minister of State's own part of Scotland. The south-west and the south-east of Scotland, as he knows, are not covered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board or by the SDA. The focus of its activities lies in the central industrial belt. Rural areas such as Galloway and Upper Nithsdale and Roxburgh and Berwickshire are not development areas and are in limbo. Earlier in the debate the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) argued in favour of the establishment of a rural development fund. My hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) made the same point. It is essential to increase the agency's funds, if for no other reason than to seed more rural initiatives.

We have had the benefit of DRAW and PRIDE, but such initiatives have come and gone, and there is uncertainty whether the outstanding schemes that are on the Minister's desk will be approved. I join other right hon. and hon Members in asking the Minister to make a statement about that tonight. If he does not, it will be remiss of him and it will cause a great deal of anger among those who are still waiting for the go-ahead for their projects.

With a modest amount of money there is a great deal of scope for the SDA to provide rural development in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale as well as in Roxburgh and Berwickshire. It could, for example, promote small businesses and tourism, in conjunction with the Scottish Tourist Board. It could also engage in land renewal projects, of which there are many at planning stage waiting for finance.

The Minister referred to the fact that the SDA will be very much involved in engineering and food processing. Local authorities and many other people in rural areas realise that there is much to be gained from the processing of agricultural produce in rural areas instead of sending it to industrial areas to be processed. That could generate considerable wealth for rural areas. If that is true of agricultural produce, it is also true of fish processing. The fish-catching industry continues to experience difficulties, but in my constituency, elsewhere along the coast of eastern Scotland and in the islands there is a massive potential for the development of the fish-processing industry. The injection of a modest amount of Government money could lead to the creation of wealth within those areas.

The regional council in the Borders has found that industrial building has been gradually siphoned off and withdrawn since its industrial development status was withdrawn. It has now to rely exclusively on private investment to meet that need. Rural initiatives that are set up and established by the SDA cannot be maintained by the local authorities, because they do not have sufficient money. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said that the cuts in the rate support grant had had a major bearing on such initiatives.

Furthermore, the SDA cannot take properly into account all the social factors. That puts areas such as my own and the Minister's constituency at a disadvantage. There are many land renewal schemes, such as that in Hawick. If additional funds could be made available to the SDA, such ambitious but modest plans would transform the biggest town in my constituency. When rural development status was taken away from my area in 1984, it thought that it would continue to enjoy some priority of funding from the SDA, but it does not now think that it enjoys that status.

The key question is whether the SDA's potential is being fully realised. The debate about whether Government funding of the agency is increasing or decreasing is, to an extent, academic. I am on the side of the hon. Member for Garscadden. There is a great deal of confusion about this, and if the Minister could clarify the position it would be helpful.

A point that has not been mentioned so far is that the SDA appears to be under a great deal of pressure to realise its assets in order to make up the shortfall in its budget.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

That, if true, is a short-term policy and ties in with what I said earlier: that when its assets are sold off the SDA's very future existence will be in doubt.

I reinforce the point that was made earlier about the uncertainty that has been caused by the current review of regional aid. According to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, during the next five years the Government will have a great deal of money to spend, but we shall have to wait for another two and a half hours to find out whether or not his forecast has changed. The injection of sensible —not extravagant—amounts of public money over the next five years would provide us with the opportunity to tackle unemployment in Scotland and to support the new industries that are needed to regenerate our environment and restructure and modernise our economy. I am in no doubt that the result of a moderate but continuous increase in funding would lead to significant progress being made in all these areas.

7.52 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I came into the House half way through the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). The good news was that I was late; the bad news was that I had to listen to the other half of his speech. I was reminded of what I said during my maiden speech: that we should savour such moments as when the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross addresses the House. I said also in my maiden speech that at the next general election the Scottish Tory will be no more. I made that forecast on 8 July, at three minutes past eight in the evening. The speeches I have heard so far from colleagues of Scottish Ministers with constituencies south of the border will certainly add to the demise of the Tory party in Scotland.

It is interesting that I should be following the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). I have nothing against him personally, but when my little daughter went through my diary and found that I intended to speak on the Scottish Development Agency—she is eight years old in December — she said, "Father, I'm beginning to worry a bit about you since you've gone down to that place. What are you doing discussing the Severely Divided Alliance?" I said to her, "It's not that at all, my young, little, loving daughter. You know that your father would not engage himself in such indulgence." She had been looking through "Dod's Parliamentary Companion" and had found that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and I have two things in common: first, that we are not over-impressed with the present leader of the Social Democratic party, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and, secondly, that we share the same birthday. I am not giving any prizes to hon. Members who guess which one is two years younger. I assure all hon. Members, and my little eight-year-old daughter, that this is where the resemblance finishes.

I watched the Front Bench, and in particular the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) listening to the speeches of the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Stockport (Mr. Favell). I saw the Minister's split personality; part of him wished he was saying those things —he certainly supports that type of nonsensical philosophy — and part of him was embarrassed, as indeed he should be.

It is regrettable that the Government ran away, as they have done on so many occasions, from the real problems of the Scottish economy. One may ask why they ran and the answer is that the Tory Government are the cause of the rundown of the Scottish economy. When I hear the nonsense from Conservative Members about how well off we are in Scotland, it is clear that they do not see the misery and the deprivation that exists in my constituency, which is no different, and in some cases, not as bad as other constituencies in Scotland. I am sure that the old-age pensioners who have spent years on waiting lists for hip operations, the kids of 19 or 20 who have left school and have no jobs and the people who have been subjected, as they have all over the country, to rising crime rates, will be interested to hear such speeches from Conservative Members, telling us how well we are doing in Scotland. That is absolute nonsense.

This Government have devastated Scotland's industrial base. They have destroyed the coal and steel industries, the fishing and shipbuilding industries. My constituency is in a large rural area destroyed by rural deprivation, by the cuts in the public transport system, the post office and school closures. This Government have destroyed community life as we know it.

Not satisfied with their sadistic monetarist dogma, their continual obsession is to take away from a community education and health services that are based on the needs of the community and replace them with education and health services that provide for the needs of those who can pay for them. That is a nonsensical and indeed a disgraceful state of affairs. As I said to the Government last week, "Shame on you," because we could be discussing Scottish industry in more detail today if we had been allowed to continue last week's debate.

When I saw the hon. Member for Stirling rise to the Dispatch Box to make his first speech and move the closure I was upset, to say the least, because it was the same hon. Member who not only hid from the real debate last week—that was bad enough—but who was sitting on the SHARPEN report. Hon. Members may now be aware of that report. I received a late copy, which the hon. Member for Stirling was keeping from the House, and from the Scottish health boards and the health councils. Had it not been for my intervention last week, the Sharpen report — the "Scottish Health Authorities' Review of Priorities into the Eighties and Nineties" would still be under wraps.

There are 11 hospitals and four health centres in my constituency, all of which provide health care for a wide population. In employment and health care terms, we need direct investment from the Government and indirect investment from the SDA. The House can imagine my anxiety and anger on discovering that not only were the Government refusing to answer the needs of my constituency, but they were secretly planning to destroy the Health Service in Scotland. Their proposals would affect my constituency more than most.

The report recommends that expenditure on the mentally ill and mentally handicapped should be reduced. It also proposes the amalgamation of maternity units in general hospitals which have fewer than 1,500 deliveries a year. That proposal would immediately threaten with closure or partial closure the William Smellie Memorial hospital in Lanark and the Motherwell maternity hospital. The report recommends a programme of fostering the elderly and other groups in the community. Last week, I described that as the Tories' "Foster-a-granny programme". Instead of providing proper health care for the elderly, we have the obnoxious prospect of foster parents for grannies. It is outrageous, and I look forward to the day when we can debate it more fully.

The Government's proposals for the Scottish Health Service must not be carried out. I accuse the Government of duplicity in their attempt to keep the report secret. I believe that they intended to present the report in legislation as a fait accompli. I assure hon. Members that the Scottish people and Labour Members will oppose this iniquitious report and expose it for what it is: another disgraceful piece of the Prime Minister's experimental, dogmatic monetarism, with no regard for the health care of the poor and sick.

The speeches that we have heard from Conservative Members tonight provide a good argument for devolution. But the Ministers here tonight are the lackeys of the people who make the decisions, and the Prime Minister has more in common with those who are attacking Scotland than anyone else. I look forward to hearing the Minister's reply to the debate and I hope that the day will come when we hear from some of those—I understand that there are one or two on the Government Benches—who care a little bit about Scotland, even if only through self-interest. As I said the other night to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, and the others who make up the 10 Tories out of the 72 Scottish Members, if the Government do not respond to the needs of the Scottish people, the Scottish Tory will disappear after the next general election.

8.3 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is savagely apposite that I am talking about the Scottish Development Agency and the Inverclyde initiative at a time when hundreds of families in my constituency are discussing fearfully the rumours and speculation surrounding Scott Lithgow. Tonight on the Scottish television programme "Scotland Today" it was claimed that hundreds of men will be made redundant at Scott Lithgow very soon. That is sombre news, and it has more strength than unconstructed press speculation. I left the Chamber to make a telephone call to a constituent who works at Scott Lithgow. He said that that was the rumour circulating throughout the yard late this afternoon.

As the Minister knows, the yard has only one contract, to build the Britoil rig Ocean Alliance, which is due to be floated out of the yard within the next fortnight to the tail of the bank so that the final work can be carried out on the rig. Then she will leave the Clyde for ever, and my deep fear is that the jobs of 1,200 men will go at the same time.

Ministers despise the honestly awkward critic in the Opposition as much as they deplore the awkwardly honest critics on their Benches. I plead with the Minister to give emergency help to the people in my constituency—to those honourable, decent, fine men who work on the Britoil rig.

he Scottish Development Agency has an important role to play in the revival and growth of the Scottish economy. Its role becomes increasingly significant day by day in my constituency. It has to reactivate and, in some cases, to resuscitate the local economy. Against the background of the impending redundancies and the massively high unemployment in my constituency, I wish to discuss the role of the SDA — in the shape of the Inverclyde initiative—in the revival and growth of the economy of the lower Clyde.

In his annual report for 1987, that famous Greenockian, Sir Robin Duthie, the chairman of the SDA, said this about the Inverclyde initiative:

> "Based in the community, the Inverclyde Initiative is supported by local government and the Agency, and spans the full range of economic development. Now in its second year, the Initiative has made substantial progress towards its goal of revitalising the area by broadening its economic base. Progress has been made in three major areas—commercial property development, factory provision and training."

With respect to Sir Robin, I must disagree with what, in today's circumstances, is an over-optimistic view of the Inverclyde initiative.

The report may contain a coded message for Scottish Office Ministers. I hope that they are listening. The Inverclyde initiative is changing character. The original idea of the initiative being steered or driven by the private sector has been a failure. That realisation must be a bleak disappointment to those who put forward the concept of private sector involvement. Over a period, the initiative has developed into a traditional public sector activity increasingly dependent upon the SDA, the Inverclyde district council and Strathclyde regional council. The initiative's changing role takes place amidst the deeply disturbing economic circumstances of the lower Clyde. The industrial structure of Inverclyde has experienced and suffered major changes in the past 10 years. Manufacturing employment has declined from over 50 per cent. of total employment to below 35 per cent. Shipbuilding employment has fallen from more than 9,000 in 1977 to fewer than 2,600 today. If the stories about Scott Lithgow today are accurate, that low figure will be much lower early in the new year.

In 1979, Scott Lithgow employed fully 7,400 men. Some of the rumours circulating in Greenock and Port Glasgow today speak of the yard being put on to a care and maintenance footing early in the new year. Inverclyde is now dominated by a very small number of large employers — IBM, Scott Lithgow with its precarious future, National Semi-Conductor and Playtex.

Since March 1985, when the Inverclyde initiative was set up, the local economy has declined further. Twenty-one companies have closed with the loss of more than 1,000 jobs. Notified redundancies from January 1985 to August 1987 amounted to almost 3,000. Unemployment in the Greenock travel-to-work area is well over 9,000 and seems likely to increase. That represents an unemployment rate now, using the Government's figures from the local jobcentre, of over 20 per cent. That figure can be compared with 18·1 per cent. in Strathclyde, 13·4 per cent. for Scotland as a whole and 11·5 per cent. for Great Britain. Male unemployment in my constituency now is about 25 per cent. Indeed, I can be a little more accurate. The latest figures that I have seen from the jobcentre show a male unemployment rate based on Government figures of 24·8 per cent.

Against that bleak backdrop, the Secretary of State for Scotland encouraged the SDA to consider giving further support in Inverclyde. As a result, one more official was appointed to the team. That is a tiny addition in the light of what needs to be done by the Inverclyde team. I must state here and now that the Inverclyde team is made up of very hard-working, honourable and decent public

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

officials. I have enormous respect for Donald Draffen and his too small team with its inadequate budget. The Secretary of State has declined to give the Inverclyde initiative an identified budget and argued that, if appropriate development is identified, finance will be made available. That added finance is desperately needed, given the economic problems facing the lower Clyde.

There is at the moment a small advance factory building programme under way in Port Glasgow. However, the scale of that development is wholly inadequate in terms of the problems facing the communities. It is essential that Inverclyde is identified as a prime location for inward investment and recognised as a priority by Locate in Scotland. I believe that the investment that has taken place in recent years has gone to areas identified by Locate in Scotland and not to areas identified by incoming investors. I have to say that with deep regret. Some of the inward investment should have come to Inverclyde over and above what has come our way in the form of assistance with the National Semi-Conductor and other developments.

The scale of the problem is immense. The Government have rejected out of hand setting up a fund for the retraining and redeployment of redundant shipyard workers. There has been discussion between the Inverclyde initiative and British Shipbuilders Ltd. with a view to further activity in Inverclyde, but to date that has not led anywhere. Again, that is a matter for regret. We should have something analogous with the British Shipbuilders Ltd. enterprise agency. That is desperately needed in Inverclyde.

It is also now essential that a part of Greenock or Port Glasgow be declared an enterprise zone. I have no doubt that the financial and economic benefits of an enterprise zone supported by the resources of the SDA would reactivate the Inverclyde economy. I sincerely hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland supports the case for the Inverclyde enterprise zone. I fear that his Cabinet colleagues are less than enthusiastic supporters of any form of regional assistance. Their indifference or hostility may harm the chances of an enterprise zone being set up in Greenock.

It is important to create new jobs. I look forward to the day when the Inverclyde initiative or the Minister from the Dispatch Box announces massive inward investment to Inverclyde in the shape of a factory with several hundred permanent jobs. As important as the creation of new jobs, however, is the retention of the jobs already in the constituency in places like Scott Lithgow and Fergusons at the Newark yard and Clark Kincades. It is absolutely essential that orders be found for those three establishments. Ministers may boast about new jobs coming to Inverclyde by way of the initiative—albeit slowly—but at the same time they regret the redundancies among existing employers.

I have said that I am deeply concerned about the worsening circumstances at Scott Lithgow. At the moment the yard does not have an order to replace the Britoil rig Ocean Alliance. The yard desperately needs an order or two. I sincerely hope that the Scottish Office will give the yard all the help that it needs to pull in orders from the offshore sector, perhaps including Ministry of Defence orders. For example, the contract for the floating jetty for the Clyde submarine base will be going out to tender in the very near future. I know that that contract has nothing to do with the Scottish Office as it is an MOD order. However, it is a massive order, perhaps in the region of £20 million, whether it is a concrete or a steel structure. Whether it is concrete or steel, the best place for it to be built is on the other side of the Clyde. I know that the order relates to the Trident programme. However, I am desperate to find work for my constituents and the Government are, unfortunately, here for another four years. I am a realist in these matters. I know that the Conservatives are in terminal decline in Scotland and I hope that that disease is contagious and we get rid of some of these English filibusterers.

Scott Lithgow is the place for the floating jetty contract, especially if it is to be constructed of steel.

Mr. Bill Walker *indicated assent.*

Dr. Godman: I am glad that at least one Conservative Member has some sympathy for what I have to say, even if this point is ignored by his English colleagues.

Mr. Walker: I shall go further and join the hon. Gentleman in any deputation he cares to organise. Provided that the floating jetty can be built at competitive prices, the lower Clyde is the obvious place to build it.

Dr. Godman: That is a qualified offer of help which I accept—with some qualifications. I am not as cynical as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and I would go with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker)—provided that he kept quiet.

The hard-working and honourable officials of the Inverclyde initiative have been set an almost impossible task by a careless and indifferent administration in the Scottish Office. Everyone on the lower Clyde knows—including Inverclyde initiative officials — that the allocated budget is inadequate. The idea that the enterprise should be privately led has failed. It has become a traditional public activity, with the two mainstays, apart from the SDA, being the two local councils—Inverclyde and Strathclyde. That is a disgrace because the opportunities are there, particularly now that the SDA has acquired certain sites in Port Glasgow. Much more must be done. The Locate in Scotland bureau must attract new business to Inverclyde.

The people of Greenock and Port Glasgow, and elsewhere in Inverclyde, desperately need the Government's help. However, in the years that I have represented an Inverclyde constituency the Government have failed the people whom I represent, the people who were represented so ably by Mrs. Anna McCurley and who will be represented with equal ability by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

Greenock and Port Glasgow is experiencing one of its blackest hours since the war. The Government are a minority in Scotland, but they must show some magnanimity, humility, sympathy and compassion for the people of the lower Clyde.

8.22 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I am sorry for the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on two counts. I am sorry that his constituents have suffered so many redundancies, but he is not alone in that. Most hon. Members have experienced redundancies in their constituencies. My constituency recently suffered 300 redundancies at a major motor component company. I shall try to illustrate how we view such matters in other parts of the United Kingdom.

I am also sorry for the hon. Gentleman because he thinks that any hon. Member who does not represent a Scottish constituency is an English filibusterer. As members of the United Kingdom Parliament we are fully entitled to participate in debates which concern the raising of revenue from our constituents to finance projects, in whatever part of the kingdom.

Hon. Members are lucky to have had two bites at the cherry. We do not have debates about the west midlands in Government time and we speak for a population almost the size of that of Scotland.

The Bill seeks to raise the SDA's financial limit from £700 million to £1,200 million—a substantial sum. I do not wish to be anything other than constructive because I realise that sensitivities are great. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is not in his place as he paid a kind tribute to his constituents, my relatives. His remarks will have been heard better than he appreciated.

This debate is similar to that which we enjoyed on the coal industry, when the Government sought to increase borrowing limits, financial assistance and so on. The Opposition have been hard pressed to decide whether to attack the Government for lack of support or to support the Government. It would be interesting to know whether the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) intends to vote. I see that he does not, so all his hon. Friends' disparaging remarks about the Government's performance are not sufficient to make Opposition Members vote against the Bill.

Mr. Maxton: Of course none of my hon. Friends will vote against raising the borrowing powers of the Scottish Development Agency which, after all, was established by a Labour Government and is supported by the Labour party in Scotland. What we object to is that it could be used so much more in Scotland as an interventionist, economic agency than this Government allow.

Mr. Howarth: I hope that that will be noted. It is at least support for what the Government are trying to do in raising the limit and increasing funds.

A substantial point of principle divides the two sides of the House. There is a strong belief that Government intervention is the only way. The history of the modern Labour party shows that it sought consistently to spend more and more of the taxpayers' money in the hope of reaping benefits. That did not succeed, but prudent spending by the Conservative Government means that we do not have to face the problems currently experienced by the United States which, no doubt, will be the subject of further exchanges in the House tonight.

This nation of ours—not just Scotland but parts of the English regions — is littered with evidence of Governments' failure to take good investment deisions and direct other people's money into sensible places. I mention some examples: The refusal by the Labour Government to give industrial development certificates attracted industries away from areas where they could enjoy the security of labour supply, skill and funds. Speke and Skelmersdale are in the litany of their disastrous policies.

I urge the Opposition not to ignore the facts. The facts are that where there has been major Government intervention problems have occurred, but the invisible hand of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends has worked and contributed to results.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Member asks us not to ignore the facts. Does he concede that the refusal of the Labour Government to give industrial development certificates encouraged companies such as Veeder Root, which originally wanted to locate in the south of England, to go to Dundee? It has been there now for 40 successful years and has added to the prosperity of the area. All this is a result of a Labour Government's policy. I have that on the authority of the manager of the company.

Mr. Howarth: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman can produce a success story. But I understand that that company came from outside the United Kingdom; it was not an indigenous company, so that was inward investment, which is a different story.

The Government have clearly demonstrated that they have the right view of the SDA. In his speech last week my hon. Friend the Minister outlined the role of the SDA as

> "furthering the economic development of Scotland, improving international competitiveness and improving its environment. These it accomplishes through a variety of functions, including the provision of finance, premises, advice and counselling, sectoral advice, redevelopment of land and property and bringing derelict land back into use."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 841.]

That is something about which no one could conceivably disagree, but what is significant about the Government's contribution is that the SDA has been used not as an engine of intervention but as a catalyst to attract private sector funding, and that has marked the successful administration of my hon. Friend.

The SDA is now attracting more money than ever before and with regard to industrial investment every £1 of public money attracts £13·50 of private sector investment, compared with £5 only two years ago. That marks a substantial difference in opinion and philosophy between Opposition Members and my hon. Friend the Minister — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Cathcart wants to challenge me on that fact I will give way. He should tell us whether he sees the SDA as being an engine of Socialism or an engine with which free enterprise can be powered.

Mr. Salmond: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that, under the present Government, the SDA has been able to fulfil its statutory purpose No. 2?

Mr. Howarth: If the hon. Gentleman would care to remind me of statutory purpose No. 2 I would be delighted to give my view.

Mr. Salmond: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman appears to have forgotten statutory purpose No. 2 for the moment. For his benefit I shall read it. The functions shall be aimed at

> "carrying on, or establishing and carrying on, whether by themselves or jointly with any other person, industrial undertakings."

Mr. Howarth: I would not rate that purpose as a high priority; some of the other objectives of the SDA are rather more important.

Apart from emphasising the catalyst role of the SDA it is important to note that it has achieved a degree of success in the creation of jobs. As an English Member I

[Mr. Howarth]

am delighted to see that public money is producing such a result. The review of the agency estimated that over the period 1981 to 1985 net additional output in the Scottish economy from the agency's investment function was about £275 million, with the creation of some 10,400 jobs. Obviously, any reduction in unemployment is welcome.

It is apparent from Scottish debates that Scotland is constantly bemoaning the fact that it is worse off than the rest of the kingdom. If hon. Members will bear with me, not in a spirit of hostility but I hope in one of enlightenment, I shall consider whether that statement is true. There is no question but that Scotland is favoured in comparison with other regions of the United Kingdom, particularly the west midlands. I remind Opposition Members that no area of the United Kingdom has seen such a change in its fortunes as the west midlands over the past 10 years, when it went from the top of the earnings league to the bottom. The good news is that it is coming back, which is why I, as a Conservative, am in this House and will remain here. It is a testimony to the success of the less interventionist policy of the Government.

Opposition Members' constituencies are in direct competition with my region for jobs. The extent to which companies are benefiting from SDA funding is of great interest to my constituents, particularly my industrial constituents. I shall consider three points and see how Scotland compares. My first point concerns regional aid. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), who is not in the Chamber at the moment, said that there had been a diminution in regional aid. According to statistics that have recently been made available to the House, expenditure, at current prices, has increased since 1977-78 from £134·8 million to £241·6 million. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm whether that is so. That is the largest level of aid for any part of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, and it compares with a meagre £9·8 million for the west midlands, which has suffered substantial unemployment.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I press on. In comparison with my own region, Scotland is doing better with regard to average earnings. It is true that, in comparison with the south-east of England average earnings in Scotland are very much lower, but average earnings in the west midlands are lower than those in Scotland. I shall give Opposition Members the figures. In April 1986—the latest available figures—the average earnings of a man working full-time in Scotland was £201·3p; in the west midlands the figure was just under £194. Apart from London and the south-east, the average full-time earnings of men in Scotland are higher than any region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is also a good place to live.

Mr. Howarth: With regard to the share of public expenditure, apart from Northern Ireland, Scotland scores the highest. In Scotland the identifiable public expenditure per head of population in 1986-87 was £2,518·50 in comparison with £1,967·5 for England. Scotland is receiving these amounts of money, yet all we hear from Opposition Members is griping. They say, "We want more money, we are making a mess of it, we want yet more money."

Mr. Darling *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that it was only with regard to unemployment that Scotland was scoring, yet all the major indicators show that Scotland is doing better.

I hope that Opposition Members will not say that I should come and see things for myself, because I have been to Scotland. I visit my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) from time to time. I hope that we can devise some means of educating Opposition Members. We are not getting through at the moment, but the message will get through eventually. Scotland is a great nation; we know that Opposition Members are capable of more and we will help them to achieve it.

When I visit Scotland I am always struck by the fact that there is much development taking place and that all is not as grim as it is painted. The hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) said that he has four hospitals in his constituency. I am still fighting for one in mine. Therefore, it is not true that Scotland is completely alone in a sea of deprivation. Scotland has many natural advantages, not the least of which is its countryside, which attracts tourists from all over the world. The Scotch whisky industry, so ably represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and others, is a worldwide and popular industry. The people of Scotland are, by and large, friendly. Clearly, there are some exceptions, but they are getting better. Scotland enjoys an identity that is not enjoyed by England. The same is true of Wales. There is not a national English identity in the same way as there is a Scottish identity. I do not have an English tie to wear but I have my Douglas tie and when I wear that I know that I am wearing my Scottish tie and I am conscious of my Scottish ancestry.

Mr. Maxton: Patronising.

Mr. Howarth: It is not patronising. The hon. Gentleman, throughout his parliamentary career, has been trying to promote the essential Scottishness of Scotland but when I wish to allude to it he is agin it.

Scotland has a tremendous amount going for it. I am alive to the concerns of Scotland but Scottish Labour Members persist in running down their own cities and towns. If I were an investor I would be turned off the idea of investing in Scotland after hearing the comments of Labour Members. In the west midlands the people have suffered greatly but they have rolled up their sleeves and got on with it. Unemployment is now falling fast and business is booming because those people got on with it. Labour Members will find that their hon. Friends who represent seats in the west midlands will attack the Government but they do not spend all their time running down their towns and cities.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend will no doubt have noticed the marked contrast that exists between the positive approach of the SDA in going out into the world and attracting new business to Scotland, under the aegis of the Scottish Office, and the carping and undermining of Scotland that we hear so often from Labour Members.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has made a good point. Essentially hon. Members are undermining the work of the agency they are so keen to support. They are also undermining the work of Locate in Scotland. I welcome my hon. Friend's point.

I urge Labour Members to recognise that they can do more by writing up their own area than running it down. The statistics that show that Scotland is not as badly off as they maintain and that it enjoys favoured conditions in comparison with other parts of the country. I urge them not to ask for an enterprise zone because businesses outside the enterprise zone may well be put out of business. The way in which the Secretary of State and my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have used the SDA as an instrument of furthering free enterprise to promote the greater economic development of Scotland is a first-class tribute to their work and to the work of the Government as a whole.

8.44 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I shall give some facts about the level of assistance going to Scotland. Industrial support under the Scottish programmes, through regional development grants, the regional selective agency and the budgets of the SDA and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, will have fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1989-90. As a share of the Scottish Office budget it will have fallen from 3·7 per cent. to 3 per cent. in that time. Therefore, it is not a picture of more and more money being devoted to Scotland.

We can take that a little further and put the sums in context. The budget of the London Docklands development corporation will be increased by £25 million in 1987-88. If one adds to that the £127 million spent on the rail link to the city of London, about £500 million on road improvements in and around the Isle of Dogs and a 100 per cent. tax allowance on all buildings constructed by 1992, it contrasts strongly with the total Scottish aid budget of £120 million.

I am speaking as a fan of the SDA. I have always supported it and have a great admiration for it as an essential component in the restimulation of the Scottish economy. I must pay tribute to the role of the SDA in my constituency, especially Clydebank. Without the SDA I dread to think what would have happened after the closure of the Singer factory in that area.

It is strange that there is often a reference to Clydebank being an enterprise zone, but that is of much less importance than the fact that it is an SDA task force area. I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) who spoke about enterprise zones. The enterprise zones that have been backed up by the SDA have had some success. If it had been left to private industry, one would have found rotting areas all around Clydebank, and I am sure that the same would have applied to Dundee. The private sector would not have rescued the area.

The enterprise zones now are a far cry from what was suggested by the present Foreign Secretary when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. The idea originally was an enterprise zone that would simply let the market rip. We now have the reverse of that. We have enterprise zones backed up by state intervention offering tax incentives and rate-free periods. That is essentially what the Labour party would urge ought to be done in areas having particular problems.

In the enterprise zone area in Clydebank, in my hon. Friend's constituency of Dundee, East and in the Glasgow eastern area renewal—all areas with which the SDA has been involved—there is superb co-operation between the SDA, regional councils and the district councils. That is extremely important. I hope that we have none of the nonsense spreading up from England where there is replacement of local authorities by Government quangos. We have proved that the operations we have in Scotland can work perfectly well.

Mr. McAllion: Will my hon. Friend concede that it is not just a matter of co-operation between the SDA and the regional and district councils? In the Dundee project there was the further co-operation of the private sector and the trade union movement. In the Dundee project the trade unions are represented and they make a vital contribution to the prosperity of Dundee through that project.

Mr. Worthington: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for adding to my point.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) back in his place as I now pay tribute to one of the smaller involvements of the SDA —its support of community businesses. I hope that this peculiarly Scottish initiative will receive strong support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. Last week the Scottish community business convention, held in Glasgow, revealed that there are now over 100 community enterprises with £10 million turnover and that 3,000 jobs and training opportunities are now available because local people have got together to try to create jobs in their areas.

It is important to note that, particularly in my part of Scotland, the areas that are being assisted most by community businesses are the most deprived and threatened areas, which no one else is helping in any way. It is striking that if there is any upward turn in the economy, there is little downward turn in unemployment in areas with 40 and 50 per cent. unemployment. The SDA put only £40,000 a year into the Strathclyde community business, which I was privileged to chair for four years. It is important to have support for this major Scottish economic initiative taken by local people. I am thinking especially of the work spaces idea, security firms in areas such as Borrowfield and Possil in Glasgow as well as of environmental work.

We must face the fact that none of the initiatives taken by central or local government, which are topped-down initiatives, succeeds in reaching those most in need of employment. One must get in among the people and work for a period of years before those initiatives really take off. I am sure that the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) will confirm that fact in relation to the co-operatives operating in his constituency. I have listened to Conservative Members who have now discovered community businesses and enterprises not just in the economy, but in housing. It worries me that they seem to think that one can simply turn on a co-operative or community enterprise and it will succeed. It will not. Unless we can learn to work with community enterprises over a period of years, there will be some disasters.

I turn with regret to the involvement of the SDA and the Scottish Office in an initiative in my area. I refer to a project that has attracted much attention in Scotland— the proposal by Health Care International to site an international hospital in Clydebank. It is a vast project

[Mr. Worthington]

worth £120 million and promising 4,000 jobs. To give the House some idea of the scale of the project, I point out that about 6,600 patients would go through it each year. The project has been seven years in the development and was greeted with glee and enthusiasm by the outgoing chief executive of the SDA, Mr. George Mathewson, as easily the biggest project with which he had been involved.

Why should one have doubts about the way in which the project has been dealt with? First, it has become a regular feature of Scottish Office initiatives in recent times that, even with projects that take seven years to develop, the public and health agencies and others are given six weeks in which to respond. I hope that we will return to a realistic time scale for public consultation.

My second reason for questioning the involvement of the SDA is the proposal to site the project on what is known locally as the asbestos site. When the old Turners asbestos firm left the area, it left vast amounts of asbestos with which the local authority had to deal. The asbestos area is now about 1,000 yd long, 40 yd wide and 7 yd deep. Not counting asbestos left in maturing tanks built under the factory, there are 280,000 cu yd of waste. Seven years ago the district council buried the waste at a cost to itself of £380,000. It dealt with the health hazard to the people of Clydebank. Now the SDA, at a rumoured cost of £2·5 million, is to dig up the asbestos and move it a little way down the road to deep-bury it in a basin.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): Perhaps it would help the House if the hon. Gentleman would clarify precisely where he stands on this project. Does he want Health Care International to come to his constituency to build its hospital?

Mr. Worthington: I have made my feelings on the matter perfectly clear on previous occasions, and I shall do so again. However, I should like to follow the thread of my argument before I do so.

The SDA wishes to spend £2·5 million on digging up asbestos and moving it a few hundred yards to another part of the site. On being questioned about the site, the present chief executive of the SDA said that it was the only suitable place in the enterprise zone with access to the airport, to communications. I find that deeply ironic. Enterprise zones are supposed to provide freedom from bureaucratic rules. However, we are now to see the insertion into the enterprise zone of this massive proposal when just down the road around Old Kilpatrick there is a vast site which could accommodate the hospital. Because of a line drawn on the map by the Scottish Office, £2·5 million is to be spent. One must ask whether that is a sensible use of public money, given that £385,000 was spent on burying the asbestos on another occasion. Have not the Scottish Office and the SDA become too close to the project and the developers? I query the connection with the World Health Organisation. In the early stages of the project I hesitated about making my feelings clear because the World Health Organisation was referred to.

Health Care International, with the support of the Scottish Development Agency and Locate in Scotland, made the following statement:

> "The applicant has worked closely over the past six years with the WHO. The WHO views the project as being particularly beneficial to developing nations which can save precious health care funds by sending their patients to the proposed hospital rather than building such facilities themselves. In those cases, developing nations cannot economically justify or appropriately staff and maintain their own tertiary care hospitals. The proposed hospital would enable developing nations to access excellent tertiary care at reasonable cost without the capital outlay."

I was hesitant about responding to a project that seemed to have goals very much in line with my aspirations — that one should use the resources of the medical infrastructure of the west of Scotland to help poorer people in poorer countries. I asked whether the project was along those lines. I wrote to the deputy director general of the World Health Organisation, and received the following reply:

> "The truth of the matter is that the World Health Organisation is not backing Health Care International in any way. I know of their plans and they have always kept in touch with us, and the only reason which has kept my interest alive is their commitment (at least they say they are committed) to using their facilities for the training of Third-world medical and health scientists to work with them and gain experience. We have permitted them to attend the World Health Assembly meeting essentially for their 're-education' and to see that emphasis is indispensably laid on primary health care, the only strategy to reduce the present inequitable distribution of health service and social injustice in health. This project is certainly not suitable for the Third world because of the heavy cost and the fact that it would only provide care facilities for a small percentage of any population, and certainly not the poor."

The project was vetted by the SDA but, as I found by simply taking the initiative to write to Geneva, the WHO disavowed any commitment to it. I feel that some people have been misled.

The primary role of the Secretary of State is to act as the guardian of the Health Service and to judge whether, under the terms of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, the development would to a significant extent interfere with the performance by him of any duty imposed by that Act or to a significant extent operate to the disadvantage of persons seeking or afforded admission or access to any accommodation. The Secretary of State has not kept that duty paramount. I believe that our representations to him were a waste of time. This project involved an in-house application to the Secretary of State. He was virtually applying to himself for permission. It is unbelievable that the present Secretary of State and his predecessor did not know about this project for several years.

Dr. Mathewson said that this was easily the biggest project with which he had been concerned, in terms of inward investment. It is inconceivable that this project was not brought up and discussed at the regular meetings between Dr. Mathewson and Locate in Scotland and the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State was not aware of the project, it shows incompetence either by him or by Locate in Scotland and the SDA in not letting him know what was happening. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman was informed about the project, what was his response? Did he encourage it? What did he say? I challenge him to say when he first knew about the project. I am convinced that the likelihood of the right hon. and learned Gentleman turning down the project was as great as the likelihood of the Prime Minister acquiring a sense of humour.

Mr. Bill Walker: How would the hon. Gentleman feel if the people who are coming to his constituency or those who are listening to him thought that they might be better off going to Perthshire? We have plenty of space and would be delighted to have them.

Mr. Worthington: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. My feelings will become clear later.

How did the Secretary of State deal with the project? There was united professional and political concern about the initiative, which was centred on the 600 nurses required to staff the project. There was concern because, in the west of Scotland as elsewhere, there was a falling birth rate. Many of us wished that the UK 2000 proposals for nursing care would be brought into operation. There is also a poor skill mix within the Greater Glasgow health board. Too many of the nursing staff within the board, compared with elsewhere in the United Kingdom, are not within the upper range of nursing skills.

The Coopers and Lybrand independent report was then produced, and it is now being used to support the project. Because of its shallowness, the report is disgraceful. It was conducted within about three weeks. In no way is it an independent report. Those who conducted the report gave back to their sponsors what they thought the sponsors wanted to hear. The report has been quoted as evidence that the National Health Service would not be damaged. Paragraph 104 states:

> "We would stress that we have not validated any of the main assumptions on demand levels or pricing policy or the estimates of construction, equipping and operating costs of the step-down facility."

It is difficult to think of what is left.

All sorts of false assumptions are made about the need for nurses. For example, to establish the hospital, 60 of the nurses are to be brought from the United States of America. There is no reference to the fact that they will have to go back. There is also the possibility of attracting some of the 2,000 nurses who move to the United Kingdom and who have fullly acceptable professional qualifications. Fifty nurses constitute only 2·5 per cent. of one year's inflow, but they would have gone to the National Health Service if it had not been for the existence of the private hospital. There is then a vague reference to the fact that about 100 could be attracted to work at HCI from the pool of nurses not working. It is thought that 120 to 130 nurses who presently are not employed could be attracted there. Why are they not employed at present? It is because inadequate resources are made available for the Greater Glasgow health board. There is the admitted problem that perhaps 60 nurses would be of the higher skill category.

The Secretary of State did not respond with the required rigour and duty to guardianship of the National Health Service. He was much involved in support of the project. He sees health care following electronics as the next job growth sector within the Scottish economy. I am certainly not against jobs for Clydebank. I am fully aware of the value of such jobs. I regard health care as a sensible sphere into which to move. The sponsors of the project, either prompted by the Secretary of State or on their own initiative, have done a great deal to lessen some of the damage to the Health Service in terms of paying wages, Whitley council rates, and so on. I am appalled at the way in which the Secretary of State has dealt with the application, because I believe that applications such as this could be dealt with in a way that is not damaging to the National Health Service. As the local Member of Parliament, why am I put in the position where I have to choose between either jobs or the National Health Service? If there was suitable investment in the National Health Service, possibly this would not be a damaging project.

Mr. John MacKay, a former Member of the House and former Scottish Minister with responsibilities for health, now the chief executive of the Scottish Conservative party, said:

> "Let's get more youngsters into training for nursing and all the other skills and professions which will be needed so that we will have enough for this project and the NHS."

The message behind that is that this is a damaging project to the NHS. Mr. John MacKay said that if he was the Scottish Minister with responsibilities for Health, he would augment the training and supply of nurses in that sector. It is a pity that the Secretary of State did not take a similar attitude.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The hon. Gentleman promised that he would clarify his position before he sat down. Will he now indicate whether, if he had been in my position, he would have turned down the application that was made knowing that, among other things, that would have led to the loss of 4,000 jobs in his constituency? Will he give us a straightforward answer?

Mr. Worthington: I thought that I had given a quite clear answer on that. It would be possible, if I had taken the unanimous feelings of the Greater Glasgow health board, the local health councils and the trade unions seriously, to put extra investment into the NHS to make the project one that did not damage the NHS. The Secretary of State ignored his obligation to defend the National Health Service. My response would have been very different.

9.12 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Throughout the course of the debate, we have heard Back-Bench Conservative Members say that those of us in Scotland ought to be grateful that expenditure per head in Scotland is higher than in other parts of the United Kingdom. It really does not matter in which part of the United Kingdom the expenditure is raised. It does not matter whether money raised in Scotland is spent in England, provided that it is spent properly, or whether money raised from operations offshore of Scotland is spent in England or other parts of the United Kingdom, provided that it is spent properly. The argument that somehow the expenditure per head in Scotland is more than it is in England does not impress anybody at all and creates a conflict where none exists. The United Kingdom will either survive in its entirety or sink in its entirety. One cannot divorce one part of the United Kingdom from other parts.

The arguments that we have heard deployed by those Conservative Members, who have given what I must say is grudging support to the Scottish Development Agency, make no sense at all. It has been interesting to hear from hon. Members on the Back Benches, many of whom I understand attended St. Andrews university. Why on earth that university should have turned out so many people who have a narrow economic view of life I do not know, but we have heard from many of them that they do not support the Scottish Development Agency, despite the fact that they are loyal Government supporters and support everything that is said from the Front Bench, except perhaps the remark made by the

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

junior Minister when he opened the debate about a week ago when he praised the SDA and endorsed the philosophy that public expenditure creates jobs. That philosophy is wholeheartedly endorsed by Opposition Members. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will tell us whether the sentiments that he expressed are to prevail in the next four years or whether the attitude of those Back Benchers who wish the role of the SDA to be diminished or even privatised is dominant in the Government.

I do not deny that parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are in desperate need of public expenditure but it is certainly not our aim to run down Scotland, as suggested by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) who is unfortunately no longer present. We argue that Scotland has structural problems which require public expenditure to put them right. That is why we welcome the work of the SDA, even with the limited role that it performs in some parts of the country, in starting to create jobs and a climate in which Scottish industry can be rebuilt. It is not a matter of Scotland against England, or of suggesting that Scotland is incapable of generating its own wealth. We are perfectly capable of creating our own wealth, given the right economic conditions.

More often than not, private initiative and private enterprise need public expenditure to get them going. In the debate surrounding the Chancellor's statement in an hour's time it is argued that large sums of public money have been spent to prime the pump to allow the Government to sell off BP. Conservative Members certainly believe in public expenditure when it assists private enterprise. The public subsidy poured into industries to be privatised has been phenomenal compared with the amounts made available to regenerate those parts of the economy and the United Kingdom which have not experienced the growth that has taken place in the south-east corner.

I wish to make two points about the SDA. I agree with just one comment made by the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon)—that some elements of the agency's expenditure were misplaced and should have been subjected to greater scrutiny. I believe that the SDA has put money into some projects when it should not have done so. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has described the problems in his constituency and the amount of money that the SDA is putting into the private hospital there. Opening the debate last week, the Minister said that the SDA was responsible for creating an image of Scotland. I pointed out that that image should not be one of making profits out of private medicine but of providing medicine on the basis of need.

I bitterly resent the fact that £20 million of public money is being poured into the coffers of Health Care International to enable it to make a profit from private health care when Edinburgh royal infirmary in my constituency is in desperate need of funds. More than £8 million is required to bring the infirmary up to 1987 standards. One operating theatre cannot be used because it is no longer hygienic and two others will have to close unless money is spent on them. The accident and emergency department will not be able to cope with the work load expected in the next two or three years and a whole series of wings need massive expenditure to make the heating safe and to remove various health hazards.

Lest anyone misunderstand me, I should make it clear that the infirmary is one of the best providers of health care in Scotland and one of the most renowned teaching hospitals in the world. It is a tragedy that, when the Government are providing £20 million to encourage medicine for profit, they are not prepared to spend money on bringing the Edinburgh royal infirmary up to date, let alone to bring it into the 21st century. The junior Minister responsible for these matters, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), during a brief visit to the infirmary said that the health board would have to find the resources from its present allocation, but that is simply not possible unless Lothian health board stops development of all other hospitals and all other major programmes. He will have to face the fact that, within the next few months, the Government will have to commit substantial sums to replace that hospital if it is not to to be the scene of major trouble and disquiet.

Great play was made a few moments ago by the Government Front Bench about whether jobs were to be provided in Clydebank because of the Health Care International hospital. Lothian health board is being told to save £7 million this financial year, and because of that, all hospitals in Lothian are short-staffed. The royal Edinburgh psychiatric hospital is now involved in a major dispute because of staff shortages. If the Government are serious about creating jobs, jobs are waiting to be created in the Health Service. If they were serious about providing health care jobs they would start putting money back into the Health Service. That would create jobs in the caring services and in building, when it comes to replacing hospitals. At the same time, it would provide a valuable service.

I have one other criticism of the SDA. It concerns something that is not entirely the fault of the SDA, but is certainly that of the Government's current philosophy. Scotland's problems will not be solved by the Scottish Development Agency lending money to firms on a small scale, no matter how helpful or laudable that is. As in many other parts of the United Kingdom, most of the financial centre of Scotland is located in its south-east corner. There is a ridiculous situation in this part of the world, in which house prices and rents are extortionate. It is difficult for people to move down here to fill the jobs that are being created. I cheerfully admit and am glad to hear that they are being created here; at the same time, there is a rundown in the economy in the northern half of Britain and in Scotland.

The tragedy of Guinness breaking the promise it made at the time of the takeover bid for Distillers—to come to Edinburgh—was not only that job opportunities were lost by not moving Guinness's head office to Edinburgh, but that if there had been a major United Kingdom industrial company operating throughout the world and based in Edinburgh it might have attracted other companies there too and broken up the cosy insularity that prevails in this part of the world among industrialists. Some companies, to their credit, have decided to stay in Scotland and operate on an international and national basis from there, but Guinness broke the stock exchange motto—"My word is my bond"—and decided to stay here. That is the tragedy of the Guinness affair.

Until Scotland attracts firms of the magnitude of Guinness it will always be the first to feel the effects of any recession and the last to feel the benefits of an expansion in the economy. The Government could put that matter right if they were prepared to address themselves to the fact that the market mechanism will not ensure that jobs come to Scotland on a long-term basis. Instead, there will be satellite developments, and we shall not be able to play our part in generating the wealth that would benefit the people of Scotland and of the whole United Kingdom. We need an end to the lopsided development in this country; it is something the Government must put right.

9.23 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): This has been a long debate, lasting more than a week, and there have been many contributions to it. The number of contributions from the Opposition Benches shows by how much the Labour party is the majority party in Scotland. The Government, by contrast, could muster only three Back Bench speeches in all the hours of the debate.

I pay tribute to the three maiden speeches made by my hon. Friends. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvey) has forgotten his, which he made last week, because the weekend and the entire week have intervened. His was an excellent speech, in which he paid a warm, well-deserved tribute to our good friends Gregor and Joan Mackenzie. My hon. Friend also referred to his constituency, part of which I used to represent. We still share the large housing scheme of Castlemilk and sit on many committees together. Great work is done by the local council, Strathclyde regional council and, to a lesser extent, the SDA, but little is done by private enterprise in such an area. We are totally reliant on public expenditure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) made an excellent and powerful maiden speech and paid a warm and generous tribute to his predecessor. Perhaps not all of us would have paid such a warm tribute to Mrs. McCurley. My hon. Friend referred to the enormous problems of his constituency, particularly in Linwood, where he lives. He mentioned that the Government have created enormous problems of unemployment there and have done little to solve them.

I am delighted to see both my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) in the House because, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Rutherglen, who took over the seat from a sitting Labour Member, they both won seats from sitting Tory Members. The speeches by my hon. Friends were extremely good, but even if they did not make a speech at all, we would still welcome them because they got rid of Tory Members of Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South also paid a generous tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Gerry Malone, and the work that he did in the House of Commons. My hon. Friend showed his expertise in the oil industry. I know that all three of my hon. Friends will play a great part in our debates over the next few months and years.

I should like to refer in passing to what happened late last Wednesday evening and Thursday morning. It is important for us to try to put some of the record straight. I should like to start with the part played by the two trivial parties, the irrelevancies in Scottish politics, the Scottish National party and the alliance. There are three minority parties in Scotland, starting with the Tory party with 10 seats, the alliance with nine and the SNP with a mere three. The alliance and the SNP seemed unwilling to say exactly where they stood. During the debate on the motion to adjourn the debate, the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said:

> "We are willing and able to stay here for as long as is necessary to complete the Second Reading of the Bill."

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said:

> "I oppose the Government's motion because it sets a worrying precedent to start interrupting and adjourning Second Reading debates. Opposition parties have precious little weaponry available to them in their armoury in any case."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 875-879.]

And then what do I read in the *Glasgow Herald* on Friday morning but the fact that

> "Mrs. Ewing who christened the Labour MPs the 'feeble 50,' said that early-morning manoeuvres and Westminster parlour games had cost MPs the opportunity for a vital debate on all aspects of Scottish economic and industrial life."

That is slightly different from what the hon. Lady said the evening before, that she would fight the Bill to the bitter end. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, making the same point, said:

> "The Labour Party substantially overplayed its hand and did not exercise proper judgment. If it is really intent on taking every issue to the parliamentary brink, we will all suffer. Mr. Dewar was unable to control his young, raw, rooky recruits."

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend is referring to me.

Mr. Maxton: I would like to refer to my hon. Friend as one of the young, raw rookies, but, although he is still young at heart, he is neither raw nor a rookie.

What became apparent during that debate was that the two minority parties—the third and fourth parties in Scottish politics — are now more concerned with attacking and fighting the Labour party than they are with fighting the Government who cause the problems. It would make a good deal of sense if, during debates on Scottish affairs, they sat on the Benches opposite. We should then have the majority party on this side of the House, with the three minority parties facing us.

What is the role of the Government in all this? Of course, there was a lot of briefing from the Scottish press office. It was unofficial, but we now know that it was being done by a man who, at least, will now be paid honestly by the Tory party for the job that he has been doing for the past five or six years. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) says that that may be described as a Government cut, but at least there is a certain honesty about the Conservative party paying Mr. Alec Pagett's wages, rather than the taxpayer doing so. After all, he will be doing exactly the same job as he was doing before.

The debate that was supposed to take place tonight was always a Government debate. It was in Government time, and the Government wanted it—although, of course, the Labour party was delighted, and we would have played our full part in it. We could have had the debate on Thursday morning, later than it eventually finished, if the Government had been prepared to keep it going. If the Whip had moved the closure at, say, 3 o'clock—four hours into the debate — your Deputy, Mr. Speaker, would probably have looked on it very sympathetically.

[Mr. Maxton]

We would have voted against it, but at least the Government would then have used their troops. Instead, we continued until 3.30 am debating an Adjournment motion simply to satisfy the pigheaded stubbornness of the Government Whips, because they believed for some reason that there was a deal.

It was obvious when the friends of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the graduates of St. Andrews university, moved in to "support" him—he must at times have wished that he did not have their support—that the Conservative party is schizophrenic about the Scottish Development Agency. Here we have an economic interventionist agency, designed to bring jobs into being in the Scottish economy, and to use public money to create wealth in Scotland. Although they voted against the original concept, the Conservatives now welcome it and want to use it. Nevertheless, it runs against everything that they believe in.

Let me return to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said about Glasgow. Here is a perfect example of what happens there. I found it extremely insulting, as did the lord provost and council of Glasgow, that the Prime Minister, representing the whole country, should make an official visit to the city of Glasgow, be 300 yards from the city chambers and not even bother to tell the lord provost — his is not a political appointment; he is the official head of Glasgow —that she was doing so. She then makes great claims about how all the work being done in Glasgow, all the enormous achievements there, are down to the Secretary of State for Scotland and to private enterprise. However, the Opposition know that Glasgow has become the shining light of inner-city regeneration and that that is due to the work of Labour-controlled district councils, Labour-controlled regional councils and the state intervention of the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): My hon. Friend will no doubt welcome reinforcement of that point. Edinburgh district council and the Lothian regional council, both of which are Labour-controlled, have an excellent record. In 1986, when they were under Conservative control, the electorate gave its verdict by turning them from Conservative into Labour-controlled councils. Moreover, the recent five by-elections in Edinburgh turned marginal seats into very safe seats for Labour.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend is quite right. Throughout Scotland Labour now controls the authorities. In conjunction with the SDA and the district and regional councils, Labour is creating jobs and wealth for Scotland.

Having praised the socialist weapon of intervention that the SDA ought to be, the Minister has a responsibility to answer some of the questions that were put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The Minister deliberately misled the House about the amount of money that is available to the SDA. There is a contradiction between what the Minister said in his speech and what has been said by his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. He also has a responsibility to set out the Government's position on regional aid. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden quoted from an interview on "Good Morning Scotland" by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Referring to the threats and rumours of cuts in regional aid he said:

> "there might be concern if it was true but it is not true. I am able to repeat to you categorically what I believe Ian Lang has also said: that there is no question of these resources available for regional aid in Scotland being reduced."

Every Opposition Member wants the Minister to repeat that categorical assurance. The rumour of cuts has been repeated yet again in today's edition of *The Guardian*. I am not saying that it is true, but there is a very strong rumour that Lord Young and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster are intent on carrying out yet another review of regional aid. We need to know whether that means more cuts for Scotland. I hope that the Minister will answer that question.

The Minister also has a duty to say whether there has been a change of policy in terms of who is in charge of regional aid in Scotland. The Secretary of State said that it would not be for the Department of Trade and Industry to make that decision—that the DTI may be responsible for regional aid in England, and that that is reasonable and proper, but that he and his colleagues are responsible for regional aid in Scotland. He went on to say that he believed that a reduction in the level of regional support was not being considered. That is not correct. I accept that the Secretary of State is responsible for the administration of regional aid, but he is not responsible for deciding what sums of money will be made available for regional aid. *[Interruption.]* That is very interesting. I am sure that the Department of Trade and Industry will be very keen to know that. That is not what it believes to be the case.

Mr. McLeish: While my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was speaking, the Secretary of State for Scotland suggested that he was in charge of distributing the money that is spent in Scotland. If that is the case, does my hon. Friend accept that the figure of £343 million that was spent in 1982-83 has been reduced to £66 million and that the Secretary of State is therefore responsible for that significant cut — not the Department of Trade and Industry in London?

Mr. Maxton: That is right. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to take the blame for the cuts that he made in regional aid instead of passing the buck to the Department of Trade and Industry, as he usually does.

Whether or not we like it, and whatever smooth words we may hear from the Minister about the SDA, we are now in the third term of a Tory Government who were not elected in Scotland. The Government are becoming increasingly Right-wing and are increasingly taking the monetarist line which we heard from the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). Indeed, the Secretary of State is going increasingly down the Right-wing route. Although he did not speak from the rostrum at the Conservative party conference at Blackpool, I believe that he spoke at a meeting of the latest Right-wing pressure group called the Committee for Free Britain. It is probably the most extreme Right-wing organisation that is allowed within the bounds of the Conservative party without going down into neo-Fascist roots. The Secretary of State, who used to be considered a liberal in the Tory party, is now speaking at such rallies.

Yesterday, when he opened the London office of the Northern Development Company, Lord Young criticised the Scottish Development Agency and the Welsh Development Agency. Clearly, he does not believe in the concept of aid to regions. He does not believe in the SDA. After the disastrous election results for the Tory party in Scotland, Lord Young is much more powerful in the Cabinet than is the Secretary of State for Scotland, and if there was a fight between the two over continued assistance to the SDA, I believe that Lord Young would win. That would be a disaster for Scotland, just as the Government are a disaster for Scotland.

9.42 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I will reply to the debate. This has been an interesting, if somewhat disrupted debate, and I shall try to answer as many points as possible in the time available.

First, I join the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) in welcoming the maiden speeches that the House was privileged to hear during the debate. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) paid a glowing tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Gregor MacKenzie, with which all Conservative Members would wish to be associated. We held him in high regard and in some personal affection, and we were sorry that he had to miss his farewell party because of the storms. The hon. Gentleman demonstrated a knowledge of and concern for his constituency which will have impressed the House.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Hood) has the challenging task of succeeding our good and sadly missed friend, Anna McCurley. As he said, she is a lady of some independence—I say that with some feeling, having been her Whip for some time. While she was a Member of the House, Anna McCurley was a brave spirit whose dedication to the interests of her constituents was unrivalled. She will be a hard act to follow, but we noted the hon. Gentleman's forceful personality today. I hope that he is as pleased as we were by the announcement from Compaq, the computer company in his constituency, that it will double the size of its investment in Erskine and bring forward its plans to create more jobs in the area.

The House will also have been impressed by the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran). We noted his close knowledge of and considerable interest in the problems of Aberdeen. Like the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Mr. Gerry Malone, the hon. Gentleman is a solicitor and in his maiden speech he showed the same degree of knowledge and dedication to his constituents as that shown by Gerry Malone. The hon. Gentleman's speech was interesting and informed and the House will look forward to hearing more from all those hon. Members who made maiden speeches today.

After the drubbing that the antics of Opposition Members received in the press in recent days following the muddle that they got into with all the own goals that they scored as a result of their behaviour last Wednesday, which was a repeat of their behaviour in Scottish Question Time in July when the left hand did not know what the left foot was doing, I prefer to accept the verdict of just one newspaper. I settle for the comment in *The Sunday Times*, which described the Opposition's behaviour as "wretched ineptitude". That comment was written by Mr. Alan Massey, an independent-spirited journalist.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was quoted as saying that he was happy with what had happened. If the expression that I saw on his face after what happened last Wednesday night was happiness, I would hate to see him when he was miserable.

Mr. Kirkwood: Irrespective of the views that we take of last week's events, it is important that the Minister of State should use his good offices to ensure that the day's debate that we lost on the Scottish economy, for whatever reason, is very speedily rectified.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is aware that that is not a matter for me, but I am sure that the usual channels will be listening attentively to his every word.

I want to deal directly with one of the recurring topics during the debate — the budget of the Scottish Development Agency. There is no need for any doubt in the minds of Opposition Members about the budget. The hon. Member for Garscadden, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) all raised that topic. The total spent within the agency this year will pass £1 billion for the first time. That is a remarkable achievement.

I can give Opposition Members the budgets at 1986-87 or 1987-88 prices. All the figures show an increase in real terms. At 1986-87 prices the budget was £124·5 million in 1978-79 and £130·9 million in 1986-87. The original budget for 1986-87 represents a 9·5 per cent. increase in real terms.

Of course it is true that the net budget is lower this year than in some previous years. Less of the taxpayers' money is being put into the agency because less money is needed to help the agency meet its gross budget. To suggest that that is a sign of failure is extraordinary. That implies—and perhaps this is the Opposition's policy—that success can only be judged by the amount of taxpayers' money that is poured into something. That is preposterous. If we simply stuffed the boilers of the SDA with £5 notes, that would be very costly for the taxpayers, but it might make Opposition Members feel better. I suppose that Opposition Members might believe that British Steel was most successful when it was subsidised by the taxpayer to the tune of about £1 million a week. That is blatantly absurd. The gross budget is what matters. The fact that the agency's net budget is now lower is a sign of success and that should be warmly welcomed for the taxpayers' sake.

Opposition Members also raised the question of industrial investment. They took no account of the fact that investment income can be recycled within the SDA. There is no lack of funds for suitable projects and the agency will confirm that to Opposition Members any time they care to telephone. The agency has 30 per cent. of its budget designated for environmental projects.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I will, of course, be following the figures very carefully. Is the Minister maintaining that all the projects submitted to the agency and that it believes are worth while and worthy of support can be supported by the agency?

Mr. Lang: The agency has not been constrained in any way through lack of funds. As I was about to say, the environmental projects budget is one in which the investment budget can intrude in the event of a desirable investment project arising towards the end of the year when the investment budget is insufficient to meet the need.

The agency now has investment in 700 companies, worth more than £40 million. It is generating more and

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[Mr. Lang]

more of its own funds and that catalytic role in bringing private investment into the sphere of its investments is particularly encouraging. The ratio of private investment to agency investment is now 13·4:1.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister saying that he is happy that the Scottish Development Agency's net investment is now only 2 per cent. of the total budget?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is distorting the agency's investment role and activities. The agency's industrial investment function is only a small part of its contribution to the Scottish economy's industrial sector. Almost all the agency's budget has an effect upon Scotland's industrial well-being. Given that the agency's budget has increased in real terms since this Government came to office and given the improved leverage of private investment, our commitment to the agency is self-evident and wholly demonstrable.

The right hon. Member for Govan suggested that the unemployment figures for his constituency had been massaged. That is not true. The unemployment rate for adults, seasonally adjusted, is very close to the OECD standardised definition, although it is calculated differently. The latest comparable figures for August 1987 are 10·2 per cent., according to the United Kingdom definition, and 9·8 per cent. under the OECD definition.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lang: I must move on. I hope to reply to the hon. Gentleman's speech in due course.

The right hon. Member for Govan asked about regional aid as though it were some dramatic new departure from Government policy. He referred to a broadcast by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State across the Atlantic. The right hon. Gentleman tries to make bricks without straw. There is no cause for alarm. My right hon. and learned Friend's position is clear. The policy for administering regional aid in Scotland is entirely my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibility. The policy formulation is a matter for the Government collectively. My right hon. and learned Friend has a strong interest and he constantly assesses and reassesses its impact on Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to cut the funds for regional assistance in Scotland—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although the Minister's reply is inadequate, it is difficult to hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members kindly attend to the debate? I do understand the situation.

Mr. Dewar: Which is the lead Department in charge of the formulation of the criteria and policy framework for regional aid in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The formulation of policy, in which my right hon. and learned Friend has an important role, is done collectively by the Government. A large proportion of regional assistance comes to Scotland. About 65 per cent. of Scotland's working population live in a development area, compared with 35 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. My right hon. and learned Friend has made his position absolutely clear and he is correct. The policy is working extremely well, is continuing to attract new investment into Scotland and is creating new jobs in considerable numbers.

I welcomed the right hon. Member for Govan's reference to the Govan initiative and to GEAR although I do not understand his grudging support for the involvement of the public sector. I have paid tribute to the regional and district councils in that respect.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to the garden festival and asked whether additional funds were being made available specifically for that. No additional funds are being made available, but the budget for the garden festival was taken into account when allocating resources to the agency. I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about the long-term use of the site. I assure him that the matter is being examined, not only in the context of housing to which he referred, but also in relation to tourism, light industry and office-based activity. The garden festival preparations are going well and over 75,000 season tickets have been sold.

The hon. Member for Garscadden seemed to think that he had an important point about Locate in Scotland when he spoke last week. It was one of the weakest parts of his argument. Perhaps that is why he compensated with much banging of dust-covered tomes. He implied that I was unsympathetic to Locate in Scotland and its objectives. When we debated inward investment in the Select Committee I took one view on what the appropriate solution would be and the hon. Gentleman took another. At that time I doubted the capacity of the SDA, as it was then constituted and with its record, to deliver the sort of improvement in inward investment that we all sought. I am delighted that it has proved so effective. Like the hon. Member for Gardcadden I saw an opportunity to attract more inward investment and I was keen to see that coming to Scotland. I recognised the shortcomings of the existing arrangement and the need for a more one-door approach.

The success of the agency is self-evident. I commend my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) on his reference to the survey of American companies that paid tribute to Locate in Scotland. They warned that the one thing that would put many of them off coming to Scotland would be the return of a Labour Government. I would take the strictures of the hon. Member for Garscadden on low pay in Scotland more seriously if he welcomed the arrival in Scotland of Health Care International and the hospital that will create 4,000 new jobs in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) also referred to that point and complained about funding being diverted from the Health Service, which is nonsense. The figure of £20 million that the hon. Gentleman mentioned was pure speculation; no discussions have taken place. Lothian is one of the best-funded health authorities in Scotland.

As to Guinness and the location of its headquarters, the hon. Gentleman should look at the headquarters of the Scottish Development Agency. He claimed that it was in his constituency, but his constituency is not in Glasgow; it is in Edinburgh.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) made one of the most lamentable contributions to the debate. Until my hon. Friend the Minister had approved the location of the hospital at Clydebank the hon. Gentleman sat on the fence. When he thought he was safe and that he could satisfy the dogmatists in his party, he turned against it. It is a major achievement for Locate in Scotland. It will bring 4,000 jobs to Scotland and it should be warmly welcomed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to the importance of the rural activities of the agency. This measure will help to develop the rural strategy of the agency. A replacement scheme for the PRIDE and DRAW schemes will be introduced. I hope to be able to announce details of that scheme very soon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) gave the House a timely reminder that support for the agency comes from the United Kingdom taxpayer. Scotland's needs are fully recognised in the relative advantage of the allocation of resources. The return on funds is an important point to consider, and my hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the record of the agency, which is certainly patchy. The agency has a vital role to play, operating at the difficult end of the market, with small businesses in particular.

Return is improving and the Treasury review decided that no change should be recommended in the powers, functions and purposes of the agency. I believe that we are right to continue on that basis.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Lang: The SDA has changed out of all recognition since its inception in the far-off days of 1975, when it was considered that the answer to any problem was to throw taxpayers' money at it. Over the past seven years the agency, under the guidance of the present Administration, has become more receptive to the needs of the market and conscious of the need to involve the private sector in the economic development of Scotland. As a result, the agency has become more efficient and, more importantly, has made more effective use of the money provided to it by the Government. The agency's more effective use of public resources can be clearly seen, for example, in its provision of grant aid for private development projects in rural and urban areas.

The agency has recently faced the challenge of a searching scrutiny of its activities that was carried out by a joint Scottish Office and Treasury team. It emerged well and demonstrated the value of its catalytic and innovative approach to the problems of Scotland's economic development and environmental improvement. It now looks forward to different challenges. The international economy offers threats and opportunities and the agency's activities, which are clearly set out in its latest annual report, seek to minimise the threats and maximise opportunities for Scottish industry by helping Scotland's industries to improve their efficiency, improve their products and processes and increase their already enviable excellent performance. The agency can play its role as a major instrument of the Government's industrial policy. The Labour party's instrument of acquisition has now become our engine of enterprise. Its ugly Socialist duckling is our beautiful free-enterprise swan. I urge the House to support the Bill so that the agency can continue with its fine work.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Scottish Development Agency Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

10 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Scottish Development Agency Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament or payable out of the National Loans Fund or Consolidated Fund under any other enactment which is attributable to the provision of the said Bill increasing the financial limit specified in section 13(3) of the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975 to £1,200 million.

This resolution authorises an increase in the limit on the amount of money that can be made available to the SDA by Parliament out of the national loans fund or Consolidated Fund.

Expenditure by the agency depends on a number of factors, some of which are outwith its control, such as the needs of Scottish industry for investment finance, the availability of land for environmental projects, the speed with which the agency can devise plans and implement schemes and the ability of the agency and Scotland as a whole to continue to attract inward investment. The new financial limit does not, therefore, pre-empt or anticipate decisions on the agency's future expenditure plans. It has been arrived at on the basis of a realistic assessment of the agency's expenditure in recent years—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen carefully to the money resolution.

Mr. Lang: As I said earlier, that expenditure has been higher in real terms than when the Labour party was in power. In our view, the extra resources being made available to the SDA should allow it to carry on with its present functions uninterrupted over the next five years. That continued commitment to the agency will provide it with stability and maximum flexibility in determining its priorities and the emphasis it puts at any one time on its respective functions.

The Bill does not lay down how the SDA's funds are to be allocated among its functions. That will depend on a number of things. For example, it will depend on the SDA's own view of its priorities, the state of the Scottish economy and the speed with which land, manpower and other resources can be mobilised. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I will continue to take a close interest through the SDA's corporate planning and budgeting process, in how the agency intends to allocate its resources among its various functions and ensure that the impact of the resources provide value for money.

10.2 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I feel I should apologise to the House for delaying it for a minute or two at the end of what has been a long day. I hope that I will not have to make too many points. However, there are one or two important things that should be said.

A recurring theme of this debate is a misunderstanding on the part of many of those who have taken part, especially the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), whose assiduous interest in Scottish affairs is becoming one of the features of our little round in the House. The misunderstanding is that, because the borrowing

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

requirement has risen from £700 million to £1,200 million, it in some way represents a new and generous turn on the part of the Government which will be reflected directly in the money that will be made available to the SDA under this resolution. It is important that we should clarify that.

Although the Minister and I may have had an argument over the past day or two about whether the budget of the SDA, and the Government's contribution, has gone up in real terms, I suspect that we would agree that the increase in the borrowing requirement does not necessarily show any intention by the Government to raise the annual budget and, therefore, the spending power or the ability of the agency to help, revive and rebuild the structure of the Scottish economy. I recognise that the Minister cannot anticipate future Budget statements. However, can he tell us whether the increase is calculated merely to allow the budget to continue at its present level or whether he intends to be more generous in the future?

10.3 pm

Mr. Lang: With the leave of the House I shall reply briefly.

As I explained to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) when I moved Second Reading of the Bill, which I admit was some time ago, I made it clear that the increased financial limit should be sufficient to allow the budget to survive for the next five years, or about that time. No possible commitment can be given to the specific budget of the SDA in years to come.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Scottish Development Agency Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament or payable out of the National Loans Fund or Consolidated Fund under any other enactment which is attributable to the provision of the said Bill increasing the financil limit specified in section 13(3) of the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975 to £1,200 million.

BP Share Issue

10.5 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the BP share issue.

I told the House on Tuesday that the United Kingdom underwriters to the BP offer had invoked the contractual provision requiring the Treasury to consult on whether the offer should proceed, and I explained the legal procedures that flowed from this. These procedures have now been completed and I wish to announce my decision to the House. It is that the offer should proceed.

In reaching that decision I have taken full account of the views expressed by BP, by Rothschild's on the underwriters' behalf, and by the Bank of England in its assessment.

The Government's practice throughout the privatisation programme has been to have Government share sales underwritten. The BP offer was duly underwritten on 15 October. From that moment, the British taxpayer has been entitled to the proceeds of the issue at the offer price, just as the underwriters have been entitled to the fees which they receive under the agreement unless the agreement were terminated.

However, I recognise the concern that in current unsettled market conditions the sale could have an adverse effect on market sentiment, particularly in markets outside the United Kingdom where underwriting is concentrated in relatively few hands. And the prospect of an unsettled after-market is naturally of particular concern to BP itself.

I have therefore agreed with the Bank of England arrangements designed to prevent a disorderly market in part-paid BP shares — *[Interruption.]* I shall start the paragraph again. Right hon. and hon. Members should listen because it is of some significance.

I have therefore agreed with the Bank of England arrangements designed to prevent a disorderly market in part-paid BP shares developing when dealings in these commence tomorrow. The issue department of the Bank of England will be ready for the next month to purchase these partly-paid shares at a price of 70p, which is roughly equivalent to the price implied by the level at which the fully-paid shares closed in London tonight. These arrangements, which will be put in place as soon as practicable, and certainly by the end of next week, will last for at least one month and not more than two months. Partly-paid BP shares acquired by the issue department will not be resold within the next six months unless the price rises above 120p. These arrangements have been cleared by the regulatory authorities in the United Kingdom.

I would like the House to be quite clear about the objectives of my decision: first, and most important, to allow taxpayers to secure the full proceeds of the BP sale to which they are entitled; secondly, to ensure that there are orderly after-markets in BP shares; thirdly, to make quite sure that the sale does not add to present difficulties in world markets. It is not my objective in any way to bail out the underwriters, whether in this country or elsewhere. By proceeding as I have indicated, the City will uphold its reputation as the world's leading international financial centre.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): It is hardly satisfactory to be handed this statement as the Chancellor walks into the House of Commons. However, I can appreciate his difficulty after days of dither and confusion —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very serious matters.

Mr. Smith: Is it not clear that this must be the first privatisation which has renationalisation built into it? That perhaps explains the difference between the tone which the Chancellor has adopted today and that which he adopted on Tuesday, when the clear implication was that N. M. Rothschild and others would get no sympathy whatsoever from the Iron Chancellor.

We have noticed, as we have noticed before, that this Government are prepared to intervene when financial interests are at stake but never when the interests of the country are at stake. The sad fact is that the Government, driven by dogma, are determined to drive through this sale and they are placing the Conservative party's interest before the true national and international interest. Is it not the case that the first victim will be BP, Britain's largest company? Has not BP made vigorous representations to the Government that the sale should not proceed? I invite the Chancellor to tell us what BP said to him. Is not BP appalled that over 30 per cent. of its shares will be held by the most unwilling shareholders in financial history? Is it not the case that BP — *[Interruption.]* I hope that Conservative Members will listen with a little care to the fate of British Petroleum. Is it not clear that BP will suffer from an inevitable over-hang in its shares which will greatly weaken the company's ability to finance its future operations? *[Interruption.]* I do not regard that, as do Conservative Members, as a matter for hilarity. I regard it as a matter of grave seriousness for BP and this country.

The interests of BP have been cast aside in the interests of the Conservative party and the Chancellor's need to sell the silver for the political purposes of the Conservative party. Is it not clear that, at a time when the Chancellor has a special responsibility to encourage stability and order in troubled financial matters, he did not take the step which would have created the greatest confidence — to abandon the sale and to announce that it would be abandoned permanently? Instead, to save his political face, he has come up with this curious buy-back arrangement. What will it cost the taxpayer when the Bank of England has to buy the shares at 70p, however low they fall in the market? The right hon. Gentleman has created a floor for the very underwriters whom he told us had to bear the responsibility of their liability. Once again, a lifeboat is being organised to help out the underwriters with whom the Chancellor was going to be so stern a few days ago. Would it not help us all if the Chancellor announced that he was now abandoning not only BP but the foolish threat to privatise water and electricity? He knows that, unless he has some special arrangements such as that, he will find it difficult to underwrite them, and he may find it very difficult to sell them. To get some sanity back to these matters, should he not take the clear-cut decision, which should have been taken days ago, not to abandon BP but to put privatisation to rest and let us get on with some serious subjects?

Mr. Lawson: It is quite clear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had written his little speech before he knew what I was going to say—I dare say he thought I was going to say exactly the opposite. I shall be brief.

On the first question, I should like to make it absolutely clear that there was no question of any dithering or confusion. The procedures had to be gone through. In fact, I did not receive the Bank's assessment until after 6 o'clock this evening.

Secondly, on the right hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks about either the privatisation or nationalisation of BP, he seems to have failed to notice that BP is in the private sector already. As for his concern for BP, my concern for BP was one of the main reasons I put in place the arrangements to have an orderly after-market in the company's shares. Finally, he has failed to understand the whole point of this operation. Under the operation which I have mentioned, the underwriters will bear the full loss of over £1 billion on the shares between the price at which they had to take them and the floor price that I have set. Under the right hon. and learned Gentleman's proposal of pulling the sale—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, he said that we should not go ahead with the sale. He would have handed back the £1 billion to the underwriters. We know that the Labour party today is simply the friend of Goldman Sachs. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will listen to those hon. Members whom the Chair calls and not ask questions from a sedentary position.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on an extremely difficult decision? As the matter is rather complex, will he tell us whether he can estimate the likely effect on the public sector borrowing requirement?

Mr. Lawson: It is impossible to make any estimate of the effect on the public sector borrowing requirement because it is impossible to say how many underwriters, or indeed any other applicants, will be prepared to sell their partly-paid shares for the price of 70p against the 120p for the partly-paid shares which they had to pay. To the extent that they do, obviously that will be deducted from the £1 billion, which is the value to the Government of the first instalment.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In the light of the buy-back arrangement, will the Chancellor, at least in future, spare us his cant on the virtues of the free market? Would it not have been more frank of him, having staked his all on this mega-flotation of BP, to have admitted that he has put his chips on black and the market has come up red? Far from having come before the House as a prudent Chancellor, is it not clear that he is in fact a reckless gambler who has been to the table once too often?

Mr. Lawson: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his percipience in noting that the market has fallen. However, far from being a gambler, I was extremely prudent. I took out an insurance policy with the underwriters.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on reaching a decision which, when it is carefully considered by the House and by the country, will be recognised for the value that it contributes in a difficult situation. Whatever may happen to the underwriters and whatever may happen at this juncture to the public sector borrowing requirement, what is important is the contribution that this decision makes to international economic and financial stability. The Chancellor and his right hon. Friends are to be congratulated on that judgment. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the right

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) failed to read his script, to keep up with the play, or to understand what my right hon. Friend has just said?

Mr Lawson: My hon. Friend is right in what he says about the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). He is right to point to the fact that, had there been this badly disorganised after-market in BP, this could have had—it may not have had a big effect, but it was a risk that I had to consider—an adverse effect on stock markets generally. That could have had an effect on the prosperity of the people of this country in these present circumstances. Therefore, I felt that it was right in these exceptional circumstances to put in place this support just below the current market price.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will there be any adjustment to the fees paid to the underwriters, and when will the right hon. Gentleman publish the total cost to the taxpayer?

Mr. Lawson: I will provide the total costs of the offer, including the costs of the fees to the underwriters, as soon as practicable. The taxpayer, however, has had an extraordinarily good deal out of this.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that what he has achieved is that the underwriters and the City, in their words, have been held to the contract that they entered into with the Government and that, at the same time, the Government have ensured that world markets will not be upset by this issue? It is quite brilliant.

Mr. Lawson: That was certainly the purpose of the conclusion that I reached. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the City of London and in particular to the sub-underwriters. The Association of British Insurers said:

> "ABI Members are quite prepared for the issue to go ahead and they will, of course, meet the obligations they have undertaken. There is no question of the ABI membership seeking to put pressure on the Government to have the BP issue postponed."

Had this issue been postponed, halted altogether or abandoned, and the underwriters relieved of their obligations, as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East sought, the reputation of the City of London would have been tarnished forever.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his measured response to these difficult trading conditions is greatly to be welcomed. Does he also agree that, whilst it is sad that United States brokers appear to be in difficulty and that the United States Treasury appears unable to help them, it is good that the Bank of England and the British financial sector are sufficiently strong to be able to provide a lifeboat for those in difficulty across the pond?

Mr. Lawson: I would not call this a lifeboat. I think that the House will find that the underwriters do not consider it a lifeboat. If it is a lifeboat, it is the most expensive lifeboat that they have ever seen—expensive for them. My hon. Friend made a good point. This has shown that the City of London, with its tradition and practice of sub-underwriting into sound hands, is a much better place to make share issues than any other financial centre of the world.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Chancellor confirm that one factor leading to his decision was direct representations from the American underwriting institutions? Will he tell the House whether any representations were made directly by the American Administration?

Mr. Lawson: What I will tell the right hon. Gentleman —[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."]—is that there were very, very forceful representations from the United States, various quarters of the United States, all of them, or nearly all of them—there were exceptions and *The Wall Street Journal* today incidentally had a very good leading article urging us to go ahead—that I should follow the advice of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and not go ahead with the offer. I declined to accept those representations.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Chancellor accept that setting a floor price for the BP share issue is, in effect, a subsidy from the taxpayers to the underwriters and that following today's announcement the Iron Chancellor will be known as the Marshmallow Chancellor? Does he agree that while he is offering the underwriters a lifeboat the Labour Front Bench would have offered them the whole ship? Will he explain why he is so opposed to subsidies in every area of the economy except when they are subsidies to the City of London?

Mr. Lawson: It seems to me to be a very strange subsidy to the underwriters if they are obliged to pay 120p for the shares that they have underwritten and then, if they sell them back to the issue department of the Bank of England, they get only 70p. That seems a very strange idea of a subsidy.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): As the Opposition have criticised all previous privatisation measures, which have been oversubscribed, as selling shares at a discount, why are they not delighted that on this occasion we are selling shares at a premium?

Mr. Lawson: I remember being puzzled by this myself at the time of the Britoil sale, which was also underwritten. The plain fact is that shares sometimes open dealing at above the issue price and sometimes at below the issue price. The Opposition complain in every single case, whichever way it goes, from which one can draw only two conclusions. One is certainly that they disapprove of privatisation, with which indeed we shall be continuing, and which will go from strength to strength. The other is that they do not understand a thing that they are talking about.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is the Chancellor aware that it is his own reputation and that of the Government that will be tarnished in the eyes of the British people? His angry responses show his irritation at that fact. What is the subsidy, hidden or otherwise, to the American underwriters as well as to the English underwriters? If 70p is to be paid to those wishing to sell their shares, would that still be the case if the share price was 35p?

Mr. Lawson: At the moment 70p is just below the equivalent of the market price. That offer will remain open for not less than one month and not more than two months, and of course it is there, it is an undertaking whatever happens to the stock market.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What price the free market now?

Mr. Lawson: It is quite impossible to estimate the cost because one does not know how many people will avail themselves of this offer, or what the share price will be during the period, but what is quite clear is that the cost will be minuscule compared with what the Government are getting from the proceeds of this offer.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will not the country treat with contempt a party such as the Labour party which jeers at the ingenious solution that my right hon. Friend has found but fails to recall that the whole process of selling BP shares was begun under a Labour Government by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? Should we not pay tribute to the British people for having the good sense to put the economy and the fortunes of this country in the hands of the Conservative party and not in the hands of the rabble on the Benches opposite?

Mr. Lawson: That has been increasingly apparent as the exchanges on this issue have developed. When my hon. Friend referred to the first sale of BP shares by the Labour Government 10 years ago, he might also have reminded the House that it was the equivalent, in today's prices, of a fully-paid share of under 100p.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): What will be the cost if everyone goes to the buy-back arrangement?

Mr. Lawson: That is not going to happen.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In order to ensure that this brilliant solution—to a problem that simpler minds like mine had thought insoluble — works effectively, will the Chancellor use his influence through the Bank of England to ensure that, in areas in which the Government have influence, there will be no other substantial public flotations during the next two months?

Mr. Lawson: I am not quite sure what particular issue my hon. Friend can possibly be thinking about. If it is the Channel tunnel, by any outside chance, I have to tell him that the decision on whether and when to go ahead—I am sure that it will go ahead at the appropriate time—will be taken by the company itself. The Government will not have any influence over that.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): What sort of commentary is it on the Chancellor's theory of market economics if the Government cannot float one of the richest, most powerful and profitable companies that the world has ever known without intervention because markets cannot cope? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he will be announcing a cut in interest rates tomorrow morning to soothe the markets?

Mr. Lawson: Interest rates will be kept at whatever level is appropriate in the circumstances, keeping in mind the need to bear down on inflation. I shall adjust interest rates as and when I think it is right to do so.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I thank my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for preserving the jobs and integrity of my BP workers at Wytch Farm in Dorset. Will he comment on a strange change that has taken place? Conservative Members have been rather unfair to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I have done a little research and can tell the Chancellor that when the right hon. Member was Secretary of State for Energy he consistently maintained that the investment of the British Government in BP shares was a Treasury matter, and not a nationalisation.

Mr. Lawson: I recall that, but as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is, unaccountably, not in his place, I do not think we need to dwell on it.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): In the aftermath of this debacle, will the Chancellor now accept that a distinction needs to be drawn between a person who invests in a company with a view to obtaining some benefit over a period from increased output and profits, and a person who buys a state asset at a knock-down price to make a fast buck? Do not the Government realise that by encouraging the latter at the expense of the former they are giving private share ownership a bad name?

Mr. Lawson: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should be so concerned about the good name of share ownership. I am not only surprised, I am delighted that enlightenment is dawning even in the strangest places. As for the suggestion that the BP share issue was sold at a knock-down price, I do not know where the hon. Gentleman has been.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when the Opposition have got over the disappointment of his doing precisely the right thing, they will realise that the City of London's word will have been shown to be its bond—it should be remembered that it earns £10 billion a year for the country—and that the problem arose on Wall street? The Chancellor has done exactly the right thing by keeping our name and our nerve. The weak sisters in America have shown the strength of London and how right it is that we are the centre of the financial world.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. The City of London comes out of this very well compared with other financial centres. For future privatisations, of which there will be many, I shall certainly need to reconsider the practice of having overseas underwriters.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Chancellor's comments about the small investor came almost as an afterthought in his reply to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). In view of all the money that was spent on advertising to encourage the small investor, even this minimal relief will represent a great loss for small, inexperienced investors. Is this not a kick in the teeth for people whom the Government have been trying to encourage?

Mr. Lawson: Obviously I am concerned about the small investor. That is why, as soon as the stock market fell, I withdrew all the advertising. I thought that it was right to do that. Of those small investors who have subscribed, I believe that the overwhelming majority subscribed as long-term investors, not as short-term holders. I believe that we shall find that this is a good long-term investment in Britain's largest company.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on a courageous and historic decision which has shown sensitivity to the market place, firmness and, most important of all, confidence in the market, the financial system in the City and the issuing company? Will he confirm that the precedent for

[Mr. John Browne]

maintaining orderly markets after a new issue exists and that that is greatly in the interests of the issuing company and its shareholders and, therefore, of the taxpayer?

Mr. Lawson: That is right. The real issue that I had to decide was the choice between going ahead with the sale and then, obviously, as any responsible Government would do in the present circumstances, doing something to produce an orderly after-market, and aborting the sale altogether. I decided that it was right to go ahead.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): What advice does the Chancellor give to the small investor whom he conned into buying shares at great cost and who is suffering, and will continue to suffer, as a direct and immediate result of this so-called historic decision?

Mr. Lawson: As I said, small shareholders who have put their money into BP have overwhelmingly done so as a long-term investment. We have encouraged them to do that by having a loyalty bonus for them if they hold shares for a certain length of time, during which time they will enjoy the success of the company as measured in the dividends that they receive. The small investor, I am sure, will be glad to have had a holding in BP, even though all investors have clearly not been unaffected by the fall in the stock market.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, so far from bailing out underwriters with taxpayers' money, even if every underwriter took advantage of the offer to repurchase shares at 70p, they would collectively suffer a loss of more than £1 billion and that, if that were to be the case, the Government would own exactly the same number of shares in BP as they did three months ago, but would have received more than £1 billion and thereby would have effected the greatest short sale in history?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend has understood the position entirely accurately. That was certainly not our intention when we made the offer, but it is the position today.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is that the position? The Government could have bought the shares back freely on the open market at less than 70p, if the market fell below that, and made more than £1 billion. Has not a deal been done between the Government and the underwriters? The flotation had to go ahead to save the Government's face, but some subsidy had to be arranged for the underwriters, or they would not have underwritten the flotations of water and electricity. That is the deal that has been done: a direct subsidy for the underwriters, and an intervention in the market by the Government to prevent the shares from falling below 70p.

Mr. Lawson: Had I sought to help the underwriters, I should have taken the advice of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and cancelled the offer. Instead, I did what was right in the circumstances —right for the City, and right for the Government's privatisation programme.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Did not this technically brilliant solution secure some £7,000 million for the public purse and in the interests of the taxpayer? Can my right hon. Friend tell us how much was raised by the first sale of BP?

Mr. Lawson: I do not recall the sums, but it was certainly considerably less. The price per share was under 100p in today's equivalent, compared with the 330p for which we have sold our 31 per cent. stake in BP today.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will the Chancellor answer the question asked by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)? What did BP say to the Chancellor when it had discussions with him yesterday and again today? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, to save the face of the Tory party, he has put at risk the future of a great company which employs many thousands of people in constituencies throughout the country? Any other Chancellor who had made such a mess of such a serious and important financial matter would have resigned. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman give his resignation to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman must recognise that there have been difficult market conditions. As for what BP said, the company informed me that it was very concerned that there should be an orderly after-market in its shares.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while the BP issue naturally assumes very great importance to us here tonight—and my right hon. Friend seems to have dealt with it very skilfully—we must bear in mind that we are talking about a little over £1 billion, after a fortnight in which the stock markets of the world have fallen in value by $1,000 billion. The wider problem remains. Will my right hon. Friend be continuing the energetic search for international co-operation to deal with it?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. Of course I shall be doing that. It is very important that we move swiftly to international agreement on measures to deal with the current financial problem. At the heart of that must be effective action by the United States to reduce the federal deficit significantly, by more than the $23 billion suggested in the Gramm-Rudman II Bill, and to do it in ways that will be credible in the markets. With that as the centrepiece, I believe that it is possible for other countries to contribute their part. Certainly we in the United Kingdom are fully prepared to contribute ours.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Have the underwriters, either here or in America, considered—or threatened—legal action against the Government on the basis of a different interpretation of the underwriting contracts from that which the Chancellor would accept?

Mr. Lawson: I have heard one or two rumours of that, but an awful lot of rumours fly around. I have no evidence of that whatsoever.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Following his wise decision, will my right hon. Friend say how much of the £1 billion underwriting loss will be borne by overseas underwriters, to the very clear benefit of this country?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that we are particularly in business in order to extract money from other countries by these means, but it is certainly true that the biggest single losses will be borne by United States underwriters.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Chancellor say what has happened to popular capitalism, or people's capitalism? Has it been temporarily abandoned, or has it been permanently abandoned? What has happened to the free market? Has the free market been temporarily abandoned, or has it been permanently abandoned? How many more Conservative principles are to be abandoned under the right hon. Gentleman's Chancellorship before he resigns?

Mr. Lawson: That was a rather tired question. Popular capitalism is alive and well. One in five adults in this country now owns shares, and that number will steadily increase.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the very sensible and quite brilliant method of dealing with this matter. One factor that the Opposition fail to realise is that by taking the action that he has taken my right hon. Friend will shore up the market in BP shares, that he will safeguard the future of that company and that he will also give confidence tomorrow to the markets in London and throughout the world, which can only be good for future world stability?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Confidence throughout the world is affected primarily by many other factors, to some of which I referred when I replied to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell). However, in so far as the outcome of the BP controversy is a factor, the decision that I have taken will clearly be a stabilising element in the question.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): While most hon. Members have on occasion had great sympathy for the Chancellor, tonight he is dangerously looking rather like the Joe Bugner of the financial markets. He fights a good fight with the underwriters, but is it not a fact that he has placed the Bank of England as underwriters of last resort, not just to United Kingdom financial institutions but particularly to American financial institutions, a role in which the Federal Reserve and the banking institutions of the United States might have refused to involve themselves?

The Chancellor has refused to say what was the exact position of Sir Peter Walters and the board of BP in relation to the Chancellor's actions this evening. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm or deny that BP's view was that this sale should have been aborted?

Mr. Lawson: No, I shall not reply in those simple terms, because the discussions with BP were confidential. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that what took place does not correspond with the account that he has just given to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, whatever be the market price of BP shares at the moment, their asset value is tremendous and holds superb potential for the future, that many of the small shareholders, about whom hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned, will wish to hold these shares, and that they will look not only to their asset value for the future but to the dividend income that they will obtain from them?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. That is the second time today that I have agreed with him in the House. It must be a record.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Following the remarks of the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) in respect of the continuing crisis which sparked off the problems with the BP sale, and taking into account what the Chancellor said tonight, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is not likely to get much assistance from West Germany and Japan in solving the crisis, because they have won the economic war? With a trade surplus between them of $120 billion, why should those two nations care tuppence about bailing out the Chancellor or even the Americans?

As for the sorry saga with BP, history will record the fact that another Tory, Winston Churchill, bought the shares for £2 million, while in 1987 the Chancellor of the Exchequer tried to sell the first tranche at 120p and then had to fix another market price at 70p, with consequential costs to the taxpayer, at a time when child benefit has been frozen and the pensioners and disabled are being hammered.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman fails to grasp the fact that there can be only substantial benefit to the taxpayer from this. If the taxpayer sells the shares at 120p and then buys some of them back at 70p, he will have made a profit. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman asked a long question and he got his answer.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House and the nation on his courage and skill in making this statement tonight? Does he agree that the brightness of the reputation and honour of the City of London remain untarnished, and that that of the company is reflected by its ability to produce profits? The statement will certainly enhance the reputation of BP.

Mr. Lawson: A main reason, which weighed very heavily with me, why I decided that it was right, having heard representations, many of which were in the contrary direction — as the House knows, the majority of the underwriters asked for the issue to be called off—to go ahead, was my profound concern that the reputation of the City of London should remain untarnished. It was important that, whatever the pressures may have been in other financial centres, that reputation should continue to ride high. During this experience, we have seen the much greater soundness of the City of London compared with other financial cities.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): If the Chancellor's announcements this evening, especially the buy-back procedures, were necessary to avoid instability after flotation, because of the effect that that could have on the prosperity of the country, what effect will the 25 per cent. fall in share values in the past 14 or 15 days have on the prosperity of the country?

Mr. Lawson: As I said on Tuesday, the fall in share prices worldwide will have a dampening effect on economic activity, and that will affect the prosperity of the British people as well as people thoughout the world. At this stage, it is impossible to put a figure on the extent of that damage. I am striving, in my actions in this country and in collaboration with my opposite numbers overseas, to take action which will minimise the effects on the world economy of the sharp fall in stock markets.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the principal concern of financial markets is confidence and that, as a result of his actions today, the

[Mr. David Shaw]

City of London has increased the confidence of people in various markets and the Government and their financial strategy have retained the confidence of people around the world? Does he agree that the only loss of confidence is that in the Opposition?

Mr. Lawson: Of course, the electorate delivered a very substantial vote of no confidence in June of this year and subsequent events have vindicated that.

Mr. Nellist: How about an election next week?

Mr. Lawson: As to the suggestion from a sedentary position by the hon. Member that we should have an election next week, I feel that that would put the people of this country to unnecessary inconvenience, given that our position in the polls is even higher now than it was in June.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call hon. Members who have been regularly trying to catch my eye, but I ask them not to repeat questions that have already been asked.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): When proceeding with the BP share sale — after a fashion — will the Chancellor of the Exchequer be having discussions with the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the chairman of the Tory party, to see whether he intends to continue with his normal practice after a privatisation of writing to the lucky shareholders offering them, as an additional blessing, membership of the Tory party and cut-price crates of Christmas claret — Chateau Rothschild usually, I believe. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman considers that unnecessary because in this case it will be the 100,000 disgruntled shareholders who will be writing to the chairman of the Conservative party.

Mr. Lawson: I cannot answer for my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), although I am very happy to discuss this matter with him, as I am to discuss any matter with him; he is very good value. As for the hon. Gentleman's observations, I congratulate him on his perspicuity in noticing that shares can go down as well as up.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the parallel transaction in the BP placing— the rights issue — has also been enabled to go ahead because of his action this evening? Can he therefore refute the Opposition's claim that BP is in a worse position as a result of his shrewd action today?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. BP was anxious to raise £1½ billion to repay borrowings which it had incurred as a result of the Sohio acquisition. This means that it will be able to repay its borrowings and be in a stronger position as a result.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Is it not clear that the crisis of the capitalist system will continue and that jobs will be put in jeopardy, particularly at BP? Will the Chancellor say something about that — or do jobs not matter to this Government?

Mr. Lawson: There is no danger to any jobs in BP. As for jobs generally, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that unemployment in this country has fallen more rapidly in the last year than it has in any other country.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is it not demeaning for the Chancellor of the Exchequer of this Government in crisis to be dragged reluctantly to the House of Commons earlier this week and again this evening, to the considerable embarrassment of the Leader of the House? No wonder the Prime Minister is looking sheepish. Why will not the Chancellor tell us the cost to the Bank of England of underwriting this issue? Is it not BP on HP?

Mr. Lawson: Any marginal reluctance that I may have in coming to the House is because I know that I will have questions like that from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: On Monday I compared the Chancellor to Nero. Someone suggested that the right hon. Gentleman would be better compared to Caligula. But Caligula's horse was alive. The Chancellor has been flogging a dead horse, and he has managed to flog it to 250,000 applicants for shares. If the Chancellor believes that they will be happy with that deal, he is deceiving himself if not the House. Will the Chancellor tell the House what action his Department will take with regard to applicants who cancel their cheques?

Mr. Lawson: If that were to happen, that is a matter that obviously I would have to consider, but I believe that those shareholders put their money into BP as a long-term investment, not to make a short-term profit. I do not believe that very many of them will cancel their cheques.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I am glad to see that the Chancellor has caught up with his reading of *The Wall Street Journal* and note that his reading is about as selective as mine. I should like to know how he can claim as a triumph a three-week period in which he has grossly overvalued the shares of the BP offer. As a believer in the free market, he has been forced to build a raft to save the financial institutions — a piece of anti-Tory legislation, much like the nationalisation of Rolls-Royce, which was carried out by a previous Tory Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question.

Mr. Wall: I am asking how the Chancellor can claim all of these tragedies as a triumph. He said that 300,000 would make money and they have lost it. What he has achieved is not people's capitalism, but, for those 280,000 investors, people's decapitation.

Mr. Lawson: What I am claiming is that the taxpayer is getting the money to which he is entitled and that the reputation of the City of London remains untarnished. Orderly markets in BP shares will have been secured— something that is not only important to BP but, in these difficult financial times, is perhaps important rather more widely.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Has the Chancellor learnt any lessons from the events of the past few days? If so, will he share those lessons with the House, or does he intend blithely to carry on looting public assets in the same way as he has proceeded so far in his term of office?

Mr. Lawson: If the hon. Gentleman is asking whether we shall continue with our privatisation programme— this question was asked from the Opposition Front Bench —the simple answer is yes we shall.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that throughout the past two weeks of turbulence on the stock exchange the one group of investors who have refused to be panicked and who have looked to the long term and seen the underlying strength of the British economy has been the small investors?

Mr. Lawson: All the evidence shows that the small investors are more likely to be long-term holders than many of the City institutions.

PETITION

Anna Chertkova

11.4 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I have the honour to present this petition signed by 81 members of my constituency from the Baptist church in Loose, and the Christian Bookshop in Maidstone calling for the speedy release of Anna Chertkova, who was wrongfully detained in a Soviet psychiatric hospital for many years.

The petition showeth,

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House encourage the Foreign Secretary in representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining Miss Chertkova's release and reunion with relatives in the West.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

School Closures (Waveney)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

11.14 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the many people of Waveney who are deeply concerned about the closure proposals affecting Waveney schools. I accept that Waveney is not unique in having some schools on death row. Within Suffolk several decisions are awaited on closure proposals. Those decisions are to be taken by my hon. Friend the Minister. Indeed, all over the country schools are being closed, as they always have been, for a variety of reasons ranging from newbuild to falling rolls, from reorganisation of two-tier to three-tier or for economic or educational reasons. That, put simply, is fair enough. No one expects education to stand still and not be in need of continuous reassessment.

The widespread concern in Waveney stems from a number of sources: the over-zealousness of the county council and the manner of its approach; the educational arguments about small versus large schools; the community needs in an area on a geographical limb, as Waveney is; the contradictions in the Government's policy of reducing the so-called surplus places, yet widening parental choice; and the dilemma of listening to democratic demands, yet responding only to one interest's viewpoint.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot comment in detail on closure proposals or on objections regarding Reydon high school, Henham primary school and Wrentham primary school. In any event, the objection period is not over and I have not yet asked him to receive a deputation. Those decisions are not yet his to make. However, I hope that when they are he will be able to make a speedy response.

The decision to close Flixton primary school in Waveney has already been taken, and, although we have corresponded and he is under no obligation to say anything about it, I hope that in general terms—this is the core of the debate—he will feel able to shed some light on why a clear and unequivocal expression of community feeling can be overridden in favour of the views of the county council's civil servants and councillors in the hope, perhaps, that if Flixton goes their own areas will be saved.

One would be hard put to find an authority more prudent or loyal to the Government than Suffolk. Many members of the authority are acutely unhappy at being pilloried for their interpretation of Government wishes. They came to see my hon. Friend the Minister for closure clarification, based on the Department of Education and Science circular 3/87. They learnt from that meeting that it is up to them. They adopted a consultation exercise with parents, governors, churches, parish councils and the community, which is recommended to the letter by the Department. However, that exercise left every person involved feeling that the authority had already decided to close the school, that no arguments would change any minds and that the whole thing was an expensive and pointless farce. Social engineering is not confined to Left-wing councils.

Local education authorities must have the powers necessary to do their business. They are confined to educational and financial arguments. However, Suffolk has given closure decisions solely to its education committee, so decisions are not ratified by a full council. My hon. Friend the Minister has an education brief, but I submit that he also has a wider brief.

To the widespread disbelief of many people in Waveney, the authority maintains — my hon. Friend upheld it by closing Flixton—that small schools per se are educationally unviable. The county officers sound almost Shirley Williamsesque in maintaining an optimum number regardless of any contrary views. I will not waste precious time rehearsing the arguments in favour of smaller personal education, except to say that I find the case against smaller schools to be unproven.

The need to bolster numbers at the Sir John Lemon high school in Beccles by transferring children from Reydon or taking primary children from Flixton to Ilkeshall St. Lawrence or from Wrentham and Henham on to Reydon primary school may be educationally justified at a time of fewer children being born outside the town areas, but it is not being presented to the community in that light. The result, wrongly or rightly, is that people feel that the authority wanted the school land for disposal, and then wriggled around for a specious educational vindication.

I feel sure that the Minister will take all these points into account and give weight to the fact that in these rural areas, versatile and dedicated teachers not only work but live alongside their pupils. Thus, the ongoing educational process is both modern and traditional. I hope he will grasp this opportunity to recognise that and will send these schools forward without the shadow of the axe but with constructive progress towards standards of rising excellence.

As I said in my maiden speech on 30 June last, most of my constituents live in the Greater Lowestoft area while about 30,000 do not. Many of those 30,000 live in an area covered by a rural development plan. Anyone who has driven north of Ipswich or east of Norwich will vouch for the inadequacy of our roads network. The prosperity and rapidly rising growth seen by hon. Members who represent other East Anglian seats has not yet reached the most easterly constituency of the British isles, nor the one of my neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss).

Our relative isolation is part of our attraction, but with fewer young people as a proportion of the population who will service the Reydon and Southwold area if it is to become a young person-free zone? What price a balanced community in terms of health care, social mix and environmental harmony if younger families and families with young children no longer see schools as an organic part of their areas? The Minister can play a part in strengthening that "social cement" by which the Secretary of State has graphically described small schools in villages.

The Secretary of State, at Blackpool on 7 October, said:

> "Choice is what we want to extend to everybody"—

and he cited the 1405 Act, which he said laid down

> "that every man or woman, of what Estate or condition that they be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner of school that pleaseth them within the Realm."

The Secretary of State commented:

> "this eloquent declaration of free choice was restated in the Education Act 1944 in the famous phrase that children should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents."

I support that aim to the last echo. In Lowestoft there are three high schools. Parents have choice. But if that is to mean anything in the country as a whole, it must mean biting some tough bullets, and the authority cannot do that unless the Secretary of State allows it to do so.

The revised targets for removing spare capacity by 1991, as ordered in circular 3/87, mean in Suffolk a further 3,500 primary and a further 7,500 secondary places being taken out. That represents 10 Reydon high schools and perhaps 100 primary schools. Who is to say that the birth rate will not rise again?

Some will say that that scale of closures is right educationally. Many will say it is right financially, even with bussing and building costs added. But it does not square with parental choice. It is no good saying that these people can choose to live in the towns. That is the "let them eat cake" approach. What quality of life would Suffolk have if everyone lived in the towns?

Hon. Members are familiar with the campaign that is inevitable every time a school is due for closure. Local councillors who live, work and have their being in their communities have a duty to respond to the feelings of their communities, just as we have duties here. We listen to the experts, and we pay them to advise us, but we do not have to accept their advice every time. If we did, we would not need elected councillors, or even Members of Parliament.

We must heed gut reaction and go for the heart, but I beg the Minister not to tear the heart out of the community. If that community wants its schools so badly, it should not have to fight the authority for them. I urge the Minister to get Suffolk county council off the backs of the community by allowing more to be raised and spent, if that is what is wanted in response to the demand for community education. I ask him also to get off Suffolk county's back by ending this absurd line on surplus places in the fastest growing region of the country.

The Minister will not wish to comment on specific proposals, but I know he will add my comments to the lorry-load of representations that he will be receiving and will give them due consideration, even though they carried no weight in the Flixton school case. I dare say also that he is unable to postpone decisions on closures until the opting out measures in the proposed Education Bill have been approved by the House.

Perhaps the Minister will clarify those proposals for schools under death sentence seeking grant maintained status. Perhaps he will comment on whether feeder and smaller primary schools will be able to opt out of the parent high school, if that is the wish of the community, and confirm whether a decision, once taken, is irreversible.

I thank my hon. Friend for coming to the House not only to answer me but to answer my constituents and the local education authority, who will follow his remarks very closely.

I conclude by asking by what right we say that any expert knows better than parents how best to educate their children, especially in a sane, sensible, attractive area such as Waveney.

11.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): Before responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) I should like to pay tribute to the way in which he has presented the views of his constituents. Long before the general election, he demonstrated his concern over important local issues when he joined a deputation led by his predecessor, Jim Prior, to present the views of parents objecting to the closure of Flixton primary school. It is very clear to me that the Waveney constituency is in very good hands.

Before I attempt to deal with the specific points raised during this debate, I must remind the House of the background against which the Government must consider proposals for the closure of schools. The Government do not seek the closure of small schools purely for the sake of closure. I am only too aware, from the many deputations I see from all over the country, that the loss of a school is always a matter of great local concern.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that nationally school rolls have fallen dramatically. I must stress that when proposals are made legally to us by local education authorities the educational interests of the children are uppermost in our minds. It was no accident that when my Department issued guidance to local education authorities earlier this year what is now more commonly referred to as circular 3/87 was actually entitled "Providing for Quality".

The circular made it very clear that the assessment of the viability of an individual school is not solely a question of pupil numbers. A true assessment must also take account of its ethos, the quality and balance of expertise of its teachers, links with other schools, the fitness of its premises and the extent to which all these factors can be sustained. In our consideration of rural areas, we said that account should also be taken of travelling distances to other schools and of the age of the children involved. Size in itself is not a determinant of the quality of a school. There are good and bad schools of all sizes. Particularly in rural areas, good teachers in small schools have done much to overcome the limitations of size. However, there must be general agreement that a point can be reached at which, even with disproportionate resourcing, a small school cannot always overcome the educational difficulties caused by having only a small number of pupils. In small primary schools the age range in classes can become very wide and there is little opportunity for proper group interaction.

The Government set out some general principles concerning the size of schools in our White Paper "Better Schools" but, as we emphasised in the circular "Providing for Quality", these are not to be regarded by LEAs as narrowly prescriptive. We expect education authorities to think long and hard before proposing to close a school, and to take account of the wider considerations I have just mentioned, and of the views of local people.

Over the past few years, the Suffolk local education authority has approached the problem of falling school rolls in two different ways. I understand that the authority has conducted area reviews where it has looked at a secondary school or schools and the feeder schools to see what, if any, rationalisation might be undertaken. The authority has also examined all primary schools where there are fewer than three full-time teachers.

As my hon. Friend knows, his constituency has experienced both types of the reviews being conducted by the Suffolk LEA. Recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, after very careful consideration of all the issues put to him, approved the closure of a small primary school at Flixton. Reydon has been the subject of an area review.

[Mr. Robert Dunn]

My hon. Friend represents a constituency where there are many small villages and hamlets, many of which have small primary schools. One of these schools at Flixton was the subject of review by the Suffolk authority, following which statutory proposals were put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the school's closure from July 1988. This proposal was approved after careful consideration of all the arguments, including those put to us by local objectors.

As my hon. Friend has said the Suffolk LEA has conducted a thorough review of primary and secondary provision in the Reydon area. I was aware before this evening's debate that the review had occasioned much local interest. I am aware also that the whole of Reydon closed down for a day in an attempt to demonstrate how the town might be affected. That shows that local concerns are strong, as does the fact that my hon. Friend has chosen to raise this matter on the Adjournment.

I understand that educational provision in Reydon is presently organised on the basis of 5-11 primary schools and 11-16 secondary schools and that it is the authority's intention to reorganise provision on a three-tier middle school system. I should explain to my hon. Friend that my Department has no locus in the formulation of proposals for any change in the nature or pattern of school provision. This is entirely a matter for local education authorities. It is for the Suffolk authority, which has the statutory duty to provide primary and secondary education, to consider how best to discharge that duty and to make proposals for change as it considers necessary. The law then provides for local objectors to make their views known and for the Secretary of State to take all relevant matters into consideration before taking decisions.

Against this background, I cannot comment at this stage on what is apparently emerging from the Reydon area review. The publication of statutory notices for changes in the education system in Reydon and the surrounding villages provides my hon. Friend's constituents with a legal right to register any objections which they may have. All public notices explain the procedures for lodging objections and I suggest to my hon. Friend that he encourages his constituents to make their views known in the proper form.

For my part, I promise that any statutory objections to proposals for change in the pattern and number of schools serving the Reydon area will be very carefully considered before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes any decisions. I am also willing to receive and listen attentively to any representations that my hon. Friend may yet care to make. I hope that he will accept that these elements of the decision-making process are not empty rituals. We as a Government are prepared to listen to the views of parents. In the final analysis, we are concerned to see that children receive the best education possible that is commensurate with the proper use of the available financial resources.

My hon. Friend has posed the question whether, if the Suffolk authority make statutory proposals for the closure of Reydon high school, the school will be allowed to opt out of the maintained system. I am afraid that I must say to him that the legislation which will allow for schools to opt out has yet to be placed before Parliament. Until that legislation has secured parliamentary approval, statutory proposals can be considered only under the law as it now stands. We did, however, make it clear in our consultation document on grant maintained schools that, once the new legislation is in place, it would be possible for school governors to seek grant maintained status as a counter proposition to an authority's proposal that a school should close. The Secretary of State would consider any such proposal on its merits. The likely future viability of a school will, of course, be relevant in the context of an application for GM status as well as in considering closure proposals.

In the meantime, the Secretary of State will, as always, take all relevant considerations into account in reaching decisions on statutory proposals. Where school closures are proposed, I have no doubt that objectors will make known their view that a particular school remains viable. The Secretary of State weighs all such issues in the balance before reaching any decision.

I appreciate the concerns and anxieties of parents in the Reydon area, but I can firmly assure my hon. Friend that they will receive a fair hearing from me.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the earnestness and robustness with which he made his views so clear in the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 30 October 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Environmental Damage (Greenford)

9.35 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I wish to present a petition:

To the Honourable The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the Greenford residential group for the environment is in the name of Mr. N. D. Keating and Mrs. C. A. Keating of 914 Greenford Road, Greenford, and has been signed by several hundred Greenford and Northolt residents.

The ratepayers of Greenford road, Oldfield lane, Bennett's avenue, Ingram way, Uneeda drive, Tees avenue and other surrounding roads in the neighbourhood are being subjected to what they feel to be inhuman conditions. They have been living under those conditions for many years. Heavy goods vehicles and commercial vehicles have caused massive damage to their homes, to roads, to water pipes, to gas pipes, which have been caused to leak, to sewers, which have been caused to smell foully, and to electricity supplies, including the obliteration of traffic lights, street lights and home lights and fires have been caused as a result.

The residents say that telephones have been put out of action by heavy drilling and day and night road works and that that work has caused deafness and nervous tension within the community. They are pleading to the London borough of Ealing to build a diversionary road to and from the different warehouses, factories, commercial stores and so on leading directly to the Western avenue through the industrial estate and bypassing Greenford road.

The residents also want relief from aircraft noise and other environmental damage over which the Government have indirect control.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will do everything in its power to support the campaign for a relief road for commercial vehicles and an end to aircraft noise against the signature of the petition signed by many hundreds of people from the Greenford area.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the hon. Member has a second petition. It might be for the convenience of the House if he presented them together.

Horses and Donkeys (Ill treatment)

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland——

which is in the name of Mrs. Shirley Walbancke of the Horse Rescue Fund—

sheweth:

That there is much ill treatment of many horses and donkeys in markets.

That others are neglected and starving.

That there is mass overbreeding of horses, ponies and donkeys.

It has been signed by no fewer than 86,000 people from all parts of the country, including many thousands from the London area.

There is no question but that many horse markets are cruelly run, especially the Southall market, although that has improved recently. It is clear that the Farm Animal Welfare Council's standards recommended for horse markets should be immediately applied.

There is serious overbreeding because many horses, donkeys and ponies are not needed and therefore neglected. There is cruelty by neglect to horses, ponies and donkeys which are put out to areas where there is no keep for them and as a result they starve or nearly starve to death. Cruel people should be disqualified from animal ownership. The Horse Rescue Fund is trying to do something about that and I commend its efforts to the House.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Government to enact swiftly to remedy the present deplorable situation.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

BILLS PRESENTED

COMPANIES

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, supported by Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. John Butterfill, Mr. Matthew Carrington, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Jeremy Hanley, Mr. Robert McCrindle, Mr. Anthony Nelson, Mr. Tim Smith, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, and Mr. Mark Wolfson, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the election and responsibilities of directors of companies and to the composition of boards of directors; to make provision concerning the appointment of independent non-executive directors; to require procedures to be followed in certain public companies in regard to the appointment and functioning of an audit committee of the board; to make further provision in regard to the responsibilities of auditors; and to make other changes in the law relating to companies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 41.]

PLANNING PERMISSION (DEMOLITION OF HOUSES)

Mr. Hugh Dykes, supported by Mr. Cyril D. Townsend, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Robert Adley, Mr. Jeremy Hanley and Mr. Robert G. Hughes, presented a Bill to make it obligatory to apply for planning permission before demolishing a dwelling-house: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 42.]

DISQUALIFICATION FROM OWNERSHIP OF ANIMALS

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Sir Marcus Fox, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. David Sumberg, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Allan Rogers, Mr. Anthony Nelson, and Mr. Richard Livsey, presented a Bill to give the courts power to ban a person convicted of cruelty to animals from keeping any animal: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January and to be printed. [Bill 43.]

Energy (Renewable Sources)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

9.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): It is clearly right that as a nation we should produce as much of our energy as possible from resources which are renewable and whose use does not deplete the earth's total resources, so long as it is economic to do so and so long as in the process we do not seriously damage the environment.

For that reason this Government have for a number of years actively encouraged and participated in a very wide range of research programmes into new forms of energy. The effect of these efforts has been that this country maintains a leading position in the development of renewable energy sources, despite the fact that as a nation we are richly endowed with fossil fuels and have one of the world's most advanced nuclear industries.

Since 1979 we have spent over £110 million in research into renewable technology. Programmes have ranged from studies of solar power to projects involving wind, wave and tidal power, to assessments of photovoltaics, biofuels and geothermal sources of energy. It is fair to say that we have looked at the fullest possible range of new and renewable sources of energy. The current renewables programme includes 218 projects worth over £77 million. Of this total, some £13·3 million has been contributed by the generating boards and the private sector. This national programme has been supplemented by learning from programmes carried out in other countries and by participating in them.

The question to which the House may want answers today are, what have we found out, where do we go from here, what are the principles by which we determine future research, and what in effect is the Government's strategy with respect to renewable sources of energy.

Our basic principles can be easily stated. They are to ensure the maximum commercial take-up of the results of the Government's research efforts. We want to ensure that, where possible, renewable sources of energy are developed to the point where they can compete fairly with traditional energy sources. To do that we must necessarily be hard-headed. We must scrap those projects which research has clearly shown do not have a commercial future, work further on those areas which are promising, and transfer to industry those programmes where a market is beginning to develop and industry should lead in the future. At all stages and in all cases we should release the maximum of information about what we are doing to industry.

It was in this context that on 16 September this year I announced a new series of technical and other publications aimed at opening the windows as wide as possible on our research efforts into renewable energy.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I sympathise with the problems of scrapping projects that have no future. Could the Minister say a little about how this is done in the Department? Is there a departmental committee that examines mechanisms of shrinkage? I recognise that this is a difficult problem.

Mr. Spicer: It is a difficult problem. There were always arguments in favour of continuing programmes. Without casting any aspersions, I must say that when scientists get interested in their projects they produce strong arguments. There is a committee called ACORD — the advisory committee on research and development—which advises us. I will give some examples of projects that we have dropped. I would be interested to hear any arguments in favour of continuing with them.

Among the projects that we have dropped because they do not seem to have a significant commercial future in this country are deep-sea wave power, on which a considerable amount of research and money has been spent during the past five or six years; active solar power—because, the House may be surprised to learn, we do not have much sun in this country—and geothermal aquifers, because of the absence of appropriate water levels in the earth.

Those which we are in the process of handing over to industry include the extraction of methane from refuse tips, combustion of industrial and domestic wastes, and passive solar design in buildings to capture sunlight. On some projects, such as the hot dry rocks programme in Cornwall, we have yet to assess the situation very carefully as there are strong arguments on both sides. We have not yet formed a decision whether to proceed. I would be happy to discuss any details with hon. Members, either privately or later in this debate if I have the leave of the House to do so.

Those programmes we have defined as particularly promising and as justifying further Government involvement in research and development include some biofuels, such as forestry and straw, small-scale inshore wave power, wind power and tidal programmes. Wind power and tidal programmes are especially interesting. In the case of tidal power in particular, the contribution to electricity generated could be substantial; the Severn barrage scheme could, for example, generate up to 6 per cent. of all electricity used in Britain.

There is, however, a great deal of controversy—we may hear about some during this debate — and differences of opinion about the effects on the environment of the proposals for tidal energy and for wind power. There is a certain irony in this. It was in part environmental considerations which motivated people to bring the tidal and wind technologies to their present state of development. They were each no doubt seen as clean, quiet and safe compared with, for instance, coal mining and nuclear power.

It is a little ironic that environmental groups here and abroad are the most vociferous in questioning those technologies. The Severn and Mersey barrage proposals are said to have potentially serious impacts on bird and marine life, and some people are suddenly seeing windmills as being noisy and obstrusive, at least on the scale that would be required to provide significant amounts of electricity.

On a recent visit to Denmark, which has a large number of windmills producing electricity, I found tremendous controversy among environmental groups, some of which were vociferously for and some of which were equally vociferously against wind power as an energy source. That environmental uncertainty is one of the strongest reasons for the Government's continued involvement in research into this area.

Mr. Dalyell: Are we not right in thinking that the Danes, for all their efforts and skills, have found that windmills provide very little electricity? It is a tiny amount —about 0·8 per cent.—of what they need. Is it not very disappointing for them?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is right. There are about 1,200 windmills in Denmark, and the figure that he gave for the amount of electricity going into the main grid was about right. It is certainly less than 1 per cent. The Danes argue that the electricity is used locally in individual houses, and that it therefore does not affect the national grid. Tremendous effort has been put into the programme, but not much electricity has gone into the grid.

There is a strong argument, which the Government support, that we should make continued efforts in that area. We must try to develop large and efficient windmills. We are about to commission a 3 MW windmill, which will be one of the largest in the world, in the Orkneys. It is open to question whether a collection of such windmills would provide some electricity for the national grid at economic rates. The Government believe that such a programme might be feasible, but environmental as well as efficiency factors will have to be considered when we decide whether to develop experimental wind farms. The environmental issues are one of the reasons why, this summer, I launched a series of major studies into the potential effects of tidal power on the bird and fish life of the Severn and the Mersey.

We must assess the full environmental effects before we give the Government's blessing, or otherwise, especially to the large wind and tidal schemes. But I am aware that some of the large projects have been on the drawing board for many years. I intend to remove the uncertainty as quickly as possible and to make a decision, especially on the Severn and Mersey schemes, within the next year or so.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): About time too.

Mr. Spicer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The uncertainty has caused anxiety to many people and, in some cases, cost them a great deal of money. It is time to make a decision on those big projects.

Whether or not those two projects go ahead will depend on factors additional to technical and environmental considerations. Financial questions are likely to be every bit as important. We have already made it clear that the projects will have to operate competitively with other forms of energy. That is likely to mean that they will need to raise their finance on the open market, outside the protection of Government guarantees. Therefore, their future will depend on the nature of the contracts that they can strike within a privatised electricity industry.

I have spoken of the need for the Government to spell out as far as possible the details of their strategy for the development of renewable energy. In that context, I shall listen carefully to the debate to collect the assembled wisdom of hon. Members on this matter. I wish especially to get a feel for the House's view on whether, in the new year, we should publish a substantive document laying out our considered thinking in this area.

9.55 am

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The House greatly appreciated the way in which the Minister, who is making his debut on this subject, introduced the debate. He opened a wide debate and his contribution will assist the House. Later, if I have time, I shall ask him some questions about the interesting matters that he mentioned.

[Mr. Alexander Eadie]

It is two years and five days since the House last had a full debate on renewable sources of energy. That debate, on Friday 25 October 1985, when I also spoke for the Opposition, provoked enormous interest. I welcome this debate, and it is safe to predict that, whatever its outcome, it will provoke similar interest. The days are long past when people interested in renewable sources of energy—or benign sources, as I like to call them — were scathingly libelled as belonging to the beard-and-sandals brigade. The simple fact which the House must consider is that fossil fuels, which are finite, are becoming a reducing asset.

The backcloth to the debate has changed during those two years, which I believe — I hope that I shall find some support in the House — has increased the importance of renewables as a source of energy. Thermonuclear power is no longer seen as such a certainty in energy provision. Chernobyl changed that. There is a bigger public lobby against thermonuclear power than ever before, and Lord Marshall's burst of candour in a television interview about its cost-effectiveness flings another dimension into the argument. A disaster like Chernobyl anywhere in Europe would just about halt our energy expectations from thermonuclear power.

There has been a massive depletion of our coal reserves. It is nothing short of vandalism. With British Coal's policy of taking the best seams first and sterilising the rest, those reserves will never be recaptured. More than ever before, pits are being closed on the basis of cost, not because the seams are exhausted.

That is part of the backcloth to the debate on renewable, or benign, sources of energy. Frank Frazer of *The Scotsman* — one of Britain's most knowledgeable journalists on oil and gas — wrote this month in the latest North sea oil commentary published by the Royal Bank of Scotland:

> "One of the factors influencing future markets will be the fact that UK oil output now seems to have peaked. The bank's monthly index shows that September output, worth an estimated £27 million a day, was four per cent. below the corresponding figure last year. The bank comments:
>
> > 'In year-on-year terms, this is the thirteenth month in succession in which the index has been lower than 12 months earlier. It is now well established that the peak production level of North sea output was reached in 1985 and from now onwards oil flow will gradually slow down.'"

The privatisation of gas provision will not resolve our problems. We know that the relatively cheap supply of natural gas from the southern basin of the continental shelf will decline rapidly. Britain has never been self-sufficient in gas. Some 20 to 25 per cent. of our supplies have come from the Norwegian sector. These supplies are likely to decline even more rapidly. Gas is available in other parts of the world, but it will not be cheap, and we shall be confronted with import bills of billions of pounds.

Will the Minister tell us what is happening in Westfield in Fife about the demonstration experiement concerning the making of synthetic North sea gas from coal? That experiment is well advanced — we know that we can make gas from coal—but some people are worried that, as a result of privatisation, there will be repercussions for research and development.

I am racing through various aspects of alternative renewable sources of energy to provide a backcloth to this subject over the last two years. I am interested in examining the part that these energy sources can play in providing an indigenous source of energy and thus security of supply. I should have liked to deal with this matter, but I do not have time. It is important for an industrial nation —or an aspiring industrial nation—to have safe, secure energy supplies.

Quite frankly, I find some of the discussions about energy today extremely depressing. I have heard it said that the Secretary of State for Energy believes that his terms of reference are to abolish the Department of Energy. If that is true, it will be disastrous. I remind the House that the Department of Energy was set up by a Conservative Government. At a conference of oil executives and panellists this month the Secretary of State said:

> "Our policy is founded on the simple proposition that economies grow best where markets operate freely and where business decisions are taken by business people and not by politicians."

Today we shall no doubt wish to defend politicians in this House but, if the Secretary of State practises that philosophy, there will be neither energy sense nor common sense in policy and energy provision.

Even President Reagan's Deputy Secretary of Energy, Mr. William Martin, gave a contrasting view at the same conference, when he said:

> "Energy issues cannot be approached on the basis of free market principles alone, for international energy markets are often not free."

Our Secretary of State is getting off to a bad start in his new job and he appears to want to emphasise our negative attitude towards energy policy, even compared with that of the United States. The House of Commons is the only forum in this country for energy debates. That is one of the reasons why this debate is doubly welcome.

One of the issues raised in the debate on 25 October 1985 was our investment in research into and the development of renewable sources of energy. We were given yah-boo replies, such as, "We spent more than you". That was a fundamental issue in the allocation of resources to research. It was proved beyond doubt that nuclear power was grabbing most of the allocation. Figures given by Dr. Jonathan Stern of the Policy Studies Institute show that the allocations for research and development have changed little. Eighty per cent. of the Government's allocation goes to nuclear energy, and one third of the allocation provided by public corporations — the nationalised industries — goes to nuclear-related activities.

I wish to deal with the Government's expenditure on research and development in solar, geothermal and wave energy. The Minister made some interesting comments about wave energy when he mentioned in-shore wave energy. It is a weak argument to compare this Government's expenditure on such research with that of previous Governments, in view of this Government's receipts from energy revenues, particularly oil.

The Government became the beneficiaries of the largest unearned fiscal and energy windfall in British economic history, which was derived from the developments promoted in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1979, Governments collected £884 million in direct taxes. Between 1979 and 1986 the Government collected a staggering £52·4 billion from oil revenues. In the 1970s the Labour Government bore the burden of an annual £5 billion oil import bill. Since 1979 the Government have enjoyed an export surplus amounting to £8 billion in

1985-86. Their expenditure on alternative renewable sources of energy, in view of those figures, is nothing to shout about. As in many other aspects of our national life, their expenditure on research and development has dubbed them an anti-research and anti-development Government.

I repeat what I have said many times, that the idea that one can have a policy of backing winners in research and development does not work, despite the Minister's measured comments. It is in the nature of R and D that there will be losers, and then it is back to the drawing board.

The Minister told us that the Government had invested about £110 million since 1979. I shall look at the table that deals with all the aspects of R and D that the Minister mentioned — biofuels, geothermal aquifers, geothermal hot rocks, solar—active and passive—tidal, wave wind and others. I have all the figures since 1975. Investment was £8·2 million in 1979. That is the year when we were battling against the big oil imports bill. The figure rose in 1980 to £11·2 million. In 1981 we seemed to be racing on a bit—it increased to £17·3 million. In 1982 we dropped back to £14·2 million. In 1983 we dropped back again to £11·3 million. In 1984 the figure increased to £14 million. The most recent figure that I have is for 1985, when we dropped to £12·7 million.

The serious point in the debate is that the Government's record is neither good nor impressive when they tell the House their spend on R and D on renewable sources of energy. I could quote the figures given by Dr. Jonathan Stern, which are even more startling, but I do not have time because I wish to refer to some other aspects.

If we are to have a debate on energy provision and renewable sources of energy, we must consider energy conservation because, strangely enough, there is a correlation. Energy conservation has been described as our fifth fuel. Andrew Warren, that tireless campaigner on energy conservation, wrote to me and kindly sent me his association's new report entitled:

> "Regenerating the Inner City: The Energy Dimension".

Mr. Warren makes a point with which I am sure every hon. Member will agree:

> "As you will know, never mind how we generate it, it is widely accepted that we are extraordinarily profligate in the way we use our fuel. The Government itself suggests we are squandering at least 20 per cent. of it at a cost to all of us of at least £7 billion a year. It has also set itself the objective of moving us from the bottom to the top of the international energy efficiency league by 1990."

With the Government's current spend, we do not have a chance in hell of getting near that, but Andrew Warren's point is well made.

In his new report Andrew Warren says that he has six objectives. The report demonstrates how energy efficiency could create new jobs — 110,000 new jobs could be created over the next decade. It could stimulate new enterprises. The report demonstrates how installation activities require limited capital to succeed. It talks about assisting local work forces to acquire new skills. The report states:

> "Commission and the new City Technology Colleges to develop more vigorously courses and work experience directly concerned with the needs of the energy efficiency industry."

The report shows how energy efficiency can improve the quality of the built environment and improve the efficiency and competitiveness of existing activities. It also shows how energy efficiency can reduce social deprivation, which will interest every one of us who has had the experience of inner-city deprivation.

I cannot do the report justice, but I should like to ask the Minister whether he proposes to respond to the document, or has he responded yet? Perhaps he can tell us today whether the Government have considered how to respond. Will they respond positively?

Another aspect associated with research, development and demonstration, and renewable sources of energy, is combined heat and power. A press release issued by the National CHP Liaison Group through its chairman on 31 March this year had the eye-catching caption, "Whose orphan is CHP", and stated:

> "Britain's approach to the development of energy saving Combined Heat and Power Schemes has already been likened to the creation of an orphan, according to the House of Commons Energy Committee.
>
> Now, the National CHP Liaison Group of local authorities, in response to the Energy Committee's CHP Report, is calling on the Government to give CHP the status of legitimacy it deserves.
>
> 'I welcome the Energy Committee's keen commitment to the development of CHP in Britain.' states Councillor Les Russell, Chairman of the CHP Liaison Group. Having now seen the Government's response to the Committee's report, I am struck by the remarkable complacency of their official viewpoint. Major local authorities in Britain are pioneering the adoption of CHP, virtually unaided in many cases, and, willing as we are to enter into wide-ranging partnerships to secure progress, the pace of the Government's efforts to resolve key problems leaves much to be desired."

For the information of the House, the National CHP Liaison Group includes members of the councils of Edinburgh—I have been associated with the Edinburgh CHP scheme — Belfast, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, Newcastle, Leicester and others. Will the Minister give the Government's view on the matter?

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): The hon. Gentleman will know that I am much in sympathy with his remarks about CHP and the lack of progress, but does he accept that the main handicap over the years with the development of CHP and city district heating has been the nationalised electricity industry and the unfair electricity buy-back tariffs that the industry has been prepared to offer private producers or city consortiums? Does the hon. Gentleman further accept that the monopoly of the electricity industry has not been interested in participating, investing in or co-operating with CHP?

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman has made that speech before. It is a good point, but the argument is one-sided. If he had been in the Opposition, he would have asked, "What are the Government doing about it?" We have had meeting after meeting with Ministers and we have been given great promises. I do not think that many hon. Members will agree with the hon. Gentleman's argument.

I should like to deal with funding and implementation. I remind the House that in the debate in 1985 I recommended a minimum of £150 million per annum for research. That was proposed, not by my political party, but by an organisation that is not associated with it, the Network for Alternative Technology and Technology Assessment. It was a minimum programme. I do not want to refer to it again because I am rushed for time. Although I made that proposition in 1985, I should still settle for it this year, in 1987. It would be a tremendous step forward in research, development and demonstration associated with renewable sources of energy.

[Mr. Eadie]

We are all aware that Government sinners are always welcome. They have come back to wave energy. There was almost a funeral pyre during the 1985 debate on wave energy. David Ross, who is interested in the matter, would say that the Government have come back to wave energy because Norwegian research and development has made them look foolish.

The Minister described inshore wave energy. We always hear about the Loch Ness business. When I was a Minister we carried out experiments on Loch Ness. Do I take it that the Government's volte-face on wave energy means that we may discuss Scottish loch wave energy and, rather than look for the Loch Ness monster, have Loch Ness energy projects? The Minister should clarify what he means when he talks about inshore wave energy. Many people are interested in it, and I know that they do not agree with him. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider the programme advocated by NATTA. We would have to set up a renewable energy agency to distribute funds and co-ordinate research. It could be along the lines of the United States Energy Research and Development Agency. I hope that the Government will respond positively to the suggestion.

The Minister talked about how well thought of we are in Europe, and so on, and said that we were one of the leaders. That is not entirely true. However, I think that I have probably been unfair to him. This week, we had a meeting at which the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) was present. Also present was the chief of the European Economic Community, who chastised us because it was discovered that we are tardy in submitting renewable sources of energy research and development projects to the EEC. We do not get our share of the allocation of resources. The Government should be indicted for allowing that to happen. Why are the Government so tardy in submitting renewable sources of energy projects to the EEC? Is the Department incompetent? Does the Department need to be stiffened up by people who are more concerned about the matter? Are too many people in the Department more concerned about nuclear power than about renewable sources of energy? We are entitled to ask such questions.

It has been drawn to my attention that a paper is to go before the European Council of Energy Ministers at a meeting on 13 November. That paper proposes a far more positive line on alternative sources of energy. In advance of that meeting, there has been a meeting of high-level civil servants from member nations. I used to take part in such meetings. I am told that already, before we even get to discuss the matter, there is some Department of Energy hostility to the proposals. We have a proposition to accelerate the provision of renewable sources of energy. If hostility has been engendered before the meeting has even taken place, it demonstrates a strange attitude. As the Minister told us that there must be a new drive in research, development and demonstration associated with renewable sources of energy, he should comment on that matter, in defence, not only of his own Department, but of the Government's policy on renewable energy sources.

I congratulate the Minister on the way in which he opened the debate. I am convinced that the debate will be productive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Fifteen hon. Members hope to speak in the debate. I appeal for speeches not to be overlong, so that they may all have an opportunity to make their contributions.

10.24 am

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I welcome the debate. It refers to a matter about which there is considerable public interest. I have seen many enthusiastic people who have been setting up plants to provide energy from renewable sources. For instance, only a few months ago, I saw a massive windmill on the top of the Pennines. It supplies a large dairy factory whose products are sold in many shops in the north of England and, indeed, all over the world. The owners of that business were enormously enthusiastic about their successful investment of a considerable amount of money in the project. Today, I shall concentrate on the possibility of encouraging the generation of electricity from water power.

I enjoyed hearing my hon. Friend the Minister's first few words in opening the debate. He said that it is clearly right that we should produce as much energy as possible from renewable sources, provided that it is economic and does not spoil the environment. I warmly applaud that statement and his later remark to the effect that such undertakings must be allowed to compete fairly. I shall devote my remarks to that point.

I was rather disappointed that my hon. Friend said little about the possibility of harnessing water power for the generation of electricity. I have had a long interest in the matter. My constituency is in the Lake District, where there are many mountains and a great deal of water. There is also a well-known and successful turbine manufacturer in my constituency. The House may recall that I have for long been associated with the National Association of Water Power Users. I certainly welcome the Government's moves over the past year or two to encourage private electricity suppliers to feed power into the grid. It is absolutely essential that tariff evaluations are fair.

I cannot see why the arrangement for tariff evaluations should not be the equivalent of avoided costs incurred by the electricity Board to produce power. I fear that the current legislation is somewhat vague on that point. The rates that are offered to developers appear to be significantly lower than the avoided costs. I hope that the Minister will examine that matter.

The Minister will recall the work of the Watt committee which, between 1984 and 1985, examined the opportunities for harnessing water power in Britain. It estimated that there is a significant economically exploitable potential in the United Kingdom. According to the committee, the amount was about 117 MW. Of that total, it estimated that Scotland could produce 16 MW, Wales 25 MW, England 14 MW, and Northern Ireland 18 MW. I am told that it is believed that, the estimate for England was considerably underrated and that it should have been nearer 60 MW. That means that relatively small undertakings have the potential to produce 160 MW. With that potential, one might have expected to find several hundreds of small schemes producing electricity in this country. But, sadly, we have only a few dozen small schemes compared with France, which has a drier climate, where there are 7,000. We must ask why that should be; the Government should do something about it.

The first reason why small water power users are inhibited is as a consequence of the abstraction charges that were introduced in the Water Resources Act 1963. This is not the first time that I have addressed the House over the past 23 years on the unfortunate effect of that Act. It was a body blow to some small water power users. They are charged an abstraction charge, but they do not abstract water; thay put it back into the water course. It caused many generators unnecessarily to be put out of use. To give the Government credit, they took a major step forward in the Energy Conservation Act 1981. The law was changed so that water authorities must in future have regard to

"the need to conserve sources of energy (other than water) and the consequent desirability of preventing the charges in question from inhibiting the use of water as a source of energy".

While all water authorities were prepared to consider those new arrangements under the 1981 Act and to allow reduced charges in certain circumstances, those powers are discretionary and are interpreted very differently. The small developer is often left uncertain as to what charges will be levied and cannot calculate his running costs in advance. For instance, if a developer has a proposed plant in the south-west water authority area, in Scotland or in Northern Ireland, no charges are levied, but elsewhere it is a lottery. The Severn-Trent water authority, which seems particularly bovine in this regard, bases its charges on the volume of abstraction, which effectively kills off enterprise of this sort. Water abstraction charges must be based on a small standard licensing fee that is graduated on the basis of energy production, and charges that are based on the quantities being passed through the turbine should be abolished. If any other charge were levied, it would simply inhibit the development of this resource, which would be a great pity.

The second reason why small water power users are inhibited—this is the most important point that I want to make; it is central to these matters—is the effect of the rating system on operators. It has a much greater deterrent effect on water power users than any other matter. Energy producers are currently rated by one of two means. First, they can be rated under the formula rating system. At the moment that applies to the CEGB, the electricity boards, and British Gas, and I understand that it would apply to the proposed combined heat and power stations. The effect of that formula is that it increases the cost of a unit of energy by 0·2p per unit.

The second system of rating is the so-called contractor's principle, where the assessment is based on capital costs. In other cases it seems to be based on the first figure that comes into the rating officer's head. The effect of the second system is that it increases the cost of production of a unit of energy by no less than 2p per unit. The rub is that most small energy producers fall into that second category. They are confronted with the problem that the rating system means that they will pay 10 times the costs of some of the bigger state enterprises.

I have received a letter from Commander Chapman, who is honorary secretary of the National Association of Water Power Users, in which he says:

"To quote a particular instance, a member in Scotland has, at some expense, had a feasibility study made and has concluded that the could have built a 500 kW hydro-electric plant to supply the South of Scotland Electricity Board. However, on consulting the Valuation Officer he found that the rateable value would be assessed on a percentage of the capital cost of the building and plant, and would render the scheme uneconomic."

I do not understand why such a situation is allowed to persist. If we are to encourage small private energy producers to produce electricity from water power, which seemed to be exactly what the Minister was saying earlier in his speech, and to sell that energy into the national grid, this gross discrimination should be removed. It is totally unjustified and wholly indefensible, and I understand that it could be changed by laying an order before the House. I should have thought that such an order would be very uncontentious; I would be very surprised if it was.

I hope that the Minister will give a green light to the water power users when he replies to the debate. Their activities are admirable and in the national interest. They harness a natural, renewable resource, they cause no pollution and do not take part in activities that are unsympathetic to the environment.

I remember my own efforts over the past few years to encourage farmers and others in the countryside to diversify their economic activities. Many farmers and landowners in certain parts of the country, and many other people, are interested in significantly diversifying the economic activities of the countryside by installing small turbine generator units to harness existing water power in their areas.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): My right hon. Friend may be interested to learn that precisely the same problem of rating applies to wind turbines. In my constituency the wind energy group's Ilfracombe wind turbine has, under the present rating law, confirmed by local appeal, found that it requires half the potential income of that generator to be paid in rates alone. Thus, the facility pays about 12 times as much in rates per kilowatt hour generated as the CEGB under the agreed formula. That proves my right hon. Friend's point about the total unfairness of the rating proposals for anyone who is seeking to diversify and use renewable sources of energy.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend's intervention is extraordinarily helpful. With regard to water power, I did not give an example that I have where the rating cost could well have been 30 per cent. of the revenue of the plant. My hon. Friend has given an example of 50 per cent., which is even more horrific, and I am grateful to him for bringing those figures to the attention of the House.

I turn briefly to the efficient and successful industry in this country that has built up a considerable export market in generating and turbine equipment. In my constituency there is a very successful company in this regard, Gilbert Gilkes and Gordon. But it must be remembered that successful producers in the United Kingdom are handicapped by the lack of a home market in comparison with their foreign competitors. They urgently need these artificial and unnecessary barriers to be removed. I cannot understand why those barriers should be allowed to persist.

I hope that the Minister will look seriously at what I have said and I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) has made much the same point. I hope that the Minister will also look at the experience of the United States, where in the past few years there has been a massive expansion in the use of water power. Legislation in the United States has been framed

[Mr. Jopling]

to help the industry to develop. While that is not an epoch-making change in the national energy supply, it is a small, highly useful and possibly highly effective source of energy in the form for which everyone is looking.

10.40 am

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech this morning. I am told that it is courtly to praise one's predecessor, but I regret that on this occasion I shall have to give that a miss. The only good thing that I can say about my predecessor is that he likes dogs. I went back in history and tried to find a former Member that I could praise, but unfortunately the three previous Members for my constituency all turned their backs on the Labour movement that put them in their positions.

I had to go a very long way back to find anyone worthy of note. Many years ago, Blyth Valley was represented by none other than Bob Smillie, then Eddie Edwards, who was the mining federation's secretary, and then Bob Taylor, another miner. There was, for a brief period, a Tory Member of Parliament during the national Government of 1934 — Sir Godfrey Nicholson. I understand that he is still alive and well today, and is well liked in the constituency.

Listening to this energy debate made me think of the Beatrice colliery in my constituency. Few hon. Members are probably aware of what happened there. It was the first colliery after the miners' strike to have the so-called independent review. Its chairman listened to the arguments from both sides and concluded that the colliery should continue to operate for two years to determine whether it would be viable to mine its 29 million tonnes of coal. Unfortunately, others higher up decided to ignore the findings of the independent review and closed the colliery, with the consequent loss of 29 million tonnes of coal to the nation. That was unfortunate. Blyth has some of the best low-seam miners in the world, and they have broken record after record. When I walk around my constituency, it distresses me to see those same miners brushing the streets, carrying black plastic bags to pick up rubbish or cutting hedges for old ladies—something that might be desirable, but not for miners. That is what the Government have done to my constituency and that is why it returned me to this House.

Renewable sources of energy is a subject regularly discussed in my constituency, and we agree that the possibilities of wind and water should be pursued. However, there is coal to be mined and it should be mined. It should also be subsidised. "Subsidised" may be a dirty word to Conservative Members, as they do not like subsidies, but their competitors like them and subsidise foreign coal up to the hilt. I warn the Government against once again relying heavily on foreign energy. Every year we import foreign coal, and are therefore repeating the mistakes of the 1960s when we relied on oil from the middle east. When the middle east first found oil, Joe Gormley said that the Arabs would not live in tents. I tell the Government that the South Africans will not live in tin huts and Colombia will not allow its kids to mine the coal that is coming into this country. The Government should note that and not rely on foreign coal. They must not destroy our coal industry and rely on foreign industry. Once we rely on a foreign supplier, up will go the price and there will be an energy crisis, just as we had with oil in the 1960s.

As many hon. Members wish to speak in this debate, I shall bring my remarks to a close. I wish simply to make a plea to the Government to go ahead with the Amble seam, up the coast from my constituency. There are 40 million tonnes of coal to be mined there, but there are doubts in certain quarters whether that should be mined. Northumberland is a mining area, the coal is there to be mined and we have the miners to do that. I plead with the Government to go ahead with that proposal. I also plead with them to build a new coal-fired power station in Northumberland which, together with mining that 40 million tonnes, would take us back to somewhere near the position that we were in when the Labour party was in office.

10.46 am

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech in this important debate. When I say that I am the new representative for Cambridgeshire, North-East, there is perplexion on people's faces, but when I remind them that it was the historic Isle of Ely constituency, there is instant recognition. I am most encouraged that my constituency has a tradition of staying loyal to its Members of Parliament. From 1929 it was represented by the Liberal Jimmy Rothschild for 16 years, from 1945 by the Conservative Sir Harry Legge-Bourke for 28 years and from 1973 by the Liberal Sir Clement Freud for 14 years. Over 58 years, the constituency has had only three Members of Parliament, two of whom became knights of the shires. One could say that my future looks propitious.

Sir Clement Freud will be greatly missed by his many supporters in the constituency. He enjoyed a widespread reputation as a diligent and dedicated constituency Member and his stewardship of first the Isle of Ely and later Cambridgeshire, North-East was both distinguished and effective. His career in Parliament was equally distinguished with a unique record as spokesman for the Liberal party on education — twice — the arts, broadcasting, social services, sport and Northern Ireland. That may be a difficult, if not impossible, act to follow. It would be an understatement to say that there was some surprise at the result in the election last June. However, the story that recently appeared in *The Sunday Times* that I was so dumbstruck with the victory that I had totally lost my voice in Parliament was, as the House will note, grossly exaggerated. I am glad to say that the affliction has soon passed.

I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without paying tribute to the outstanding contribution made to politics in this House by the late Sir Harry Legge-Bourke. He was much loved in the Isle of Ely and will long remain in the highest affected of fen people of all political persuasions.

I trust that the House will forgive me if I decline to take it on a geographical tourist trip around my constituency. With the highest point only 35 m above sea level and about 85 per cent. at or around sea level, the House will appreciate my difficulties. Most of the land area is grade I or grade II agricultural land, which depends entirely for its existence on the intricate and extensive network of drainage channels developed by Vermuyden, the Dutch engineer, in the 17th century. While the fens would not claim to be first in renewable energy, for more than a century wind power was used to work the pumps to raise the water through the drainage system. Many of those windmills remained well into the 19th century, although their duties were replaced by the steam engine during the industrial revolution.

Without an efficient, well maintained and improved drainage system, my constituency would literally cease to exist. In winter we would be paddling around in about 2 ft of water, and in summer — it would have to be a better summer than we enjoyed this year—we would be squelching around in thick, glutinous mud.

The position of the internal drainage boards in the proposed national river authorities post-water privatisation is vital to the continued prosperity of my region—and I am happy to say that there is broad agreement between all parties to discussions on the best way forward.

Cambridgeshire is the county with the fastest growing population in the United Kingdom. That is putting great pressure on resources, notably for housing and social services. The county has a reputation for sound finanical management and the education department has long enjoyed a reputation for innovation, creativity and flexibility—no more so than during the past few years with the introduction of local financial management in our schools. Following the successful pilot scheme, the system has now been extended to all secondary and most primary schools. One of the most significant outcomes of local financial management has been the tighter control of heating and energy costs. Some schools have achieved remarkable savings. The lesson is well learnt—that once one is responsible for costs, one adopts an entirely different attitude to the way in which those costs are incurred.

I agree with the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), who stressed the need for energy conservation measures. I applaud the developments that have been made and the money that has been spent by the Government in seeking further conservation measures for the future. Extrapolated to the national level, the energy savings that have been made in Cambridgeshire schools purely in education would save us millions of pounds. The same lessons applied to other local government departments and to commerce and industry would save us billions of pounds. Indeed, the hon. Member for Midlothian mentioned that £7 billion of energy is wasted in this country. I believe that that was the figure in 1985. I wonder what it is today, following the Energy Efficiency Year promotion of 1986.

Just as our schools have found it difficult to plan energy supplies and to budget for costs, the task is nigh impossible at national level. Centralised energy planning is, if anything, a qualified art rather than an exact science. The key is flexibility in scale, diversity, efficiency and economy of supply. I hope that privatisation will free still further the provision of energy, especially the supply of electricity. In some areas, small may yet return to being beautiful. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) made that point when he discussed small schemes in rural areas. The smaller the scale the greater the tilt towards renewable energy sources.

We need diversity if we are to have a strong energy economy. It is folly not to have circumspect contingency sources of energy in case of activities and events outside a Government's control. We need insurance against disruption in our coal industry and against a possible flare-up in the Gulf war. Economy is best achieved by introducing the element of competition into the production and supply of energy. We look forward to the Secretary of State's proposals for privatising the electricity industry. Despite the events of the past few weeks, market forces are still the best and only sure way to deliver to customers services of the right quality, in the right quantity and at the right price.

No doubt hon. Members will use the debate to argue the pros and cons of nuclear power, fossil fuel power provision and every pet scheme from combined heat and power to coal gasification and liquefaction. However, we should concentrate our attention on renewable sources of energy. Putting aside the "long shots", in departmental parlance, of geothermal aquifers, solar voltaic cells, ocean thermal energy, and, despite the Norwegian project, wave energy, we are still left with an interesting list of potential winners.

I should like to comment on three of these, beginning with biofuels because it is of particular interest to an agricultural constituency such as mine. The main contributor in that sector is considered to be the direct combustion of organic wastes. Over the next 20 to 30 years it is deemed possible to extract about 20 per cent. of the total energy potential in that area alone.

In my constituency, as in others that are high producers of cereal crops, we have just gone through the annual problem of straw burning. It was especially bad this year because of the inclement weather. Most farmers follow the strict code that is laid down in the byelaws, but they, and we, cannot ignore or deny the obvious pollution aspect of that practice.

I plead for greater urgency into the research and development of an economic marketable dry biomass combustible system to help solve the pollution problem, provide much-needed income for our hard-pressed farmers, and establish a viable alternative energy source. Small-scale localised generating companies may well be in a position to take up the new technology, post-privatisation.

Although in theory a range of liquid and gaseous fuels can be produced by the thermal processing of crops and organic wastes at high temperature, we are told that methanol and pipeline methane will not make any real impact on the United Kingdom's fuel requirements until 2010. In the light of the current situation in agriculture, I urge the Minister to seek a quicker way forward on this issue by closer liaison with his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The same could also be said of those systems of anaerobic digestion which produce biogas from the biological processing acting on animal slurries, sewage sludge, and industrial effluents from food processing plants — raw materials which are in great supply in communities that are dependent on agriculture and its allied industries.

I was delighted to hear disquiet expressed about wind-generated energy. I, too, have reservations about peppering our countryside with 75-ft high monster windmills. The prospect for the fens landscape is positively horrendous. I suspect that my fenland constituents would much prefer the methane route. Windmills would perhaps be more suitable for the Third world and for those areas of our globe that are sparsely populated. There are obviously possibilities for British technology, well advanced in this area, to make further advances and to add to our exports.

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

I should like to say a few words about tidal energy generation. One analysis has suggested that the United Kingdom's tides could yield up to 20 per cent. of the electricity requirement of England and Wales. Nine tenths of that would come from our major estuaries, the Severn, Morecambe bay, the Solway Firth, the Dee, the Humber, the Mersey, the Thames and the Wash. The Wash is about 10 miles to the north of the northern boundary of my constituency and any feasibility studies would have an impact on the constituency. I suspect that the Wash will be rejected as a possibility because the barrage would have to be enormous—20 km in length—and on present early studies, generation costs at 7p per kilowatt hour would make the project completely untenable.

However, the Severn and Mersey estuaries are different. Both have had much work done on them. The Government's recent announcement of additional money for studies into the environmental impact of the Severn barrage is welcome. One is struck by the sheer size of the Severn scheme. It would cost £5·5 billion and have a barrage about 10 miles long that would produce 6 per cent. of our electricity and take 20 years to construct. It has been said on many occasions that barrage schemes will stand or fall on their energy economics. However, in more recent promotional material one detects a move away from that to an emphasis on the peripheral and complementary advantages of amenity value, tourism, employment and possibly transport improvements. At this stage, that project looks so big that it calls into question the ability to attract the necessary finance, and if that has to come from abroad we may well have to take a foreign contractor. I question whether that would be acceptable.

The Mersey project gives us the greatest cause for optimism. However, it would be too easy to fall into the trap of promoting the scheme just to alleviate the problems of unemployment and deprivation in the Mersey region. The expected 5,000 construction jobs must seem like manna from heaven to those seriously concerned with the situation on Merseyside. Those factors aside, the scheme has much to commend it. It is on a smaller scale and will involve considerably lower costs. I am told that it could be started by 1989, and I suspect that a boost could be given to it by the proposed privatisation.

The hon. Member for Midlothian castigated the Government for lack of investment in renewable energy sources, but surely the priorities for the present are nuclear energy and the more efficient use of coal-fired production, and it is right that those areas should receive the greater proportion of research and developmeent funding. The Government are right to channel more resources to projects which have a real chance of contributing to alternative energy by the turn of the century. Tilting at windmills is just not in the Government's nature.

11 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I am grateful for the opportunity to congratulate not just one but two hon. Members on their maiden speeches. I am extremely happy to do so, especially as it is not long since I made my own maiden speech in March and I know how intimidating it can be.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) made an excellent and pungent speech, showing that he will bring renewed, if not infinitely renewable, energy to the representation of his constituency. I was interested to hear about the hon. Gentleman's constituency and the difficulties experienced there. I am sure that he will do his best to defend the interests of all those whom he now represents.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) made a detailed speech describing not just his constituency but many of the issues in the debate. I congratulate him particularly on his gracious references to his predecessor, Sir Clement Freud, as he now is. Those comments were well deserved, and the hon. Gentleman was right to say that that would be a difficult act to follow, although I am sure that he will do his best. He has certainly started with every appearance of having that intention.

An American researcher who is carrying out a study on energy, who has no party political axe to grind and is not a campaigner in relation to renewable energy, commented on the material put out by the Government:

> "This is not a debate on renewable energy resources, instead it is a debate on the single area in which this Government have a firm policy. The policy is not greater diversification and encouragement of increased research into renewable resources of energy. The single policy is to spend a little money on research for appearances' sake and a great deal of money on self publicity. That is the sole reason for this debate".

I hope that that is not the case.

Mr. Speller: Can the hon. Gentleman provide any basis for that comment? He may not realise that this is only the second debate ever on alternative energy. No other Government even provided an opportunity for such a debate. Why should the motive be self-gratification rather than something more useful and sensible?

Mr. Taylor: I shall go into that in some detail later in my speech. Last year, in the period between the two debates, the former Secretary of State expressed a remarkable condemnation of renewable sources of energy. That was in a speech outside the House, so there seems to be a difference between what is said here and what is said elsewhere.

In the Department's glossy pamphlet entitled "Review" the word "risk" is used so many times that it should be paid overtime. I wish to suggest some areas which the Government should consider, and I welcome earlier contributions to the debate in this respect. What could be less of a risk than a well thought out conservation programme? George Manteatis, executive vice-president of Pacific Gas and Electric, the world's largest private sector utility, said:

> "Conservation programmes are considerably less expensive than the cost of adding new capacity, and are clearly less risky from an investment perspective."

The British Government continue to attempt to cater for a projected increase in demand by increasing emphasis on the nuclear programme while our European neighbours have shown up our conservation programme by improving energy efficiency by 72·2 and 84·4 per cent. in France and West Germany. It is almost ludicrous to debate the subject of renewable energy sources and energy use until we have increased our ability to conserve the energy that we have.

In that remarkable speech last year the Secretary of State suggested that without the development of nuclear power we could face a crisis. He based that prediction on a 2 per cent. growth in energy use. In the United Kingdom, demand in 1985 was identical with demand in 1968, while in the United States demand has been falling and, by and large, it continues to fall throughout the developed world. The CEGB currently predicts that to serve the growing demand in England and Wales it will need nine new power stations within the next dozen years, at a cost of £17 billion. Why do we have consistent projections of growth when in the EEC demand has fallen by 8 per cent. since 1974, while gross domestic product has risen by 18 per cent. since 1974, while gross domestic product has risen by 18 per cent.? That is not the kind of parallel between economic growth and energy demand consistently projected by the CEGB.

The Goverment talk about job creation. A conservation programme would provide the perfect opportunity. If Monergy '86 is to be regarded as a failure in view of the increase in net consumption that year, we must seek new means of reducing consumption. A study commissioned by the Association for the Conservation of Energy found that a major programme to improve energy efficiency in the United Kingdom could create up to 155,000 new jobs, two thirds in the manufacture and installation of energy conservation equipment and the rest through increased economic activity as costs are reduced.

It is ironic to note the shock and devastation caused by the recent hurricane in the south-east and the alarm at the destruction of the environment when the greatest threat to that environment and to the world is not the occasional freak storm but the continued abuse of the environment and the waste of resources that are not indefinite. Successive Governments have been unwilling to make the investment required to ensure that renewable sources of energy replace those currently laying waste to our environment and to the ability of future generations to consider a wide range of options. That is why I welcome this debate, but it is vital that the Minister should take from the debate the clear message that nothing can be done until the consumption of energy has been taken in hand and there is a redirection of effort towards conservation. I welcome the debate as a change of heart by the Government and a change from the previous Secretary of State's attitude towards alternative sources of energy. Perhaps in the future the Government will not do as the Secretary of State did on 26 June in his speech to the Engineering Employers Federation and dismiss wind, solar and tidal energy as insufficient to replace nuclear power's current contribution. I trust that the Government will instead increase research and development funding for them.

In March 1983 the United States Congress science policy research division showed a very different outlook, producing a detailed document on the use of alternative energy technology development and policy. It is fascinating to note that, with limited federal support for research and development into renewables such as solar heating, wind energy and wave energy, that document predicted a "moderate return" from 1990 onwards.

We can contrast that with the predictions for power provided by breeder and fusion, which Congress suggested would need extensive federal support, with only a "limited return", even after the year 2000. The report suggested no energy source that could provide a real return after the 1990s without federal support. It is interesting to note that, in the economy that is often described as being the nearest that we have to a free market economy, Congress says that the development of alternative energy will require substantial federal support if it is to see a real return and that the best return is from renewables. The report states that the prospects for imported oil and natural gas are in long-term decline. That comes as no surprise. Nuclear power supplies only a little over 3 per cent. of total United States energy demand, only 1 per cent. more than that supplied by renewables. That excludes hydro and geothermal power, which, if added to the figure, would almost double the proportion supplied by renewable sources to that supplied by nuclear sources in the United States.

What support do renewables receive in this country? In 1984 they received just £14 million, while fission received £200 million in research and development support and £30 million was invested in research and development into fusion. Since then the amount supplied for renewables has declined. In 1985-86, £12·7 million was made available for renewables — only 6 per cent. of the money spent on nuclear research and development. We should contrast that with the projections of Congress about the source that is most likely to see a return and the likely size of that return.

Debates such as this cost nothing. Support for research and development costs a great deal and requires commitment and long-term vision. I ask the Minister to cease to concentrate on the glossy pamphlets and advertising, and instead to put his money on the table and to make real, significant long-term investment. In the previous Parliament the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) proposed an Energy Bill, which, unfortunately, fell as a result of the general election. The Bill was aimed at promoting the generation of electricity by means of wind power generators by encouraging appropriate research and development and by reforming the rating valuation base for private wind generators. All those aims have been referred to in the debate.

It is said that up to 20 per cent. of our current demand for electricity could be met by onshore wind turbines, and if offshore machines became cost effective there would be even greater potential. Friends of the Earth predict that by the year 2025 about one fifth of our current annual demand could come from wind power providing 54 billion units of electricity through 6,000 medium and large wind turbines.

Mr. Dalyell: What scientific evidence, if any, does Friends of the Earth have for such a statement? Is there any basis for the prediction? In the light of the Danish experience, of which we all know, it is utterly unfeasible.

Mr. Taylor: I understand that the CEGB itself has said that the potential is there for up to 20 per cent. of demand to be supplied by wind energy.

Mr. Dalyell: When has the CEGB said any such thing? I cannot imagine that Walter Marshall or anyone else has made such a claim.

Mr. Taylor: I do not suggest that the CEGB said that 20 per cent. would be provided; it has said that the potential is there. However, I shall check my facts and let the hon. Gentleman know.

I should like to examine some of the other opportunities available — in particular the possibility of producing power through a series of barrages such as the Severn and Mersey barrages. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East doubted whether the Severn barrage could be constructed without bringing in foreign contractors. I believe that it could. In my constituency, English China

[Mr. Taylor]

Clays Ltd. would be more than delighted to have the opportunity to provide the resources for the building of that barrage. That would be of great advantage to my constituents, not only in terms of jobs, but because good use would be made of the current China clay waste, which is simply tipped across the landscape in the St. Austell area. Friends of the Earth estimates that while considerable investment would be involved in, for example, the Severn barrage, some 6 per cent. of our energy needs could be provided by a construction that would last 100 years.

Let us compare that with the cost of building two nuclear power stations, which would provide equivalent power and which would have an expected life of only about 25 years. We must study with care the environmental impact of such barrages. However, there is the potential for the generation of long-lasting and renewable power that is of no danger to those who live nearby. I would welcome the Minister's comments on that.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman in response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Linlithgow, (Mr. Dalyell) and his reply to it. One gigawatt of installed wind generated capacity, sufficient to meet about 1 per cent. of current United Kingdom demand, would require about 100 square miles of windmills.

Mr. Taylor: I thank the Minister for making that point.

Another project has immediate relevance to my county. It is the geothermal project—the hot dry rocks project—based in Cornwall. Will the Minister give us some information on the possibility of further funding for that? We should advance to the next stage in its development. The Minister offered to expand the point further, and I hope that he will take the opportunity to do so. When my predecessor raised the subject in an Adjournment debate in June last year he asked the Minister for a commitment that the next stage in the development of that project would proceed. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that his Department now hopes to go ahead with the next stage.

The project is especially valuable. Unlike many other forms of renewable energy, if the geothermal project succeeded it would provide a constant source of power rather than one that varies with tides and winds. The project's potential is vast and it should receive the encouragement and financial backing from the Government that it needs to make it work. I am glad that when it seemed that the project might be taken over by a private concern, with no guarantee of continued long-term funding, the Government decided to put the money in themselves. I hope that that will continue.

That brings me to what will happen in the privatisation process. If electricity generation is privatised, what will be the future of investment in the further development of different energy sources? I have two major worries. Can we really expect private industry to take the long-term financial risks that should properly be taken by the Government in projects such as these? It is not simply a question of whether we can make a financial return. We have to look to the future and recognise that we must make such developments and invest in renewables. We must recognise that we need a variety of energy sources to which to look, not just in 20 or 30 years' time, but in hundreds of years' time. We should ensure that investment is made, and that is clearly the Government's role.

It is appalling that, when vast revenues have been generated through North sea oil and gas production and those resources have peaked and are being reduced, more has not been invested and more has not been taken of the opportunities. It is not right, and future generations will not forgive this country — whatever party is in goverment — if all our efforts are directed towards nuclear power, towards unproven and unsafe technology and vast sums which bear no relation to evident possibilities are spent. I hope that the message will go out loudly and clearly from the Chamber that this is not adequate, that the British people will not put up with it and that the Government will not be forgiven if they do not start to match investment in renewables with the investment being made in the sexy pet project of nuclear power.

11.20 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell), who made a short pungent speech and gave the Government due warning that he would be a good representative of Blyth Valley and, I suspect, a thorn in the flesh of my hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It was good to hear the hon. Gentleman's strong speaking, without notes, which is a good sign. I wish him well in a long and prosperous career here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) has followed a famous name. I trust that he will make his name as famous. He has clearly studied the alternative energy brief hard, although I warn him that he has made two tremendous blunders by not preferring windmills to rows of pylons and by mentioning the Severn barrage while within sniping distance of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), who has strong feelings on that subject. We very much welcome the interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East in energy and welcome him as a colleague.

As the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said, the parliamentary road towards alternative energy started two years and five days ago when the Conservative Government — the first Government ever to do so — provided time for a full debate on alternative renewable energy. I was as grateful then as I am now for the change that has come over Governments, whatever their persuasion. For years they were dedicated only to either fossil or nuclear fuels. The present Government are the only one to have shown more than a passing interest in the renewables. The book that has been produced on this subject may be a "glossy", with a handsome picture on the front of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, but I welcome it. It is good to have professional literature that extols the virtues of the alternatives, as opposed to what happened in the past when too much money relatively was spent on other forms of energy.

Recently my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that, when electricity was privatised, this would meet increased competition within the industry. Increased competition must be good news for the alternatives and renewables, which have been frozen out for far too long. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for State has spoken of the need to use all resources that would not reduce the world's energy stocks. He has spoken the language that my own group, the alternative energy group, has promoted in the House for a number of years.

The parliamentary developments started when my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) held the ministerial portfolio and brought forward the first alternative energy debate. I have no hesitation in saying, as a strong supporter of alternative energy, that we are grateful to this Government for at last taking an interest in alternative energy and for promoting that interest. Long may that view continue, but it will not necessarily do so if the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has his way. He quoted the view of his American researcher. I presume that that was the hon. Gentleman's view, as he did not say that it was not. The hon. Gentleman gave many statistics, then rubbished the Government's work and ungraciously thanked them for helping the hot rocks project near his constituency. I advise the hon. Gentleman that, if the Government give him some cash, he should be grateful, because they may give more. I suspect that if one is not grateful one may get even less, or such is my sad experience.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I should point out that the project is not in my constituency, although it is in Cornwall. I do not yet have the honour to represent all Cornwall. I congratulate the Government on what they have put in, although they came in late in the day. The EEC was involved before the Government. I hope that the Minister will come forward with further funds. It is a shame that there is not yet the long-term commitment that the project needs if it is to succeed.

Mr. Speller: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not think that any reply is needed.

We must accept that the Government's position, both past and present, has been ambiguous when it comes to putting up cash, while there is no secret that a vast amount of research money has been spent on nuclear development. The general impression has always been that nuclear was the only hope for the future. There is no sense, in a debate on alternative energy, to talk down or criticise other power sources. It is feasible to increase the use of coal in electricity generation. Coal generation can be cleaned to provide clean energy, and we all welcome such an approach. The CEGB has an unparalleled record of success and for not having the type of disasters that one would sometimes think happened every day in the nuclear industry. Chernobyl is used as a bogy man. As the House may know, I am no great supporter of the extension of nuclear power, but it would be wrong not to accept that British engineering and the nuclear installations inspectorate are of the highest quality. I always wonder, when people assume that disaster must always strike, whether they hope that disaster will strike someone or somewhere so that they can promote their own case.

Cost is an important consideration. It has always been assumed that the cost of nuclear power generation is lower than that of any other cost-effective power. The hon. Member for Midlothian correctly pointed out that a fortnight ago the chairman of the CEGB, Lord Marshall, revealed honourably and honestly that the CEGB had in a sense misled the public by claiming that nuclear power was the cheapest option. Evidence is emerging that the reverse is true. Lord Marshall said:

> "the British public have never had the cheap electricity that we have always promised from nuclear power. It has been, and continues to be, a case of 'jam tomorrow but never today.'

I respect him greatly for making that public comment.

Mr. Eadie: I do not want to become involved in the argument about thermonuclear power. The hon. Gentleman made a fair point. There are many views on the matter, and I have mine. Surely the hon. Gentleman agrees that that important statement on cost has transformed the debate to some extent. During the 16 years in which I have taken part in these debates it has been argued that nuclear power is cheap. I have tried to make the point that, whatever one's views on nuclear power—whether or not one is concerned about the environment or worried about whether there will be a disaster — there has been an unfair allocation of resources for renewable sources of energy provision. That is a reasonable point.

Mr. Speller: I cannot disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Were it acceptable practice to pay private generators of electricity a reasonable rate — my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State referred to this — there is no doubt that other projects would have come forward to find improved ways of using coal and energy alternatives — for example, combined heat and power, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) may speak. The burden of the debate on the development of energy resources has been based on the fiction — as we now realise — that nuclear was less expensive. I am not arguing against nuclear, but the cost argument has now been clearly revealed. Now that the fact is known that the costing is not all on one side, the alternatives must be considered. That is why I am grateful to the Government for providing time for this debate and to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for saying openly that he wants to hear the views of the House. Clearly, there has been an unhealthy domination by nuclear of research in the electricity generating industry for years. The alternatives have been excluded.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I had not meant to intervene, but the cost of the nuclear industry is obviously crucial to the argument of my hon. Friend and others. My understanding of Lord Marshall's comments is that there have undoubtedly been great problems in the British nuclear industry, especially with the AGR series of power stations. That has created problems and extra costs for the nuclear industry. If one is comparing the costs of nuclear power with those of other forms of energy, one must go wider than the AGR projects and examine, for instance, the costs of electricity provided in France by the nuclear industry. The Germans have a great fear of 1992, which is the year in which the Common Market opens itself to the possibility of Germany importing cheap French nuclear-generated electricity. One must be clear exactly what Lord Marshall was talking about, and about the comparisons that are relevant.

Mr. Speller: I am grateful to the Minister, but it is fair to say that the French electricity industry is currently in debt to the French taxpayer to the tune of £20 billion— a figure that increases daily. At a conference not long ago a French energy correspondent informed me that the price of electricity to the French domestic user was approximately twice that at which France was selling it to

[Mr. Speller]

Britain. I am not against cheap energy, but, to be fair, the French public are not getting the same deal as the British public.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If one is arguing about the costs of the French nuclear electricity industry, one must take into account the wider issue of the subsidies that are paid to other forms of energy in Germany and the United Kingdom—for example, coal. I have had discussions in Germany and in this country. In Germany they are keen to find some way in which the French nuclear industry is not economic. On a basis of fair comparison with the subsidies that are paid to other industries, it is a highly economic industry, which provides electricity cheaply.

Mr. Speller: I am sure that the Minister is right, but that correspondent objected strongly to paying more for his electricity than I have to pay for it from France.

It is not my job to talk down nuclear energy. My point is that there has been a general belief that nuclear energy is cheaper, and that may not now be the case. The parliamentary alternative energy group had the good fortune to be addressed by Dr. Michael Davis, the director of energy saving and alternative sources of energy in the European Community. His view agrees with that of the Government to a large extent in that renewables will provide a useful part of future energy, but will not by any means be a dominant factor. He read physics at university and, like many folk in the scientific establishment, may tend to lean towards the nuclear side. Dr. Davis spoke about the fact that renewable energy has so often been called new, but biomass is as old as life on earth. Prehistoric man discovered how to make use of wind and water currents. What we have done is to rediscover the wheel of alternative energy, and whether for conservation or cost reasons it is good that we should realise which alternatives are available.

What is the potential of these alternatives? According to Dr. Davis, there is no question but that while, theoretically, it exceeds our present needs, there is a general assumption in the European Community that alternatives could not provide more than a small part of total energy requirements. They may be costly, but we must re-examine how we have spent money on research and development during the past few years to see whether we should turn in that direction again. To bring renewables to a more mature state so that they can contribute to energy needs, a lot of work must be done first by the industrialised world.

It is interesting to note that, in the Third world, renewable energy is almost automatically used. Such countries cannot afford our more costly fuels and in many parts of Africa and Asia alternatives are the norm. In the Republic of China, 30 per cent. of energy is produced by alternative methods — largely, of course, through biomass. There is nothing new about that, either. The Chinese have relatively small per capita energy requirements at present, but 30 per cent. is a fair amount.

The main thrust of the European Community at present is in a different direction. In its view, there has been too much fragmented research and development, and not enough co-ordination and work as a community. There is a Community-wide market now, and what is needed most is an even-handed and reasonable way of paying those private generators who wish to sell electricity to the main networks. If we can find a way of linking the electricity producing renewable energy installations into the main grids we shall have done well, but there is no independent body to oversee this development. A year ago the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) brought in a Bill to promote renewable sources of energy. Many hon. Members sponsored it, but it fell early on in the parliamentary hurdles. It sought to establish an independent commission, directly responsible to Parliament, for research, development and demonstration of clean, renewable alternative forms of energy.

The European Commission is seeking to promote that, too, and has gone as far as producing a draft recommendation saying that we should, if so directed, produce some form of legislation to bring about an administrative procedure to overcome the obstacles to developing the exploitation of nuclear energy sources. Although many hon. Members may not be wholly in favour of the Community, it is interesting that the Community has got as far as a Council recommendation to the member states on developing renewable energy sources. That, too, gives hope for the future. Unless there is some form of body independent of the existing establishment we shall get nowhere. Perhaps there is nowhere to go other than nuclear fission or fusion. However, I do not accept that as yet the resources have been applied to discover whether this is so.

The European Community goes further. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East mentioned efficiency, water and light. I am thinking also of heads of water that can provide power. Interestingly, the Community is again rather ahead of us and suggests following the American example of energy conservation. If we saved energy, instead of being so profligate with it, every penny spent on insulation would be worth a pound spent on new generation.

The EC has an idea of putting an energy rating on every property at the time of sale which would tell the prospective purchaser what the energy rating of the house or flat was. Something similar is already done in the United States. If one buys a refrigerator it is marked in such a way as to inform one of its electricity consumption, and the Community is thinking along the lines of some way of rating a home at the time of sale to give an indication of fuel costs. In our climates they are a significant factor and the idea is good news for those of us with alternative energy interests.

I intend to quote now from all sorts of strange sources. Usually, when Friends of the Earth is mentioned the accuracy of its views is questioned. However, I have always found its research to be of a high order. It says simply that the sun is a massive nuclear furnace, radiating energy into space. It is so simple, yet most people do not realise that, whether we like it or not, we are a sun and nuclear-based world. Yes, the sun's energy is nuclear. The energy of wind and wave is also solar. The heat of the earth makes the air move and creates clouds, rain and so forth. Tidal energy seems to be put down these days.

When I intervened in the speech on water power made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) I mentioned wind turbines. At Ilfracombe in north Devon tides rise and fall some 30 ft twice a day, and the sheer vast power of all that water, completely predictable 100 years in advance, must make it an energy source that must surely have great potential. The hon. Member for Truro mentioned geothermal energy

—the heat from the centre of the earth. All these are clean, renewable and eternal energies, and we should be unwise to neglect them.

I mentioned insulation and energy rating on properties. The state of play of the renewables is not good and if we were playing football I think that our team would be losing three to one. Most of us now have a solar calculator, or watch, or something gimmicky. But solar power does not have to be gimmicky. With proper storage organisation we could do a great deal with photovoltaic modules, but at present major markets are in the world's sun belts and their use is not much in evidence here.

Biomass is much used in the Third world, particularly by the Republic of China. It has a huge potential, but, again, although it is technically and economically attractive, nothing much seems to happen because the Government's commitment of £300,000 per annum is not enough for anything more than keeping a project simmering. If we are to promote biomass — a huge resource of the earth — we must put more cash in the kitty. Much biomass activity is considered to be extremely unpleasant. I think of straw burning and slurry leaks, or sewage leaking on to beaches and increasing pollution so that it oversteps EC standards. Some sort of environmental credit should be given to those concerned with making more use of such materials to create clean energy from a dirty product.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale talked about the potential of water. I want to discuss wind energy. Wind energy machines are not ugly and I do not find wind generators any less attractive than a row of pylons marching across Exmoor. It is amazing that things that have been part of the environment for years become invisible, like the postman in an Agatha Christie story or the butler "who did it?" However, if one wind generator is erected the world says, "How monstrous. How ugly."

The public require power at the flick of a switch, yet the grid will never reach some parts of Exmoor. A combination of daft rating and environmental folk who do not mind a line of pylons across the land but object strongly to a wind generator is holding back a logical, sensible and British-based industry.

I congratulate the CEGB on its good work in promoting wind energy at Carmarthen bay, but the wind machines erected in the United Kingdom are not commercial. They are experimental in number and in capacity. Some excellent firms are selling them to the United States and making money for Britain also in the Third world, but, because of our built-in objection to anything that we have not been used to all our lives, we do not develop them in this country.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: During my speech the potential of wind power was queried.The hon. Gentleman has just mentioned the general good sense of the Friends of the Earth projections. In their critique of the June 1986 speech the Secretary of State, Friends of the Earth state that the potential of wind power, even land based is 20 per cent., but that it would be 50 per cent. of our requirements including offshore potential. The CEGB argues that a limitation is caused by the variability of wind power, but that it could absorb within the national grid 20 per cent. of energy produced by wind supply.

Mr. Speller: The hon. Gentleman is correct. I speak partly in jest about the beauty of wind generators. The logical place for wind generators is offshore. Anyone who has seen the huge rows of wind generators at Palo Alto, California will find them no more attractive than the rows of pylons which I do not like. The technology exists to build the generators offshore, and that is where they should be. There is no technical problem, but there is an absence of will to support this form of energy. There is enormous scope. It would be good business for our northern heavy industries, which sadly have declined over the last few years.

When I visited Norway I saw two forms of wave energy exhibited. It is fascinating that the Norwegians are using those forms of energy while we invented them. Universities such as Queens, Belfast and Edinburgh have fantastic records for inventing things which others take up and use to make money. That is almost the story of British invention. It is illogical that we should fund enough for a university project in the early stage but then stop. One must then cross the world to find somebody else who is prepared to take the project further. It is not logical to say that when a point is proved the project will be closed and another project started.

All our resources are pushed in one direction. That is not the logic for the future. I pay tribute to the universities which have produced such sterling work. The stirling pump invented in the last century by a Dr. Stirling from Scotland is now in production in Japan. The pump burns unattractive fuel such as cow dung and produces low compression power. When the Select Committee was in Japan we saw these pumps being produced in quantity for the Third world.

I appeal to the Minister to accept that there are great proven possibilities in alternatives which have never been taken beyond the proving stage. That is the illogicality of our energy story.

I welcome the Government's attitude and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Truro put the Government down, because they are the first Government to take this stand. They are also the first Government to produce any literature—glossy or not—on the subject.

I congratulate also the CEGB, which is too often seen as the bogyman. I believe that it produces excellent economic power for our country. When we lose resources as we did after the storm recently, one can see how totally dependent we are on the CEGB, its engineers and contractors.

I think that we should consider also the question of rating property. The ultimate question concerns energy winners and losers. Almost all Government funding has been based on proven commercial winners or losers, but, on that basis, we would not have had the high expenditure on nuclear energy research because, on costing grounds, it has not proved to be a winner. In other words, we have backed and made a winner out of what would have been a loser under the old rules.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does my hon. Friend agree that cost is not the only criterion that has to be considered when providing power, but that volume is also important? If there were a source of power generation which was very cheap but which could provide only 4 or 5 per cent. of the nation's needs, that would not be effective or desirable.

Mr. Speller: My hon. Friend draws me into an argument that I did not intend to enter. Security of supply

[Mr. Speller]

is the key. One knows that the tide will come in twice a day. One can be pretty sure of the wind and of water storage. On security of supply grounds, one must consider what happened at Chernobyl.

Across the water on the Channel Islands, one can see three French nuclear power stations. Where would our own security of supply be if it were not for the coal-fired generating stations should the unthinkable accident happen here or there? That is what we must consider. I accept all the arguments for the efficiency of the nuclear industry. I accept all the arguments for the extensive and continuing use of clean coal. My final plea is only that we should consider also those other eternal, alternative renewable sources of energy. They have been around for as long as mankind, before mankind in fact, and, if we carry on as we sometimes do, they will be around long after mankind.

We are unwise not to devote a fair proportion of Government funding to renewable sources of energy. Those of us who come from rural areas are aware that one cannot rely on the piece of cable that stretches across the country. We should make sensible use of wind, water and tide if we want to be sure of a supply of electricity. In the last big freeze the happy farmers were those with their diesel plants and those with wind generators. The rest of us were jolly cold and in the dark. Let us accept that renewable sources of energy have a valuable and increasing part to play in the supply of energy, and let us not be mean in supporting them.

11.50 am

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech.

First, may I congratulate the hon. Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on their maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley spoke of the recent closure of a colliery in his constituency. In my constituency there used to be more than 20 collieries; now there is none.

My constituency has had a chequered electoral history. It has been a Liberal seat, a Labour seat and a Nationalist seat, but throughout this century it has never belonged to the Conservative party. If one looks at the electoral history of my constituency, one learns that we have recorded some remarkable swings against the trend. In 1945, with the Labour landslide, Carmarthen was the only seat that the Labour party lost. In 1966, in a by-election, Carmarthen returned the first Nationalist Member of Parliament. I take his opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Gwynfor Evans for all his work for Carmarthen and for the Welsh people. I also pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Dr. Roger Thomas, who represented the seat for eight years and who was a hard worker for the constituency.

In 1979 the seat was won back for the Labour party. We held it in 1983, and I am pleased to say that we quadrupled our majority earlier this year. Thus, we have won and held the seat in three elections that have been extremely difficult for the Labour party. Within the constituency we feel every confidence that we can now build on our platform and turn Carmarthen into a safe Labour seat in common with about 20 out of the 38 seats in Wales. The Conservative Government do not have a mandate in Wales or Scotland. In fact, the Welsh people are a radical Socialist people.

Let us now consider the topic of this debate. Our generation is living through a very difficult time with regard to the supply of world energy. We are confronted with a major problem the like of which civilisation has never met before. Our prosperity in the 20th century, and especially in the post-war period, has depended upon oil and gas. As a society we have used enormous, prodigious quantities of oil and gas. However, in the past 15 years we have come to realise that the world's resources of those energy supplies are limited. Indeed, we are talking about surviving on hydrocarbons for just a few more decades. When we look to the year 2000 and beyond, we must look to alternative sources of energy.

Regrettably, the present Government do not spell out their energy policy—it is a vague area. Of course, we know that the Government have an obsessive hatred of miners and an obsession for nuclear power. That obsession for nuclear power is undiminished despite the events at Chernobyl last year. They intend to press ahead with the construction of pressurised water reactors.

Earlier this week I noticed in the 1987 British social attitudes survey that 78 per cent. of the British public believe that nuclear power will leave society with long-term environmental problems, and that 59 per cent. of the public believe that, in Britain, we will have a major nuclear accident some time in the next 10 years. Almost 90 per cent. of British people do not want the construction of more nuclear power stations. If we had a true democracy, nuclear power would be rejected out of sight by the people. I believe that our energy policy for the next century should be based on coal, conservation and renewable sources of energy.

In Britain and across the world there are coal resources that will last for centuries — at least for 300 years; indeed, more like 1,000 years at the present rates of extraction. I am aware that coal presents some environmental problems, especially that of acid rain. I am pleased that the Government have, belatedly, recognised that acid rain is a major threat to the environment, not just in Scandinavia and parts of Germany, but right across Europe and the advanced world. The problem of acid rain can be solved. We have the technologies to defeat that problem.

When we consider long-term energy policy, we should press ahead, at full speed, with fluidised bed combustion. With that technology it is possible to add to the coal while burning limestone that absorbs the sulphur. Combustion occurs at a lower temperature than it does at present in power stations and thus the oxides of nitrogen and sulphur are removed. It is a disgrace that the Government have more or less frozen fluidised bed combustion research at the level that it had reached in 1979. It is a vital technology for clean coal burning for the next century. Coal should be the bedrock of our energy policy.

As we heard earlier in the debate, conservation has a massive role to play. Indeed, someone called it our fifth energy source. If we consider the potential for conservation, I should like to quote the former Secretary of State for Energy, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker). In 1984 he gave figures that showed that we could save £7 billion a year on our energy bill of £35 billion if we simply adopted the energy conservation and saving measures that are used in other countries. Thus, within five years the capital cost of such measures could be recouped.

Conservation simply means insulating our houses and buildings to a higher standard than at present. It would generate tens of thousands of jobs up and down the country. Much of the housing that requires attic insulation or cavity wall insulation is older, and often old people live in such housing. Therefore, such insulation would be a good social service. The repayment period for such a programme would be between two and five years.

Another part of conservation policy is combined heat and power. In this country CHP schemes are few and far between. However, they are commonplace in Sweden, Denmark and Germany. Let me give one example of what is possible through combined heat and power. Recently, I read about the new headquarters for the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, which has a CHP scheme based on gas. The gas is used to generate electricity, the surplus heat is used to warm the building and surplus electricity is fed into the grid. The cost of electricity production in that building is a quarter of the cost of electricity from the national grid. Such CHP schemes could be built into offices, factories, hospitals and housing estates. They have enormous potential. They need not be based on gas. The economics of coal burning in combined heat and power schemes are almost as good.

There are so many renewable sources of energy but I shall comment briefly on only four or five. For the past 10 to 15 years in Wales we have read about the feasibility studies into a Severn barrage. It is the best site in Britain, and would be one of the best sites in the world for the construction of a barrage. It would be an enormous technical undertaking, costing about £5 billion to £6 billion, but it would produce far more electricity than the Government's prospective programme of pressurised water reactors. Unfortunately, all that we hear from the Government is that they intend to conduct more feasibility studies. They are willing to spend a few million pounds a year on feasibility studies, but we hear nothing stronger than that.

If the Government are afraid to take the plunge and go ahead with the Severn barrage, perhaps they should consider the Mersey barrage first. That would be a smaller project, with one tenth of the capacity of the Severn barrage. The barrages could be two major economic contributors to our energy supply in the next century. Although it may take between 10 and 15 years to build a barrage, it will supply energy for at least a century. Coal and oil-fired stations last for only 20 or 25 years. Like a hydro-electric power station, a barrage will have a life span of about 100 years.

The former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), talked at length about hydro-electricity. Our potential for hydro-electricity is substantial, and I understand that the cheapest electricity produced in Britain comes from small hydro-electric power stations. It costs about one tenth of the electricity produced from coal or nuclear power. Hydro-electricity is extremely economic. Of course, there is a capital cost in constructing the power station, but the running costs are cheap. I live in and represent Carmarthen, which lies in mountainous country, at the mouth of the largest river in Wales, the Towy, but despite the fact that there is a large reservoir at the head of the river, no electricity is generated by the Towy.

We have heard about the potential for wind power. There are 5,000 windmills in California, generating 1,500 MW of electricity. They are run by private utilities, so there is little Government investment, but I gather that, within seven years, they can recoup their investment in constructing the wind turbine. The British wind power research programme is almost amateur. Earlier this year a Minister at the Department of Energy opened a vertical axis wind turbine in what used to be the Carmarthen bay power station. In view of the publicity, I visited the scheme, but I was severely disappointed by the number of people involved and the small size of the project. Yet the turbines used in California were designed in Britain. We can export the technology, but it is not good enough for us. The prevailing winds in Britain are from the west. We are ideally placed, and in view of the events in the south-east during the past couple of weeks, perhaps there is a potential for wind power there, too.

I should comment on biological wastes. In developing countries, biomass is an important part of the solution to the firewood problem. There are 7 million biomass units operating in China. We, too, have the potential to use biological wastes. In the annual straw burning exercise in August each year about 6 million tonnes of straw are burnt on our farms. The energy equivalent of those 6 million tonnes of straw is one half of what is generated by our nuclear power stations. These are not trivial matters. Straw burning could be a substantial contributor.

As for sugar cane, water hyacinths and fast-growing plants, perhaps in the long term photosynthesis will be the answer, as it always was. That is where the fossil fuels came from. These days it is possible to produce new varieties of plants that grow much more rapidly than timber. We know that in Brazil they use sugar cane to make alcohol to drive cars, and about 2 million cars run on alcohol produced from sugar cane. It is possible to produce varieties of plants that can produce 300 tonnes of photosynthetic yield per hectare per year. The productivity is 20 times greater than that involved in growing timber. The product can either be burnt directly or fermented to produce alcohol or gas. They are all possibilities for the next 10, 20 or 50 years.

Alternative energy sources are not already contributing substantially to our energy supply because of a lack of investment. The Minister said that we had spent £110 million since 1979, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said, since 1979 North sea oil has produced £52·4 billion in revenue. The Government have received 500 times more money than they are willing to devote to renewable sources of energy. If they will not invest in those alternative sources, they will be wasting a valuable resource.

If the matter was put to the British electorate, there is no question but that when they looked at the future beyond oil and gas they would utterly reject the Government's solution of nuclear power. What the British people want is an energy policy based on coal, conservation and renewable sources of energy.

12.8 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): It is a pleasure to be allowed to follow the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), whose excellent maiden speech, delivered with such confidence and assurance, contrasted so greatly with mine in 1970. It was a particular pleasure for me to hear him make his maiden speech in an energy debate because the Opposition sorely need a few more Members able to make such intelligent and informed contributions to our energy debates. Therefore, I congratulate him and expect him to be on the Opposition Front Bench before long.

[Mr. Peter Rost]

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on organising today's debate, and I welcome his statement that we should produce as much as possible of our energy from renewable sources if they are economic and as long as they do not damage the environment. I have been a supporter of that theme for many years and, of course, I support the so-called renewables — wind, wave, tidal, geothermal and solar — and believe that they can and will make an increasing contribution in the longer term as they become more economic, as the technology improves and as fossil fuels become scarcer and more expensive.

However, there are already two existing sources of renewable energy that are literally on our doorstep and have barely been mentioned so far. They could now make an enormous contribution to our energy sources. They are proved and tested technologies and are economic, which, I am afraid, one cannot say yet about all the other so-called renewables. Those two sources of energy that are here and waiting for us could, in the short term, within two or three years, provide the energy equivalent of at least 10 Sizewell nuclear power stations, of thousands of windmills, of hundreds of geothermal projects, or of two or three Severn estuary barrage schemes. All that equivalent energy could be provided in half the time that it now takes to build one major power station. It would be more economic as well, on the figures quoted for new power stations.

I shall refer to the first of the two major potentials for renewable energy as the municipal and industrial waste on our doorstep and the second of those enormous potential sources of energy as the waste heat from our electricity power stations. I regard both sources of energy as renewable because, while we continue to live in an industrial society with a high western standard of living, we shall always have enormous quantities of municipal waste and, of course, we shall always need electricity, so we shall continue to have these sources of energy — waste, municipal refuse and waste heat from power stations.

I declare an interest as an adviser to the WARMER — Recycling Warmth and Energy from Rubbish — campaign, a charitable organisation without any commercial interests with the industry, promoting the recycling of warmth and energy from rubbish. I also declare an interest as a consultant to Associated Heat Services, which is the UK's largest contractor energy management company. However, as the House knows, I do not have to declare an interest that is not commercial and that has been a long-standing one of mine in this area of improving energy efficiency.

It is estimated that every year in this country there are 55 million tonnes of municipal and industrial waste. What do we do with it? Half is disposed of in landfill and nearly all the rest is simply burnt in incinerators to get rid of it. Only about 15 million tonnes are recycled — in other words, converted into useful energy. The result is that we are dumping into holes or simply burning in incinerators the equivalent of £1 billion of fuel a year — fuel that is waiting to be used. We are virtually bottom of the European league in converting that huge source of fuel. Other countries do far more.

In his summer tours of the electricity industry, particularly in Scandinavia and Germany, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will have seen some of the towns and cities that are heated from municipal refuse and also obtain their electricity from local power stations that burn the local municipal refuse. It is time we did a bit more of that here.

The other so-called renewable source of energy which is on our doorstep but which we do not use extensively at the moment is the hot water that comes from electricity production. We shall always have a need for electricity. The law of thermodynamics makes it impossible for us to drive a turbine on a steam cycle without two thirds of the fuel having to be wasted in the form of water going out at the other end.

The amount of warmth in the hot water which is the by-product of electricity production in even the most efficient of our electricity power stations is two thirds of the fuel input. In total, that means that we are throwing away energy in the form of hot water; that is, about 60 million tonnes of coal equivalent. Enough water is being thrown away in our rivers and cooling towers to heat every building in the country. We even spend £5 million on constructing a cooling tower to get rid of that energy. If we used that hot water and piped it into buildings, the level of thermal efficiency of a power station would rise from about 35 per cent. to about 80 per cent.

The technology is not particularly far-sighted, advanced or in need of development. We need only to see what is happening in the rest of the world. About 3,000 towns and cities in Europe have combined heat ahd power; in other words, electricity production is combined with piped hot water to provide heat for districts. The result is that those towns and cities have no fuel poverty and their heating is far less expensive than ours. Of course, they are using their energy twice as efficiently as we are.

The alternative sources of energy that are available to us but which are not being properly used at the moment are not only economic and fully developed but pollution free. Nobody can be more conscious of pollution problems than the Swedes are. They burn municipal refuse literally in the centre of their cities—even plastics which produce dioxins — without producing any pollution. The technology exists in this country to burn refuse without producing pollution. We must compare that with the pollution problems to be derived from landfill. Such problems will become increasingly more severe as scientists become more anxious about polluted water seeping out from municipal refuse which is dumped in holes.

Of course, something is happening in this country, and it has been happening for some time. In Edmonton, about 10 per cent. of London's rubbish is being successfully used to produce electricity. Many plants exist in other parts of the country. For many years, there has been a scheme in Nottingham to burn local refuse and produce domestic hot water and electricity. I have referred to many schemes, but perhaps it would be more realistic to say a handful. Certainly only a fraction of the municipal refuse that is available to us at the moment is being converted into useful energy. The technology has been proved. Hardware companies are ready to go ahead. Indeed, they are anxious to get into export markets. I have seen companies and projects all around Europe. For example, some companies are members of the Process Plant Association. Companies that are members of the Combined Heat and Power Association and the many sectors of British industry that are members of the Council of Mechanical and Metal Trades Associations are prepared to show any of my colleagues in the House the technology and hardware that is available to convert rubbish into hot water and electricity for combined heat and power.

The other advantage, which my hon. Friend the Minister appreciates, is that the development of these energy resources could be achieved far more quickly than expanding our electricity capacity over the long term. It takes eight to ten years to build a major power station, yet perhaps six months to a year to build a smaller station that will convert municipal refuse. Many such stations could be and are being built. Projects are going ahead in Newcastle, Hastings, the Isle of Wight, Birmingham, Hampshire and larger schemes are now starting that use municipal refuse for district heating and electricity in Sheffield, Corby and so on.

A great deal more must be done if we intend to use this enormous energy resource, and some obstacles need to be removed. The major obstacle is the privatisation of the electricity industry, which is already under way. There is no doubt that if we privatise the electricity industry it will generate competition and give private producers an opportunity to sell their electricity. Local authorities that want to burn refuse to produce electricity and obtain a fair price for their electricity will be able to take advantage of schemes such as the one at Edmonton and others in the country. Such schemes would be far more economical and viable than current practice.

It is most important that my hon. Friend devises a formula for the privatisation of the electricity industry that will make the grid available to all at a fair price so that private producers can compete on a fair basis. At the moment they are unable to do so because the nationalised industry is not keen to have competition from private electricity production from combined heat and power schemes. That is the first and most important obstacle that the Government must remove. They must allow the investment that will exploit these huge energy resources of municipal refuse and hot water.

We need an even-handed opportunity to compete with the nationalised industry, which has not been allowed up until now. Nationalised industry is allowed to invest in new power stations at a lower artificial rate of interest. Unlike the private sector, it does not have to borrow its money at commercial rates in the market place. Once that obstacle has been removed and the combined heat and power private enterprise consortia are given an opportunity to show what they can do by being offered a fair price for their produce in a competitive market, I am sure that those schemes will benefit the national energy grid.

My hon. Friend is aware of other obstacles. There is a prejudice among local authorities and planning departments against the burning of municipal refuse. There is a prejudice, and some further obstacles, in the Department of the Environment. There is some unjustified ignorance and fear about pollution problems which are being overcome by the burning of municipal refuse in modern plants. The House must be aware that unless we move in that direction we will only pile up more problems for future years, quite literally in the form of rubbish.

Infill sites are becoming scarce and environmental constraints and the need to prevent pollution of the water table will force us to impose even stricter controls on where we dump our rubbish. Therefore, even if it were not economic, which it is, it would become increasingly necessary to convert this huge annual source of fuel into useful energy. That may be this island's only option because I am sure that we will be prevented from continuing to dump vast quantities of rubbish into the sea.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will confirm that he intends to consider how best we can progress with this important source of alternative energy. I know that, generally, Government Departments do not talk to each other, but I hope that he will make an exception and will knock together the heads of his Department and those at the Department of the Environment to ensure that they encourage local authorities to participate in finding the least-cost option for disposing of their rubbish.

There is evidence that many local authorities dispose of their rubbish by high-cost infilling, which is much more expensive than building combined heat and power or refuse incineration plants, and ratepayers suffer from that high cost. In areas where infilling is scarce and expensive, it has been proved that there is a cheaper alternative, and such a source should be pursued. The Department of the Environment or the Department of Trade and Industry should provide feasibility study finance to local authorities to assess the cost effectiveness of recycling their waste rather than dumping it in holes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that the Energy Efficiency Office has a role to play with, perhaps, a strong and vigorous campaign to make those responsible for industrial and municipal refuse aware that there is a better alternative to burning and dumping, and one that provides useful energy.

The renewable energy available from using industrial and municipal waste and the hot water from power stations could, in the short term, make a far larger contribution than the other renewables that we have been discussing. Those sources would not only produce far greater amounts of energy, but would do so more economically than any of the existing renewable sources and also help to solve environmental and pollution problems.

If we move in that direction, we can make a major contribution to improving energy efficiency while conserving our non-renewable energy sources. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is sympathetic to my suggestions, and I hope that he will give a strong lead for which the whole country, especially the young generation, will be eternally grateful.

12.29 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I should like to congratulate those hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches this morning. Although I enjoyed his maiden speech, I advise the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) not to read too much into what is printed in *The Sunday Times*. Many of my hon. Friends read little into the organs of its proprietor, Mr. Rupert Murdoch. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) on their very good maiden speeches. I hope that they will contribute to future energy debates because their comments will be welcome.

It is hoped that today's debate will set the scene for renewable energy in this country in the long-term. The United Kingdom's research and development programme on renewable forms of energy has never received anything like the financial support that is normally given to more conventional forms of energy. The funding of renewable

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

energy started in 1975. The hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) may be right to say that on at least two occasions the Government have initiated debates in the Chamber on renewable energy. However, that is more likely to have happened because of debates on renewables outside the Chamber during the past few years.

It was a Labour Government that began funding such research and development — directly from central Government. From 1975 to 1986 only £97·1 million has been spent on research and development in this area. That should be compared to the expenditure of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on its nuclear research and development in 1985-86—more than £212 million.

I was interested in the Minister's comments in replying to the hon. Member for Devon, North when he discussed the remarks made recently by Lord Marshall about the cost of nuclear power. In the television programme "Taming the Dragon" on 15 October Lord Marshall said:

> "You are correct to say on the Magnox stations as a whole, whether or not Magnox has been an economic bargain or not in the narrow sense does depend on their performance in the future and the price of coal in the future, so in that sense, it's jam tomorrow."

When asked about the AGRs, which the Minister mentioned, the interviewer said:

> "And that's also true of the AGRs?"

Lord Marshall replied:

> "That's bound to be the case because we've only got some of them working in the last few years."

In defence of Lord Marshall's comments, many of my hon. Friends have been speaking for a long time on the cost of nuclear generation in this country. The Minister decided to go across the Channel to France to try to defend his position on the economics of nuclear electricity generation. He was amply dealt with by the hon. Member for Devon, North who gave him some of the facts. I should like to give the House the facts of the cost as calculated by the Central Electricity Generating Board. Its analysis of generating costs in 1983-84, which is the latest available update, states that for major stations commissioned between 1965 and 1987 the Magnox generating cost in 1983-84 per kilowatt hour was 2·60, for coal-fired stations 2·38 and for oil-fired stations 2·77. Some of us have argued many times over many years and without support from the electricity generating industry that that has been the case. I am pleased that people at the highest level of the industry now accept exactly what that case is. That calls into question why there has been such a great difference in the amount invested on research and development into renewable energies as compared with other forms, especially nuclear. The Government still spend only £14 million a year on renewables.

I know that other hon. Members want to take part in the debate and so shall mention only briefly two forms of renewables. One is geothermal energy. The Minister said that the aquifer programme was cancelled in 1985 because of the absent water levels in the earth where the drilling was taking place. I understand that that applied to four places in Great Britain at that time, or immediately prior to it. I should like to ask the Minister whether any feasibility study was carried out involving international comparisons. France is currently in the process of putting into effect its aquifer programmes at the rate of between 20 and 30 a year. I understand that Italy also has programmes going ahead in the Po valley.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On the relative cost of nuclear power, I have asked for specific figures. The CEGB's analysis of comparative generating costs shows that the average lifetime cost per kilowatt hour at 1987 prices for the most recently commissioned plant at Hinkley Point is 2·82p compared with 3·03p for the first stage of the coal-fired station at Drax.

Mr. Barron: The Minister is using an argument that was made in the late 1950s and 1960s about Magnox and AGRs. The estimates were wide of the mark then and I suspect that the same is true now. Perhaps the Minister will also tell us, though perhaps not today, whether and how the Government plan to proceed with privatisation of the Magnox stations.

With regard to the hot rocks geothermal project in Cornwall, that programme is regarded as the most likely to be economic when fully developed. The Government, however, have been wavering in their commitment to the project. I understand that the boreholes are currently about 2·8 km but everyone agrees that they need to be much deeper so that the heat of the water will be much greater than the present 70 to 90 degrees.

In 1986, the Energy Technology Support Unit confirmed the immense potential of this scheme and stated that electricity generation by this means could be cheaper than with other fuels. In the Department's quarterly review, the Minister recognised that

> "perhaps the most challenging prospect is the extraction of geothermal heat from hot dry rocks at depths of around 5 to 6 km for use in generating electricity . . .
>
> The UK is a world leader in exploring this technology, but there are still many questions to be answered at the Camborne School of Mines project in Cornwall before the construction of a prototype commercial scheme can be contemplated."

In view of his comments on that occasion and today, I hope that the Minister will ensure the feasibilty of the project by maintaining long-term funding until the questions have been answered.

Mr. Spicer: I will deal with that point straightaway. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) also referred to the extra funding required. An enormous amount of additional drilling is required. We are down to about 2·5 km and we need to go down to between 6 and 8 km. We have already spent £25 million on the project, with a further commitment for the rest of this year. At this stage, it is perfectly legitimate to seek to take a clear view on whether it is correct to spend a very considerable additional sum to reach depths that have never been achieved before in a project of this type. It is thus quite reasonable that we should take a dispassionate view, and we shall be reaching a decision very soon.

Mr. Barron: In a world of new technology, some brave investments will clearly be needed in likely prospects. If the Minister comes to a negative decision, we shall have to review the criteria for deciding whether the project in Cornwall goes ahead. On other issues, one suspects some of the criteria used — particularly with regard to the massive investment in nuclear generation.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I support the hon. Gentleman's point about the criteria that will be used. Will he agree with me on another point? Once before the project was on the verge of being disbanded and the highly skilled and trained staff involved were uncertain of their future. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in pressing the Minister to make the earliest possible decision on the future funding of the project so that the research team can be held together?

Mr. Barron: Coming as I do from a coal-mining background, I know that once such industries close and the skilled labour force moves elsewhere in search of wealth it is difficult to put a team back together.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I assure the hon. Members for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that the present contract runs to the end of next year. Until then there will be stability in employment, although I am mindful of the fact that we must make a decision in the near future. I also take the points about criteria.

Mr. Barron: Perhaps the Minister's decision could be brought before the House so that we may comment on it, and on the criteria involved. With the experience of the past 10 to 12 years, everyone would say that renewable energy, in whatever form, is is here to stay.

Design studies have shown that passive solar energy can meet 30 per cent. or more of heating needs in both small and large houses, whether in areas of high or low density. The Minister will know that in 1985 Liverpool university announced the findings of its 20-year study, which showed that heating costs in Britain's first large solar-heated building, St. Mary's school in Wallasey, were about half those of other schools of the same size.

A London Business School study, published in 1984, concluded that passive solar design could be an attractive lead technology, saving 10 to 15 per cent. of energy. The Government have agreed that passive solar heating is already economically attractive, yet there has been little take-up by the building industry. In the Government's publication "Review" the constraints on the widespread deployment of passive solar heating are given as being the rate of new building and renovation and the slow take-up by the building industry.

Denmark, France, Japan and Sweden give generous tax credits and make available subsidised loans for the installation of such energy-saving systems. What plans do the Government have to encourage the incorporation of passive solar heating in new buildings?

The 1982 Energy Technology Support Unit review on renewable energy technologies did not consider solar heating to be cost-effective in any but the most extreme circumstances. It recommended that our programme should be terminated. In 1985, the review confirmed that view of active solar heating which it claimed would make only a tiny contribution to our energy needs.

The Minister said in his opening remarks that the active solar heating project had been terminated because there was not enough sun in this country. That may be true of Britain, but it certainly is not true of the rest of the world. Solar cells are currently in use in hot deserts to provide power for refrigeration and water pumping. Some are used for telecommunications equipment on cold mountain tops. In remote villages solar cells are used to recharge torch batteries and to provide television. On navigation buoys and aboard sailing vessels they keep lights burning. There is still an immense potential for using active solar cells throughout the world. That potential has been ignored in the decision not to go ahead with further development programmes.

Let me give a practical example of the use of active solar energy. I have a photograph of a solar-powered water pump that is being used in Mali in west Africa to irrigate food crops. Although there may be no market here because of this country's climate, there is no question but that Africa and Asia have a great potential for markets in active solar energy. But the aid flow to those nations is crazy. We send the food which we overproduce to nations such as Africa. Farmers in those countries find it difficult to farm in their climate, so they rely on our overproduction. It would be much more sensible if there were not this overproduction under the common agricultural policy and the money were used instead to finance active solar energy to give real help to the people of Africa and Asia to ensure that they become self-sufficient in food.

In 1983, about 60 million solar-powered calculators were sold throughout the world. World shipments of solar cells reached 25 MW in 1985 compared with nothing in 1975. Technical advances and mass production could reduce the cost in the next decade so that solar electricity competes directly with grid electricity. The potential market will be enormous. It is in these technologies that Britain should use its inventive skills to develop forms of energy that will do much more good and achieve larger markets in Third world countries than the investment in and promotion of nuclear technologies.

The Government are reviewing the criteria concerning all renewable energy and future prospects. They must examine what criteria were used in deciding not to go ahead with active solar cells, the development of which would be to the economic good of this country and the human good of other areas. I await with interest information on the criteria to be used in other socially useful projects.

Potential users of renewable energy systems are given no incentives to switch from conventional energy supplies. The low Government spending on renewables shows their complacency and is the major obstacle to further development. I make that point not just to this Conservative Government but to those of different political persuasions. The Under-Secretary of State says that work on renewables is moving from the science and engineering stages to more commercially based operations. We are told that there will be increased collaboration between the Government and manufacturers and other energy users. Will this involve real incentives, as are given in other countries, or will we just see the same kind of glossy promotional material issued by the Energy Efficiency Office when it began the campaign last year?

The only way in which this country will realise the employment and energy potential from renewable energy technologies will be through a real increase in Government expenditure and commitment. This goes further than just glossy pamphlets and breakfast meetings in hotels in different parts of the country for discussions on energy efficiency. If we mean what we say about renewables, much more must be done. When people go back from those meetings, incentives must be provided. We can debate whether to use the methods used in other countries in terms of tax concessions or subsidised loans. If we are to exploit renewable energies which will perhaps be

[Mr. Barron]

economically productive, although perhaps not in the immediate future, the Government must take a much more serious approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) referred to the need to establish a renewable energy division in the Department of Energy — although rumour has it that that Department may not last long as a single Department in Whitehall — and a renewable energy agency which is separate from other energy agencies and has a proper budget. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will deal with some of our points.

12.50 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): May I say what a pleasure it is to speak for the first time with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair?

We have heard several maiden speeches today, and I want to comment on two of them. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on a significant and comprehensive maiden speech. I congratulate also the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on his maiden speech, which was capable and able. Toward the end of my speech, I shall refer a great deal to his part of the country.

When we speak of renewable or alternative energy, we think of it as alternative to those energy sources that we have used for many centuries. We have used hydrocarbons —coal—for hundreds of years and wood for thousands of years; and, more recently, gas and oil for the past 40, 50 or 60 years. We are looking for something alternative to those fuels, knowing that they will run out in due course.

The word "renewable" means that we are looking for an energy source that appears to renew itself indefinitely. However, because we are using only a small amount of such an energy, compared with the vast amount of it on the planet, it appears to defy the laws of thermodynamics. We all know that one cannot create energy, but because we are taking only a small amount of the so-called renewable source, it looks infinite, whereas it is not.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) advanced another definition of the energy sources that we are discussing today, using an expression that I like and have heard him use before — benign energy sources. I know what he means and sympathise with his definition, although the alternative, renewable energy sources that we are examining are not wholly benign in every sense. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that a barrage across a river is not wholly benign for the environment. He will also agree that windmills are not totally benign when it comes to noise. He will further agree—I am sure he has many hon. Friends with shipping and fishing interests—that wave machines are not completely benign for people who go to sea to earn a living.

Regarding the speech made by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), one must say that even solar power in its largest forms is not wholly benign. Power stations, such as the one in Italy with 727 mirrors, which produce only about 1MW of power, are hardly benign for the landscape. However, I understand the theme behind the idea of the hon. Member for Midlothian of calling such forms of energy benign, and I accept its validity.

We should apply one or two criteria to alternative, renewable energy sources, so as to be able to judge whether they will give us what we want in this country and the rest of the world. First, are they convenient? Their location can often be very convenient. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) pointed out that there are many parts of his constituency that the grid will never reach, and by using wind power he can have a convenient form of energy that can be brought to the user. In that sense, there can be convenience of location.

There are many other forms of renewable energy sources, such as wave power, or even tidal barrages. Barrages are perhaps the best example of a form of energy generation that is not conveniently located wherever it is required. By definition it must be at the mouth of a river, and the energy may be needed hundreds of miles away. What about the availability or security of supply from alternative energy? I raised that point in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North. Wind is sometimes, but not always, available. I shall always remember going to see the wind generator in the Orkneys and finding that it was not turning because there was no wind there. When we returned by aeroplane to Hatfield in Hertfordshire, we had to circle several times to wait for the wind to die down on the runway before we could land. We had wind at Hatfield where we did not want it, and no wind in the Orkneys where we did want it.

The same is true of waves. There will always be waves, but will they be of sufficient size to generate electricity when we want it? The barrage is a good idea. The tide will come in twice a day, and ebb twice a day, and it will give us security of supply. As to the sun, as the hon. Member for Rother Valley said, the sun is reliable in many places in the world, but seldom is it reliable in the United Kingdom.

We must also consider the convenience of energy produced from alternative sources. Almost all the alternative sources ultimately produce electricity. That contrasts with gas, which can provide heat at the point of supply, coal that can provide steam, and the hydrocarbon fuels — petrol in particular — that provide mechanical power at the point of use.

If we follow the alternative or renewable energy route, we move towards an all-electric society. By coincidence, that is the route that we shall follow if we go down the nuclear path. Nuclear energy produces only electricity, not motor power, although it can produce steam at the power station.

Mr. Rost: The French and the Swiss already have nuclear power stations specifically to provide hot water for their district heating schemes.

Dr. Clark: That is an interesting intervention. I was saying that one can use nuclear power stations to produce steam, because steam is an intermediary between nuclear power and the generation of electricity.

Knowing my hon. Friend's interest in combined heat and power, I am delighted that his interest has gone beyond conventional generation through the use of hydrocarbon fuels to generation by use of the nuclear source. My hon. Friend can combine his interest in combined heat and power with nuclear generation.

Another feature that we must consider is the cost of generation. Most alternative or renewable energy sources are expensive. For example, the return on investment in wave power machines will take 16 years. It is an expensive form of electricity generation. In contrast, the cost of wind-generated electricity can be recovered in two years.

The third criterion by which to judge alternative energy is the contribution that it can make to the national grid. It is thought that if we had 600 miles of wave machines, perhaps on the west coast of Scotland where the waves are strong, we might be able to generate half our electricity. If we had 10,000 windmills, one on the top of every beauty spot on these islands, we might be able to generate half our electricity. However, I wonder whether we want every beauty spot in the country turned into an electricity generating site with 100 m blades making a noise like that of a landing helicopter every minute of the day. We could have a barrage on the Severn or the Mersey. Indeed, we could get about 5 or 6 per cent. of our electricity from such barrages.

The message that we get from an analysis of the amount of electricity that can be generated from alternative or renewable sources is that it is wise and appropriate to choose a whole variety of energy generators and to put them together to make some significant contribution to the grid. No one particular source will provide enough electricity to change the electricity generating policy of the country. However, all the sources put together and used in appropriate places and in appropriate ways could make a significant contribution. Perhaps by the turn of the century we will be getting about 7 or 8 per cent. of our electricity from alternative sources. We must bear in mind that that amount will just about meet the increased demand for electricity and therefore it will not be additional electricity. However, it will prevent the need for as many nuclear power stations as might otherwise be necessary.

One other form of alternative energy that has not been touched upon is the source that exists in the constituency of the hon. Member for Carmarthen—a pump storage system. It is correct to say that a pump storage system is not a form of energy generation—it does not generate primary electricity. However, it is an alternative form of electricity and an alternative to building a new power station. If we can store electricity at night when the output from power stations is not required and use that electricity in the day time when there is peak demand, we are providing an alternative to the need to build a new coal-fired or nuclear power station.

The pump storage system could almost be called a renewable energy source, although that might be stretching the definition too wide. Such a system is renewable in the sense that the water from the bottom reservoir is pumped up at night, using cheap and plentiful electricity, to the top reservoir where the water is kept until such time as the electricity is needed. The water is then released down a series of pipeworks inside the mountain at Dinorwig. The water coming down the mountain turns turbines, which turn generators, which create electricity. When the water has flowed to the bottom reservoir, it can be pumped back up to the top reservoir the following night.

The size of this enterprise is not always realised. The Dinorwig pump storage station has a capacity to generate nearly 1,800 MW. That is equal to the output of the largest oil-fired station that we have, and equal to one and a half times the power generated from a nuclear power station. The pump storage station in north Wales, about which so few people know anything, is a magnificent example of British engineering and ingenuity. It is also a significant example of Welsh workmanship, because it was built by some 2,600 men, 90 per cent of whom were locally recruited. The station was built by local Welsh labour who were trained and skilled in such construction.

The Dinorwig pump storage station can make a significant contribution to the grid, as it has a significant output. Not only can it be used to generate electricity in the day time, thus saving the cost of building another, possibly nuclear, power station, but it can be brought on at short notice to act as an additional electricity generator at times of peak demand. An example of how quickly it can be brought on occurred two weeks ago when we had the great storm in the south-east and we were all without electricity for five to 10 hours or longer. The reason for that power cut was that it took the CEGB several hours to fire up its power stations, get them on line and generate the electricity that was needed locally because of the destruction of the national grid and the breakage of power lines in various parts of the country.

The Dinorwig pump station in north Wales can go from generating no electricity to generating 1,300 MW—which is about the capacity of the proposed Sizewell B power station — in 10 seconds. It is remarkable engineering. It opens its valves and allows the water to flow, thus turning the turbines and generating electricity. It goes from zero to 1,300 MW in 10 seconds; that sounds like a racing car pulling away from the start. Indeed, it is a racing power station.

The pump station is completely acceptable environmentally. All that can be seen are the top and bottom lakes, because all the mechanism of the power station is hidden inside the mountain. There are 11·4 kilometres of underground tunnels hidden inside the mountain, which are used not only for water flow but for maintenance and the installation of the massive machinery. To construct the station, 300 tonnes of shale and slate were blasted and removed. The machine hall, which looks like a James Bond film set, is 180 m long, 60 m high and 24 m wide.

Perhaps the Minister will say whether there are plans to construct more pump storage stations. I know that there is one at Ffestiniog, and two in Scotland, but the biggest of those three—the one at Ffestiniog—is only one fifth of the size of the Dinorwig pump station, and the other two are very modest in scale. Has thought been given to an alternative method of construction? Instead of having the high reservoir at the top of the mountain with the lower or sink reservoir at sea level, could we not have the top reservoir at ground level and the sink reservoir underground? We could use disused coal mines as the sink reservoirs into which the water would flow. It would also mean that the machine hall would have to be underground. We would have to find an area with the right geology, but I invite the Minister's comments on the possibility of creating more pump storage stations to ensure that we use our existing coal, oil and nuclear-fired stations to the best advantage by using cheap and plentiful electricity at night to store energy that can be used during the day.

I have tried to whet our appetites for pump storage stations because I believe that the Dinorwig station is a splendid achievement. I am ashamed to say that, before I visited it four years ago, I did not know it existed. Many other people—perhaps even some hon. Members—do not know of the existence of this splendid piece of British

[Dr. Clark]

engineering. I invite the Minister to continue to publicise everything that we do in relation to energy, but especially the Dinorwig pump storage station.

1.8 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The debate has shown that there is widespread interest in renewable energy resources. I congratulate the Minister on the way in which he introduced the debate, and hon. Members' speeches have shown that there is a way forward in dealing with not only short-term energy needs but the long-term provision of energy. The Government spend £110 million on research and development of alternative forms of energy, but the problem is that the nuclear power industry absorbs too much of the money that is made available.

It is a matter of concern that in the Sizewell inquiry doubts were cast upon the economics of nuclear power. It was argued that the CEGB was exaggerating the savings from nuclear power. The Magnox stations are not as economical as the present coal-burning power stations. Therefore, we must look to the future.

I should like to sound a note of warning on research which has not been mentioned in the debate. It concerns the argument about tidal barrages. There is no doubt that they are an exciting form of renewable energy and that they must be considered. There is also no doubt that the construction of the barriers would bring a great many jobs to the areas concerned and would help the local economies, and indeed the national economy.

However, I am concerned about the long-term environmental consequences of barrage systems. I know that on the Severn research is being carried out on the possible consequences. Perhaps I am taking it out of context, but I was concerned when the Minister said that when considering things such as barrage schemes, the financial considerations were a major factor. I take it that by "the financial considerations" he meant what it would cost to construct them. If it was clear—it might well be—that barrage schemes were economically attractive, I hope that the financial arguments would not override the environmental arguments on the impact of those schemes on the eco-systems.

We have talked about the Mersey and the Severn, but in my part of the country there is much interest among the business community in a Humber tidal barrage. The same arguments about the environmental consequences for the Humber apply to that. We must remember that those estuaries are of not only national but international significance with regard to the wildlife that uses them, particularly in the winter months. For example, on the Mersey estuary, Stanlow point is one of the most important wintering areas for pintail in the whole of Europe. The Mersey, the Severn and the Humber contain a large proportion of most of Europe's wintering wading birds on the mud flats. Any scheme that would upset the delicate balance of those mud flats that provide a safe sanctuary for wildlife——

Mr. Michael Spicer: Perhaps I can assure the hon. Gentleman on the important point that he is making about whether environmental factors will be overridden. The answer is that they will not. From my study of environmental matters I know that, for instance, on the Severn, there is a great deal of controversy among environmentalists. It is a difficult situation. Some argue that on the vast expanses of mud flats on the Severn there is not sufficient bird life. It is argued that, by having the barrage, one might still the water and increase the marine life and bird life. I am not saying that one would accept that argument, but sometimes the environmental matters are more complex than even the environmentalists accept.

Mr. Morley: I accept that there has been argument about the environmental consequences, but that is all the more reason why there should be careful consideration before the scheme gets off the ground. In the past, power station schemes, including nuclear power stations, have begun and the environmental consequences have been discovered after the enormous investment has been made. We do not want that to happen with such major schemes as barrages. I accept that they have their attractions. I am not necessarily saying that we should oppose barrages in principle, but we should look carefully at the consequences.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his point is underlined by the last barrage scheme built in this country? In real terms, it ended up costing nearly twice as much and taking nearly twice as long to construct than was estimated at the time it was agreed by the Government.

Mr. Morley: That is true. It may be argued that technology and barrage construction methods have advanced since then. I do not necessarily rule out the argument. As the hon. Gentleman implied, there is a counter argument that barrages can be a good thing for wildlife. I am not convinced by some of the arguments. Mud flats are important for wintering waders. They need to be covered and uncovered at regular intervals. The prototype designs that have been put forward mean that water levels cover many mud flats and, therefore, deny important wintering areas for wildlife during winter months. We must bear in mind that we are talking about not only our own country but the whole of Europe.

There is also the technical aspect. The Minister mentioned complicated arguments. During dredging for the Manchester ship canal at the mouth of the Mersey, industrial effluent sediments were disturbed and poisoned a great many waders, including the dunlin. We must bear that factor in mind when considering barrier construction.

It has been argued that wave energy can entail disadvantages, but there can also be spin-off benefits. The Minister is probably aware of erosion problems on the east coast of Britain, particularly the Holderness coast. To a certain extent, wave machines can have the dual function of stopping coastline erosion. The arguments are certainly worthy of research.

There has not been sufficient investment in research. I should like the Minister, if he has figures available to him, to compare the percentage of GDP that we put into such research with the amount spent by other major Western industrial nations. Some of our best wave research scientists have been attracted by the Norwegian Government. Unlike our Government, the Norwegian Government have put a great deal in resources into research. Does that mean that we are to lose the lead that we had because another country is far-sighted enough to invest money and to give researchers the necessary resources? The long-term implications are for the benefit of our country. Even though at this stage the schemes are more costly, in the long term we shall have not only cheaper forms of energy but considerable export potential.

1.17 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful for being called, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall try to reciprocate by keeping my remarks brief and by deferring to the greater expertise that has been shown by many hon. Members. Once again, the debate has shown how the House of Commons comes into its own in terms of the thoughtfulness and intellectual level of debate on Fridays, and this subject is appropriate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on initiating the debate and thank the Government for deciding that this is a vital subject to debate. As an interested, enthusiastic amateur — unlike many of my colleagues and many Opposition hon. Members — I commend the various thoughts that have been expressed, which, despite the difficulties and problems, support the continuation and development of alternative and renewable forms of energy.

I am aware that the Department of Energy is doing a great deal. I commend the efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister and thank him for what he has done so far and what he undoubtedly plans to do in the future. Without sounding too critical, it is right to come to the sad conclusion that we are spending insufficient money on such projects, despite the problems and the fact that many will go into the sand — sometimes literally — and not come to anything.

I would not quarrel with the list of items that the Minister has said must be abandoned for obvious reasons, but, compared with other countries, we are spending inadequate amounts. That is a great pity, but, wearing my hat as a member of the EEC Select Committee, may I say that if more cannot be done by one country on its own —the Treasury always agonises about committing funds to speculative projects that may come to nothing, but the Department of Energy is a weaker Department that is trying to stand up to the Treasury for which I commend it — the logic must surely be that we will have to get together with our European partners to do more of these projects together. I shall not go into them now, but there is a long list of projects that could be considered in the EEC. All too infrequently in the Select Committee do we see either collaboration or co-operation projects, or indeed significant projects, other than half a dozen rather spectacular examples, one of them being the jet fusion project in Culham, in respect of which the Community could do so much more to reassure national treasuries, where the understandably dry-as-dust officials are worried about committing money nationally. We do not seem to demonstrate the will to do this, which is a great pity.

Much could be done together, but the EEC energy budget is inadequate, because once again the will of leading member states, not small countries, to commit more money to an EEC energy budget of sufficient size is woefully absent. I hope that that will change in the future, and that we will see not only co-operation on a European basis but with our United States friends in their Department of Energy and also with regard to the fascinating ideas that are coming out of Japan — a country that is beset by a shortage of raw materials and energy resources, especially for use in transportation. All these matters surely call for much more co-operation, not just high-fallutin seminars of the International Energy Agency.

I hope that I shall not embarrass my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) if I pay tribute to him. He has been relentless in his determination not to give up on these important matters. He has conducted a personal campaign that has been joined by many other people and it has earned him plaudits in the House. Perhaps he will forgive me for saying that many of the points that he made are already well known, but none the less they are valid. He concentrated on municipal and industrial waste and he mentioned hot water usage from existing installations.

I thought how right he was and reflected on the good work that has been done by the press in recent months. It is seemingly rather a marginal subject and people tend to switch off about it partly because of its technicalities and complexities. For instance, on 21 September *The Independent* said:

> "The Government's decision to sell off the electricity industry has created a chance to end the most absurd waste of energy in Britain today. The energy is in the vast amount of surplus heat that coal and nuclear power stations produce. Only a fundamental change in the way we produce electricity will make it economic to put this waste heat to work.
>
> Two-thirds of all the energy that goes into thermal power stations disappears. This does not mean that the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), which produces all of"

—our electricity—

> "is deliberately profligate. Engineers simply have no economic way of using the vast amounts of 'low-grade heat' which remain in water emerging from steam condensers.
>
> The energy that escapes into rivers, the sea and up chimneys is enough to heat every home in Britain. A growing body of opinion believes that this waste, in a country where people die of cold, is totally absurd."

The article continues in that vein, and the telling argument is that we must at long last reverse this almost idiotic policy and try to do something about it.

Mr. Rost: I hesitate to contradict or dispute *The Independent's* correspondent, but engineers have devised a way of recycling low-grade heat. In Sweden they have large-scale heat pumps attached to power stations that upgrade the low-grade heat and distribute it to homes as hot water. There is no reason why we should not do the same.

Mr. Dykes: I was seeking not to try the patience of the House, but the next sentence of the article stated:

> "Scandinavian authorities, which take heat seriously, pipe surplus hot water into homes and offices. This practice, called community heating from combined heat and power . . . provides 40 per cent. of Denmark's domestic heat and 25 per cent. of Sweden's."

If both the will and resources were available, the combined package of what could be done, together with the benefits to conservation, would, at long last, put this country in a significantly better position.

I want to refer to electicity privatisation, but not in any tangential way. Understandably, there is strong feeling among Conservative Members that privatisation will open the way for the development of other energy sources. Although alternative and renewable sources of energy are not central to the privatisation issue, either politically or economically, they will have a beneficial effect. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister is, together with the Secretary of State, responsible for the privatisation of electricity. In view of the complexity of the subject and the need carefully to examine it with a completely open mind

[Mr. Dykes]

—a welcome characteristic of the Department of Energy —the process may take a long time, but we really must get it right.

I have no wish to detract from previous privatisations — indeed, I am an enthusiastic supporter of them because, on balance, they will considerably benefit British society if properly managed and controlled. However, there may be political problems, because the privatisation programme is now a long way down its road. The electricity industry was not on the original list, although I accept that it was included in our last manifesto. It is a huge entity, against which even the British Gas Corporation, with its gigantic issue of £7 billion, pales into insignificance. The whole of the electricity industry — with its three segments of generation, transmission and distribution and with all the little details in between — could have a value of between £20 billion and £40 billion. If it were practical to privatise certain elements of the electricity industry, I would support that. Indeed, the final outcome might be that only certain elements are privatised.

I think that, especially on the Conservative side of the political debate, there would be most enthusiasm for saying that, if privatisation was limited, generation should be the first priority. However, I am inclined to take the contrary view and say that, subject to the future arrangements for generation, there are arguments—even on the Conservative side of the political spectrum—that generation could remain in the public sector and be broken into different entities. I am simply throwing out that suggestion as a putative, theoretical argument. The priority of a number of people might be the privatisation of distribution, especially the final part when the electricity industry comes into direct contact with the consumer— both as companies and individuals — through a whole host of showrooms and shops.

The British Gas Corporation was kept as one monolithic entity, for good or ill, and, in retrospect, that was the right decision. However, the electricity industry is much larger and more complex and there is an argument that it needs special treatment. There is not time to develop that argument today as it would not be strictly relevant to the debate and would tax the patience of the House. However, I thought the matter worth mentioning.

Earlier in the debate the Opposition suggested that the Department of Energy should be wound up. What a terrible thought. I should like it to be expanded in both its prowess and abilities. It is an excellent Department of Government and I am glad that there is a new team carrying out its various policies.

I should like to make a brief reference to a hugely complex subject. Therefore, I apologise for my brevity, but I am sure that other hon. Members will not mind. Unlike some of the assertions that have been made, I am enthusiastic about the Severn barrage. However, I appreciate that because it is so complicated it is easy to say that that agonising decision may go the wrong way. Like other hon. Members, I appreciated the Minister's reference to the need to make that decision fairly soon, to allay the uncertainty. I think that he said "over the next year or two," as the time period. In view of the uncertainties and the problems, that should be the time limit. I do not share the pessimism about its effects on the environment. It is difficult to guesstimate or assert anything and because, by definition, we are talking about something in the future, no one can prove anything. However, I think that the environment will benefit in net terms if sufficient years are allowed to elapse.

I was struck by an article by Richard Rolfe in the *Financial Times* on 4 April — once again the quality press has done a good job in its articles on the subject— which concluded:

> "The passions aroused, and the importance of the issues involved, make it centain that the final decision on the Severn and Mersey schemes will be taken not a million miles from the cabinet room in 10 Downing Street. If barrages get the thumbs down, the government of the day will be accused of ignoring the potential for benign energy, job creation, regional development and work for the construction industry. On the other hand, if it gives the go-ahead it will be charged with destroying a vital link in the world's chain of wetlands, decimating bird species, ratting on international obligations, and trampling all over its own conservation policy. Pressure for a compromise solution"—

I presume that that means accepting the Mersey scheme and not the Severn barrage—

> "will be intense; but it is hard to see, at the moment, what it might be."

I hope that despite those problems and agonies the Government will decide to go ahead with the Severn barrage which would be of enormous economic benefit to the area. It will take a long time to complete, although the 20-year estimate was a bit pessimistic, and will depend on the input of technology and construction technology. However, even if in the end it provided 6, 7 or 10 per cent. of our energy use requirements, it would be worth while. The future must be a blend of new technologies, the new exploration of renewables, our existing schemes and the development of the nuclear energy industry.

I agree with what my hon. Friend said about Electricité de France producing electricity at the right price. The right way forward must be for all those things to come together, because there is no simple magical system that is unique and special and, therefore, must be the only way. These things will need more political will and commitment, and psychological commitment, from our entire population. Although it is a reality, it may be more difficult for other Government Departments to accept the actual physical investment of the right amount of money in the quality schemes to get the right solutions for the future.

1.33 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): It will not surprise you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or the House if, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, I concentrate my remarks on the Severn tidal barrage project. Nor will it surprise you that another reason for doing so is that I was a member of the Department of Energy's Severn barrage committee, which investigated the topic in depth from 1978 to 1980. Twenty years ago I used to live in a caravan on the banks of the Severn estuary at Lavernock Point The colossal reserves of energy that exist there used to impress me, as they would anybody else who saw the Severn estuary every day. The Central Electricity Generating Board has been unable to see that.

One of the facts elicited by the committee investigating the Severn barrage was that some 5 cu. km. of water rush up and down the estuary twice a day—or almost twice a day, as it is a 25-hour rather than a 24-hour cycle. That is a colossal, almost unimaginable amount of water and its significance for this country in terms of energy could be enormous. To the CEGB, however, a large volume of water rushing up and down an estuary simply suggests cooling water for ordinary thermal power stations rather than a source of energy in itself.

As many hon. Members have pointed out, we realised how complex and massive a step it would be to capture that energy by means of a barrier. There might also be ecological consequences going beyond this country due to the overwintering of wading birds and the effects on fish life. Two of the finest game-fishing rivers—the Wye and the Severn—flow into the estuary and if salmon or sea trout could not penetrate the barrier to reach their breeding grounds there would be serious consequences for a valuable sport.

One might go further. I am told that any interference with a tidal regime ultimately interferes with the rotation of the earth. I am happy to assure the House, however, that a Severn barrage would not prevent that rotation altogether. Indeed, as the effect is in proportion to the amount of water impounded behind the barrier compared with the total amount on the earth which, as we know, is two thirds ocean and one third land, the effect would probably be unnoticeable. It might be nice to organise sufficient interference to ensure that debates of this kind did not occur on a Friday, but that is probably beyond the wit even of our finest engineers.

To deal briefly with the ecological problems, which may prove insoluble, the Severn estuary includes a very large area of wetland. The density of bird life is not especially notable, but the colossal areas of wetlands exposed twice a day offer winter feeding grounds for a very large number of wading birds. Two of the best known areas of real consequence to the ornithological world are upstream, around Slimbridge, home of the famous Wildfowl Trust, which would not be greatly affected, and Bridgwater bay, which would be outside the barrage and affected to some extent by a different tidal situation.

Between the Severn bridge and the likeliest line of a barrage, on the Cardiff to western line, lie large wetlands, not especially rich in feeding grounds, although I recognise their importance and defer to the ornithological knowledge of my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who is not present in the Chamber, and his concern about the fulfilment of Britain's international obligation under the Ramsar convention to offer facilities for wading birds arriving from their summer breeding grounds in Siberia. There are other reasons, too, for satisfying the conservation interests before we take the ultimate step of committing ourselves to a scheme such as this.

As I said, the Central Electricity Generating Board has resolutely refused to see the Severn as an energy resource but has concentrated on it as a cooling water resource. Those hon. Members who do not live in my area or represent constituencies in it probably do not realise just how much of a cooling water resource for the CEGB the Severn estuary has become. It already has four nuclear power stations and, if present policies continue, there is a likelihood of a fifth being built. Berkeley, Oldbury, Hinkley A and Hinkley B have two nuclear reactors each, which makes eight nuclear reactors in all. No other estuary anywhere in the world has eight nuclear reactors built on it.

The Government have given every indication that they will soon approve a CEGB application for Hinkley Point C—a 1,320 MW station on the model already approved for Sizewell. We shall then have 10 nuclear reactors, with a total installed capacity of over 4,000 MW, on the banks of the Severn and lower down the estuary. The Severn estuary will be used—I suppose that this is not too crude a description — as the largest nuclear flush lavatory in the world. That is an inappropriate use of an energy resource. It is an extremely wasteful method of utilising the Severn, whose tidal action—if it could be captured—is an energy resource in itself.

I was pleased when the Minister said that he hoped to be able to give a decision before very long on whether to approve the Severn tidal power group's scheme. I think that he said that that decision would be made in a year or so. I hope that those words do not contain the seeds of further wavering.

In one of the excellent maiden speeches that we have heard today the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) said that he understood that the Severn barrage, as currently proposed by the Severn tidal power group, would take 20 years to construct. I intervene retrospectively — to abide by the rules of the House regarding maiden speeches — to say that I think he is wrong. The figures in the latest report of the Severn tidal power group to be deposited in the Library show that the barrage will take nine years from the start of construction to completion and that it will be seven years before the first power is generated. The barrage would therefore become a generator of useful revenue from electricity much sooner than the hon. Gentleman believes.

The hon. Gentleman also said that the Mersey scheme was more desirable simply because it was smaller. I am not sure that that is especially significant. It is true that the Severn estuary is rather daunting. The waters rushing under the Severn bridge, 30 miles upstream, look daunting, and the thought of capturing the energy in the seven miles between Lavernock Point, where I used to have my caravan, and Brean Down in Weston is daunting indeed. However, it is by no means impossible. The barrage would be a seven-mile crossing or, in the zigzag formation recommended by the electrical engineers, a 10-mile crossing designed to accommodate 192 turbines. However, although it would be a long crossing, and the massive project would probably cost £7 billion at today's prices — it is almost four years since the cost was estimated at £5·5 billion—a proven technology would be used. There is nothing new in the Severn barrage technology. It will simply be a hydro scheme dropped into place in the waters of the Severn. It can reliably be assumed to work to the group's design and to produce the costs and benefits which it has estimated.

The time has come to cease to regard renewable resources, such as the Severn tidal power group's scheme, and the Severn barrage's energy potential as a subject for glossy pamphlets. The review pamphlet is welcome, but it tends to make the Opposition think that the Government's attitude towards alternative energy sources and renewable energy sources is like their contribution to the game of Trivial Pursuit. It is all very pretty. It produces nice ministerial visits. I welcome the ministerial visit two months ago to the Severn barrage when the Under-Secretary of State took the hovercraft across the Severn and the mud flats. I did that 10 years ago. The time has come to cease wavering and to reach decisions.

The Government are caught in a cleft stick with the electricity industry because of their obsession with privatisation. They want nuclear power stations — Sizewell C and Hinkley Point—to be built, but they also

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

want to privatise the electricity supply industry. They can probably have one of those developments, but not both. There is no record of a private electricity utility building a nuclear power station. It is nine years since any private electricity utility in the world has built a nuclear power station. Private electricity utilities do not go in for nuclear power because they cannot get the power stations insured, or so I understand. If the Minister has different views, I should be glad to hear them.

The alternative to Hinkley Point and Sizewell C is the Severn barrage scheme. That would have to be built by the public sector. I hope that the Minister will soon announce a decision which will mean a commitment to that scheme, which will produce jobs and clean, renewable and benign power. That will be far more welcome in south Wales than the Hinkley Point scheme.

1.47 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), not least because I wish to speak about the same subject as he did, although that will be the extent to which I follow his remarks. I shall draw the opposite conclusion about the desirability of the Severn barrage.

It has been a privilege to listen to the three maiden speeches today, all of which had great merit. I especially praise my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) for the generosity he showed his predecessor and his depth of thought on the benefits of so-called benign energy and its effects in his constituency. My studies on the Severn barrage, which, if I may be forgiven a small plug, will lead to the publication of a pamphlet within the next couple of months, were undertaken initially from the point of view of the effect on my constituency but they have led me to much wider conclusions about the damage of which the barrage is capable.

It has been mentioned several times in this debate that the principal worries about the barrage concern its effect on the environment. I want to concentrate not on the environment of birds, trees, flowers and fish but on the environment of people.

The Severn barrage has been compared to a large, inefficient, activated sewage treatment plant. It operates by aeration and agitation by wind and tidal coverage, and variation of that agitation from violent on stormy days and spring tides to relatively mild on neap tides and during calm weather. When the waters of the Severn estuary are quiescent, large pools of liquid mud with a high affinity for pollutants settle in the estuary.

One effect of the interposition of a barrage in the estuary will be greatly to increase the frequency and depth of those pools of liquid mud. That in itself may not be too much of a worry, but the pools have an affinity for pollutants, and if they remain anaerobic for 14 days or more because of the process of stratification—they will undoubtedly do so once the tidal range of the Severn is cut off—large amounts of toxic, evil-smelling gases such as hydrogen sulphide, methane and other reduced sulphur compounds will begin to be emitted. Imagine the extension of that process over a period of years, and having to live anywhere along the shores of the Severn estuary with the build-up of these vast smells which are an inevitable risk when the tide is cut off in an area that has been subject to one of the greatest tidal ranges in the world.

For many years, the topic of conversation in my constituency has been the long, low and constant noise known as the Avonmouth hum, which no one can explain. In future years, if the barrage is built, conversation will no longer be about the hum but about the Severn-side stink.

The basic research being done on the barrage now will largely depend on the computer models of the tidal ranges and conditions in the Severn estuary. My hon. Friend the Minister will know from one of his previous incarnations that one factor of computer modelling is the acronym GIGO—garbage in, garbage out. So the accuracy of the researches into the future effects of the barrage will depend on the accuracy of the surveys that are fed into the computer.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend is worried, as I am, about the age of some of the surveys that are the only ones available from the Ministry of Defence for feeding into the computer. I have a map that shows that, for substantial parts of the Severn estuary, the latest available bathymetric surveys were produced in the years between 1878 and 1913. They may soon be approaching their 100th anniversary. Conditions on the bed of the river will undoubtedly have changed in that time, so unless we can quickly obtain more up-to-date bathymetric surveys there is a strong risk that the expensive and detailed research that is going on now will be largely negated by having been based on the wrong premises.

I turn now from the effects on the environment to the effects on jobs of building the proposed barrage. We have heard much today from hon. Members and from the Severn tidal power group about the jobs that will be created by the Severn tidal barrage. However, they have not mentioned the jobs that will be destroyed by the barrage. There is a great deal of doubt about whether the ports of the Severn estuary will still be able to operate once the barrage is in place. More important, those industries which are wholly or partly dependent on the port will, likewise, be affected by the barrage.

We hear of the jobs that might be created in the long term. I refer not to the jobs created directly by the barrage because they will be relatively small in number, but to those jobs created by the vast tourist and leisure industries that will grow from nothing in the Severn estuary once the barrage is built. We hear less about the jobs at risk. In my area alone job losses are variously estimated at between 5,000 and 38,000. I think that the 38,000 estimate is too high and that the chemical, oil and other industries on Severnside will survive, albeit at a reduced operational level. The 38,000 estimate comes from the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Any visionary project such as the Severn barrage goes through several stages. First, it is justified in terms of the jobs that it will create directly. When that begins to look shoddy the justification turns to the spin-off effects. I remember what happened with the proposed London airport at Maplin sands. It was initially said that it would be a job creator, but when the figures for jobs were questioned the arguments for Maplin turned to the spin-off effect which, it was said, would vastly outnumber the direct effects of the airport. We are seeing an identical process in relation to the Severn barrage. As the case for the barrage looks more and more shoddy the economic case for it turns increasingly on the industries of the future that might be generated if the barrage is allowed to go ahead.

One argument concerns whether renewable energy generation is safer than existing methods. I am indebted to Professor Sir Herman Bondi who, in a recent speech to the parliamentary group for energy studies, made the valid point that we are proposing, with the Severn barrage, the most dangerous technology of all. The technology of dams has created the most spectacular and most damaging accidents.

We are talking not of a technology relating to the dim and distant past. It is not just the technology of the Third world. The technology for the big dam proposed for the Severn estuary can be compared to the technology used at Carsington reservoir where embankment slippage only three years ago caused £12 million worth of damage. It can be compared to Megget dam in Scotland which suffered substantial damage to the protective metal lining of the underwater installations. It can be compared to the Sargozan dam in Soviet Tadzikistan which collapsed under mud flow pressure earlier this year.

Let us consider the density of population around the dam proposed for the Severn estuary. We cannot subject the population — the downstream population in particular — to such dangers unless there is an overwhelming environmental and economic case for the barrage. I hope to have a future opportunity to explore further why the case for the Severn barrage does not exist.

1.59 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): First, I should like to add my congratulations on the three excellent contributions from the maiden speakers in what I think is one of the most informative and constructive debates that it has been my privilege to hear in my few months in the House.

As a country we are well provided with renewable energy sources and that has been stressed this morning. We have one of the most favourable wind regimes in the world. We have a number of tidal estuaries—the subject of considerable discussion today — suitable for tidal power development, large geothermal potential, and much more besides. What has provoked me to be so keen to make a contribution to this debate is that we are lagging behind so many of our international competitors in the development and use of renewable energy sources. That is something that I should like to see rectified.

I welcome the fact that this debate has brought renewable energy into the mainstream of debate. I believe that, in the past, there was a tendency to regard such energy sources as a slightly eccentric fringe interest and not to give them the credibility that they rightly deserve. Official spokespeople have frequently failed to inform the British people of the potential that we have in renewable energy. Many people believe that we have to look to the traditional resources and that there are no others to which this country can turn in the future, but if we look at what is happening elsewhere in the world it is clear that that is not the case.

Hydro-electricity currently supplies a quarter of the world's electricity. Biomass in the form of wood pulp, crop residues and dung supplies 14 per cent. of the world's total energy consumption—three times the amount provided by nuclear power. About a fifth of the energy needed for space heating in Britain is already supplied directly by the sun as a result of passive gain through walls and windows. What options are available and what should we be considering today to ensure the greater use of renewable energy sources?

Solar power has already been discussed at some length. In spite of comments that solar power is not entirely feasible in this country because of our relative lack of sun, experience abroad has shown that, when combined with high insulation and heat storage, solar collectors can be an efficient means of providing space and water heating. Widely reported experience of solar homes in this country has shown that energy bills can be reduced by as much as twothirds.

The technical problems of using the sun for space and water heating have been largely resolved. What is now needed is assistance in achieving their rapid development and overcoming the institutional barriers to their widespread use. Later I shall discuss in more detail some of the institutions that are extremely powerful in directing thoughts and energy against alternative energy sources, especially renewable energy sources.

We have discussed wind regimes, hot rocks and a variety of alternative sources of renewable energy. Some speeches, including that of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), gave me new information and I was vey pleased to be informed of so many possibilities, to which we are not giving the credibility they deserve. The energy content of the domestic and industrial waste that we currently throw away amounts to 10 per cent. of our primary energy use. Both direct combustion and biological digestion could make a substantial proportion of that energy available for use at an economic cost. I believe that we have covered the tidal barriers in considerable detail, and we have also touched upon wave power.

I wish to pinpoint some other reasons for supporting the greater development of renewable energy resources. The first is the scope for developing new export markets for British technology. Although we make some limited exports in this area, most of the energy technology that we have exported has concentrated on large-scale, non-renewable energy sources which, in many instances, are suitable for the energy requirements of most countries. We should shift our attention to developing smaller-scale renewable technology which we could export to a much wider range of countries, in their interest and in ours. An important additional point is that such technology is well suited to our traditional skills and could be a valuable source of employment.

Developing renewable sources of energy would give us a good opportunity to increase the security of our energy supply. I endorse what has already been said, that the wider our variety of energy sources, the greater our security of supply and the better the nation will be served. In the past we have been ill-served by relying on one or two major sources of energy.

Another advantage of renewables is the opportunity that they give us to reduce the environmental impact of energy use. I accept that renewables are not without their environmental consequences and that we should always take them seriously into account, but we know what has happened with our coal-fired power stations, and although I welcome the Government's initiatives in recent months to reduce the problems, I believe that they came very late and not before considerable damage had been caused.

We know about the clear advantages of developing renewable energy sources. As with any emerging industry,

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

Government support is essential, but the response of this and previous Governments has been less than fully committed. I hope that the debate will signal greater commitment in the future. The amount of money provided for research and development into other sources of energy is not yet good enough.

I conclude by mentioning the subject that may be uppermost in the mind of the Secretary of State for Energy — the privatisation of the electricity industry. It is no exaggeration to say that the hostility of the Central Electricity Generating Board to innovation played a key role in the lack of resources for renewables. The CEGB has suppressed innovative technology in pursuit of its corporate goals. I urge the Secretary of State to consider ways in which that hostility can be removed. We do not want the electricity supply industry changed from a public monopoly into a private monopoly. We want fair competition in energy generation.

2.8 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister asked the House whether we should have a substantive document on this issue in the new year. Certainly we should, if only to tackle the question of the soft option—which is not real —and the wishful thinking involved in supposing that renewable energy can be a substitute for nuclear power stations or for coal-fired power stations, which may create problems of acid rain.

The question about windmills is whether they are thermally efficient. Perhaps the Minister will write to me about the thermal efficiency of the windmill at Burgar hill in the Orkneys, which has been built by the Department of Energy. I echo the comment that it is in the interests of Taylor Woodrow, GEC and British Aerospace that something should be done to help the market abroad as well as the home market, and I endorse what the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), said about the importance of the home market to markets abroad and about water power rating.

I used to be an enthusiast for barrages. My hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) made excellent speeches. All that I say to the Government is: for heaven's sake be careful about the ecology and look to Egypt, where the results of the Aswan dam on the Nile delta have turned out to be a catastrophe.

The Minister asked us for our priorities. In shorthand, one of mine is methane from refuse and the way in which it can help industry. Can he write to me about ACORN and the mechanism for scrapping projects? I agree that deep sea wave power, active solar and geothermal aquifers probably will not give a great yield or be very successful, but we must understand that when a project is brought to an end it can break the hearts of the scientists, who may have been working on it for years. That is cruel, and it is a difficult thing to do. The scientists are entitled to receive a good reason why their project should be scrapped and at least be able to defend themselves before any final decisions are taken. I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said about Westfield in Fife.

One of the most important matters that the Minister's Department must consider is the problem of transmission. That was explained in a productive interview that my ASTMS hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and I had with the Secretary of State on Tuesday. I thank the Secretary of State for giving us an hour of his time.

There are two important areas for priority finance. First, there is high temperature superconductivity. The Government should look at what Georg Bednorz and Alex Müller did for their Nobel prize, which was justified. In the *New Scientist*, a description by Michael Kenward states:

> "This year's physics prize marks a continuation of the trend whereby prizes come from large laboratories, many of them run by companies that see it as an essential part of their R&D to be active at the frontiers of science. Even in the United States, large corporations, concerned about the relative demise of academic institutions, have built up large research laboratories where scientists have access to facilities that are far more modern and expensive than those available in academia."

That is a problem for our work on high temperature superconductivity, but it is the top priority.

Something must be done about research on the ozone hole and the depletion of the ozone layer. It was first observed by the British Antarctic Survey team. It raised serious problems of ultraviolet radiation — not only sunburn and skin cancer, but many other matters. The Department of the Environment must inquire into the release of chlorofluorocarbons, chemicals used in aerosols and refrigeration. The human race is in danger from the increase in the levels of chlorine monoxide in the lower stratosphere. I ask for a letter about the stratospheric ozone review group, which is considering the matter, and the Montreal protocol. I cannot emphasise enough that the top priority for some of us is work on the ozone hole.

2.14 pm

Mr. Eadie: By leave of the House, I shall speak again.

It is with much pleasure that I congratulate my two hon. Friends the Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), and the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), on their maiden speeches.

As the House knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley is a miner. He is a worthwhile addition to the miners' parliamentary group. He demonstrated by his maiden speech that, with his knowledge through having worked in the industry, and because he has served on a local authority, he will make a useful contribution to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen has been mentioned in the debate. He was generous to his predecessor and to one of his political opponents. That is a hallmark of stature, which the House of Commons will appreciate. My hon. Friend spoke with authority. He carefully thought out what he wanted to say. I am sure that we shall hear more from my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East told us that there was concern about the time that had elapsed before he decided to make his maiden speech. We listened to what he had to say. He obviously did a bit of work on his speech. He could probably say to his critics — we would endorse anything that he said in this regard — that his wind is in very good nick indeed. I am certain that we shall often hear from him.

The Minister was anxious that the debate should be successful. I am sure that the House joins me in saying that it has been a good debate. It was the Minister's wish to open an earnest and constructive debate on the subject of renewable sources of energy, and he has succeeded. He will certainly face some problems in his reply. Questions have been put to him about visible pollution, invisible pollution and security of supply. On reflection, perhaps I should have advanced arguments on security of supply, as it was mentioned in the debate.

Pricing was mentioned. I did not try to bring anti-nuclear arguments into the debate. I have personal views about the matter. My worry is that, at this stage of its development, nuclear power is an unforgiving technology. That aside, I tried to make a point about the costing of nuclear power, whether one is in favour of it or against it. We have had demonstrations and information, particularly from Lord Marshall, who, incidentally, was my chief scientist. To some extent, he widened the argument.

If we are to discuss renewable sources of energy, there is a case for saying that we have not had our fair share of the allocation of resources for the development of renewable sources of energy. I do not wish to argue whether such renewable sources are satisfactory; my time is short. One cannot depend on windmills if the day is not windy. One cannot depend on waste power if there is no waste. Some day we may invent ways in which to store electricity. They say that the possible takes time, and the impossible take more time. If we were to invent ways in which to store electricity, we would open many avenues.

I congratulate the Minister on initiating the debate. We shall hear with interest what he has to say. The debate has been a success.

2.18 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said that the House of Commons often comes into its own on Fridays. I share that view. I thank the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) for what he said. There has been such a wealth of detailed knowledge and such a depth of discussion in the debate that, in 10 minutes, it is extremely difficult to answer all the questions that have been put to me. If I do not answer them all, I shall write to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and other hon. Members. It is not that I do not have the answers, as I have been showered with answers from my wonderful officials in the Box. They were delighted with what was said about increasing their empire. I saw them smiling when an hon. Member mentioned that there should be a division to deal specifically with renewable energy. I was so showered that at one point I considered setting up a waste combustion plant on the Floor of the House. I will not do that because I will use the information to answer hon. Members' questions.

I add my congratulations to the three hon. Members who have made maiden speeches. The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) made a powerful contribution. Sadly, he was unable to say anything nice about his predecessor, who was a lively Member of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) said some nice things about Sir Clement Freud, who again was a lively Member of the House. As the hon. Member for Midlothian said, my hon. Friend left it quite late to make his maiden speech and some people have been questioning him about the reason for that. However, it was a good example of why one should make one's maiden speech in one's own time rather than under the duress from one's association or constituents. My hon. Friend made an extremely witty and well-informed speech and I am sure that we will hear many such speeches from him in the future.

The same comments apply to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), who, without notes, made a superlative speech and lived up to our expectations of coherence, fluency and knowledge from Members in the Principality. We look forward to many contributions from him in the future, although perhaps not late at night when we may want him to sit down. We certainly enjoyed what he had to say on this occasion.

There has been a considerable measure of agreement that renewable sources of energy should form part of a coherent, variable and secure pattern of energy sources. If there has been any argument—not necessarily across the Floor of the House, but between hon. Members—it has been between those who believe that renewable energy sources are so important that they should be encouraged at almost any expense—certainly encouraged in a way that discriminates in their favour — and those who believe they should compete fairly against other forms of energy. Many hon. Members have said that other countries have spent a great deal more than us on renewable energy sources. There is some evidence to support that view, but other countries—perhaps because they do not have indigenous sources of fuel—have spent large sums of money on very expensive field testing.

It is probably fair to say that some countries regret spending so much at an early stage of the development of these technologies and have since looked at our methods. Unusually in the British context, we have spent a lot of time and money researching the subject to determine whether there were particular profitable lines of development. As a result, certain types of renewable energy sources have proved worth pursuing seriously. I agree with those hon. Members who said that there are some large projects on which we must start to take a firm stance. The counter argument is that we must ensure that renewable energy sources are able to compete fairly in the market.

The hon. Member for Midlothian referred to papers about to go before the Council of Ministers. We should not try to arrange European directives that would virtually compel the development of renewable energy sources, or would so discriminate in favour of them that, by definition, we would be discriminating against other sources. We must create market conditions that allow the fair and competitive development of renewable sources.

A number of speeches have followed that line, including those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). They both, in different ways, said that it was important not to create barriers to the development of other sources of energy, and I could not agree more. Whether combined heating and power, hydro-electricity or other suggested sources, it is important that there should be no barriers to their development. Hon. Members have cited several possible barriers from rating through to the way that the bulk supply tariff currently operates. If the 1983 Act is not working effectively in encouraging new forms and new suppliers of energy, when we consider the structure of the industry in the context of privatisation we will certainly bear that very much in mind. We shall be considering the future structure of generation and the future ownership

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

and structure of the grid and distribution and, in that context, my hon. Friends were right to question the sponsoring of the development of renewable sources of energy. Many sources, because they have been so thoroughly researched, have a good market ahead of them. Indeed, it was remiss of me during my opening remarks not to have mentioned that hydro-electricity and combined heat and power both have a good future. Indeed, we have spent considerable sums of taxpayers' money supporting combined heat and power feasibility studies throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) mentioned inshore wave energy, and the hon. Member for Midlothian questioned whether we were doing enough in that area and suggested that we had given our technology to the Norwegians. In fact, we have supported research, especially at the University of Belfast, into inshore wave technology. At the island of Islay we are running an inshore wave project which is technologically well in advance of much of what is happening in Norway and, indeed, is solving some of the problems being encountered by the Norwegians.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) made an interesting contribution and we would be glad to receive any further information that he has about silting. However, the original study of the Severn tidal power group found that silting at the English-Stones site was unacceptable. That is one reason why it suggested the Cardiff-Weston barrage site. However, we will certainly consider any further information that my hon. Friend might put to us. We are open-minded about that as we are on environmental factors, such as were raised by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and others. Such factors will be extremely important, which is one reason why, a month or so ago, I announced that we would engage in detailed further studies of the environmental effects, especially on bird and marine life. I advise the hon. Member for Cardiff, West that we cannot rush completely headstrong into such things. I agree with him, however, that we need to come to some conclusions.

Finally, we shall produce a paper on our strategy for the House to consider, because I realise that that is the wish of the House.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Housing Rental Purchase Schemes

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am grateful for this opportunity so soon after the recess to raise this issue, and I know that many hon. Members of all parties are concerned about it. This Adjournment debate enables me to do two things today: first, and most important, to put to the Government the case for them to take action on housing rental purchase schemes; secondly, to make any people who are at present entering into such contracts think carefully before they do so and to advise them that they should consult their solicitor and employ a surveyor. My own view is that even if they take those precautions they will be going ahead with a far worse deal than they may expect.

This problem was brought to my attention just before the summer recess. Immediately, I tabled a number of written questions and wrote to the Minister for Housing and Planning. As a result of the publicity arising from those initial actions, a number of other cases have been raised with me. What I have seen and discovered has appalled me and convinced me that action must be taken as speedily as possible. As it is not just a local problem, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will speak briefly. Many other hon. Members have expressed the wish to speak, but that is not possible.

This is not a new problem. It has been raised in the House previously. On 26 June 1974 my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) introduced a Bill to deal with some aspects of rental purchase. He said:

> "It may well be that the agreement is not binding in law, and that any solicitor could drive a coach and horses through it."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1974; Vol. 875, c. 1575.]

In 1987, that is no longer the position. It is apparent that the present rental purchase agreements are watertight and legal. However, although they are legal, they use the law to the limit. It is all one way and is against the interests of the would-be-purchaser.

Preston borough council has published a leaflet about this. It is not the only council that has tried to take a stand against the practice. I shall quote the main items from the Preston leaflet because they summarise the main problems that I shall pursue. The leaflet is headed

> "Rental Purchase schemes — Beware! Tempted by the chance to buy?".

I hope that the Minister will note the main problems that the leaflet summarises. It states:

> "Under a Rental Purchase Agreement
>
> 1. You will have more limited rights than either a private tenant or an owner-occupier.
>
> 2. You will not have the full benefits of owner-occupation or the full rights of regulated tenants—only the status of a licensee.
>
> 3. A court order will be required to obtain an eviction, but this is usually granted because the licence gives you only the minimum protection under the law.
>
> 4. You will be paying approximately 25 per cent. interest per year compared with approximately 11 per cent. to a Building Society or 19 per cent. to a Credit Company.
>
> 5. The Rent Officer cannot fix a fair rent as rental purchase schemes do not fall within the Rent Acts.
>
> 6. Housing Benefit will not automatically be paid—each case will be individually examined."

Local authorities are taking different lines in different areas. Some are refusing to countenance such agreements, some are meeting the demand in full and some are setting limits which they believe to be reasonable in their area. However, many people who have entered into these agreements are finding that they are not getting the benefit that they expected to meet the commitment that they have entered into.

The leaflet continues:

> "The property involved is likely to be quite old and the level of improvements carried out prior to the 'sale' are likely to be low, therefore leading to high repair and maintenance costs. You will be responsible for all repairs and maintenance."

It goes on to explain why Preston council opposes the principle of rented purchase and what it wishes to do about it.

Pendle borough council has also had a report on the subject and Blackburn borough council has taken a strong stand. Many local authorities are concerned. Burnley borough council housing department has a dossier on the subject and was represented at a seminar in Bolton on 21 July. In a letter to me dated 24 August, Chief Executive Brian Whittle said:

> "This is obviously a very vexed question but I am not aware of anything which is unlawful in the arrangements made by Bradford Investment Company although in many other respects the arrangements are unsatisfactory."

In a letter to me dated 13 August the Minister of State also referred to the Bolton seminar, which an official from his Department attended as an observer. The letter said that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities had undertaken to collect evidence. The Minister stated that he took the matter very seriously and that any abuses should be stopped. I hope that we will receive further assurances from the Government today.

What are the abuses? I shall refer to rental purchase in general and to Bradford Investments plc in particular. That company was spotlighted on Tuesday this week in the Channel 4 television programme, "4 What It's Worth", and the company was given the opportunity to appear or to respond to certain points, but chose not to do so, saying that it did not regard the matter as appropriate for television programmes or public debate. Bradford Investments plc is noted for its attempts to prevent individuals or the media from raising issues affecting it or criticising it in any way. Its immediate resort to solicitors' letters or injunctions in such cases suggests that it has something to hide. It has pursued that line with television, radio, the local and national press, Shelter and its own purchasers. This threat to people purchasing houses from the company is clearly intended to prevent them from airing the problems that they discover once they have signed an agreement.

The company's advertising holds out the vision of home ownership to people who would not otherwise have the chance. I am 100 per cent. in favour of people having the opportunity of home ownership, but that is not the argument today. The scheme that I have described is false and misleading. It looks attractive and people fall for the bait. Those attracted to it are mainly people on unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit, and so on, who would find it difficult to obtain a mortgage from a building society or bank. Moreover, the properties are grossly overvalued. I have proof that the company paid £6,500 for one property and sold it for £10,950 after spending minimal sums, mainly on superficial work to make the property look more attractive. That property was grossly overvalued, and surveyors' reports show many problems. One report lists 23 items needing attention.

The first abuse, therefore, is in selling properties of a poor standard at well above their true value. The second abuse is the interest rate, shown as 1·9 per cent. per month — equivalent to 25·34 per cent. per annum. The so-called purchaser does not have the rights of an owner-occupier purchasing with a mortgage or those of a regulated tenant, but only minimal protection. That is appalling in 1987. The cost of all repairs is the responsibility of the occupant, and in view of the type of property the cost is likely to be high.

One case was highlighted in the television programme "Watchdog", shown by the BBC on 18 August 1985. I do not know whether the person named is still a purchaser from Bradford Investments, but I cite a case that has already been publicised so as not to create further difficulties for my constituents in view of the pressure already being put on them by the company. Therefore, I shall use one case that has already been publicised, although I assure the Minister that there have been many such cases.

The "Watchdog" script states:

> "Dave Scott and his family now have a loan and a house provided by Bradford Investments. Dave's buying his home for £13,500 whereas Bradford Investments obtained it for £11,500. And so, after making repairs, Bradford Investments made a profit of about £1,000. They then charged £325 administration fees just to sell their own property. They've managed to make all this money out of Dave, but he hasn't got any—he's on the dole, and has been for the last six years. So how can an unemployed man take on such hefty commitments?
>
> Well, the answer lies in the way Bradford Investments sells houses. Bradford Investments make buying houses seem so easy. Don't worry if you haven't got a job, Bradford Investments advertise houses for the unemployed. No need to worry if you're hard up, Bradford Investments offers a hundred per cent. credit. Don't be put off by complicated procedures, Bradford Investments boast you can move into your new house in just fourteen days.
>
> It all seems so easy. Dave Scott seized on the chance to buy his own home. But he's landed himself with a heavy commitment. Heavier than normal as Dave bought his house from Bradford Investments on something called 'rental purchase'. Rental purchase works like this: a customer sees a house advertised by Bradford Investments. If he has the money he hands over £500 cash deposit, if not, no problem. He just gets a friend or a relative to guarantee £1,000 for five years. A charge is put on their property by Bradford Investments. If, like Dave, the house costs £13,500, Bradford Investments gives you a loan of £13,000 over ten years. For this, you're charged a massive 25·34 per cent. interest — that's twice what the building societies charge. Dave repays this at £47·94 a week. However, because he's unemployed, the DHSS pays this for him. And that's not the only money Bradford Investments gets from the state —the Inland Revenue also hands over to them £17·30 each week in tax rebate on Dave's housing loan even though he's unemployed. But Dave isn't the legal owner of his house. Bradford Investments holds on to the title deed until they've received the final payment in ten years' time. Yet Dave, like all the others who've bought on rental purchase from Bradford Investments, had to sign a document saying he's responsible for all repairs."

The script continues to give a number of examples, which are paralleled by cases in my constituency and other parts of Lancashire. In many cases Bradford Investments operates a guarantee so that if a person fails to meet his obligations the guarantor pays £1,000 — even if the purchaser owes less in arrears. The firm makes its justification for that sound very convincing in its documents.

Recently Bradford Investments took one of my constituents to the High Court in Leeds, claiming that he had broken an injunction restraining him from claiming

[Mr. Peter Pike]

that the company was dishonest. For obvious reasons I cannot get involved in that legal wrangle, although it provides one example of how Bradford Investments immediately resorts to legal action if it is criticised. However, I wish to refer to the editorial opinion in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* of 15 October 1987—the evening after the case was heard. Having dealt with Mr. Rickwood's case, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* states:

> "following the High Court hearing, Bradford Investments issued a statement which appears to attempt to shift some of its complaint against Mr. Rickwood, and some of the restraint imposed upon him, on to this newspaper.
>
> For, in a press release which says that the company was not prepared to submit to the sort of tactics Mr. Rickwood employed in his demand for compensation, the firm deplores an article which appeared in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* last month, reporting Bradford Investments being granted an interim injunction to stop this man attacking them."

The *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* editorial says that the paper always tried to deal with the matter in an objective manner.

The editorial continues:

> "Indeed, most of the communications from Bradford Investments to ourselves have been in the style of solicitor's letters.
>
> What Bradford Investments has to fear from public discussion of its methods in the controversial field of rental-purchase is something about which a reasonable, fair-minded person might wonder."

The paper concludes by saying that it will not be stopped.

> "the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* will, as always, continue to monitor and report matters of public interest and will not be scared out of that duty."

There are many other examples and factors. Today I received a letter from the Lancashire and Cumbria area branch of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. The branch made many points in a briefing note which was sent to its officers. I shall let the Minister have a copy, because it deals with the points that I have made, and additional ones. I urge the Minister to look at that document and the agreement. I hope that pressure will be applied under the housing legislation which is to be soon considered by Parliament to restrict such practices. If it is found that controls cannot be imposed, those practices should be outlawed.

2.45 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I should like to speak briefly in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and to underline the fact that the activities of companies pushing rental purchase are having a detrimental impact elsewhere, not least within my constituency of Leeds, West and the Leeds district as a whole.

Leeds is well known throughout Britain for its classic back-to-back housing. Although many of the 72,000 back-to-back houses standing at the turn of the century have been demolished, there are still inner-city areas of substantial back-to-back and on-to-the-street terrace housing left standing. There are numerous signs of available rental purchase properties especially in the Armley and Burley area in my constituency. Bradford Investments signs are popping up on practically every street. I should like the Minister to ask her Department's officials to visit and inspect what is on offer behind those signs.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley said, the company is offering a scheme aimed at people on the lowest incomes, but they are schemes for which people can pay dearly. They ask for repayments, which are often tacked on to the housing benefit scheme, well above the cost of building society mortgages. There is no ownership until the purchaser pays the final instalment. Although the rental purchaser does not own the property, he is responsible for rates and repairs inside and outside the houses. Such houses in the Burley and Armley areas are often in need, to say the least, of full-scale, whole house improvements.

Rental purchasers get the worst of both worlds. They are responsible for repairs as though they own the property but they do not have the reality of ownership. In addition, it is clear that the increasing capital value of the house goes to the company until the purchaser can complete all the payments. If the purchaser fails to keep up with the payments, the company can apply for eviction. Rental purchasing offers limited security of tenure. This means that, in practice, a person could lose not only his home but all the money which he has paid under the agreement up to that point. He cannot sell the house to another person and he could end up homeless. Rental purchasers in Armley have come to me asking for help in finding them a home because they have had to endure unacceptable damp conditions. They have not been able to keep up with the costs of their home and have had to turn to the local authority for priority rehousing as homeless.

It may be as the advertisement for Bradford Investments which appears in the local Yorkshire evening newspaper says—

> "Thousands of people, employed and unemployed, have found rental purchase the answer",

but others feel not only that they have been cheated but that often they have been trapped into paying well over the odds for substandard housing. I respectfully urge the Minister to look into this matter and to bring before Parliament proposals that will safeguard our constituents.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) for raising this subject and for the contribution of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). As I am sure they know, it is one in which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and I take a keen interest. We have expressed our concern that if abuses are taking place and hardship is being caused to innocent people, these abuses must be stopped.

It might be helpful if I explain the differences between buying a house on a conventional mortgage and buying a house by rental purchase. With a mortgage agreement, a purchaser is normally required to pay the vendor the whole of the purchase price. A loan is advanced to the purchaser on certain terms, and the purchaser repays that loan under one of several different methods. As soon as he has purchased the property, he has a legal interest in the land, and ownership of the house is vested in him when the payment to the vendor has been made. If he should default on his payments and the house is repossessed by the bank or building society that made the loan, he will get back a proportion of the equity in the house.

With a rental purchase agreement, the purchaser pays in instalments. Rental purchase is defined in the Housing Act 1980 as

> "an agreement for the purchase of a dwelling house under which the whole or part of the purchase price is to be paid in

three or more instalments, and the completion of the purchase is deferred until the whole or a specified part of the purchase price has been paid".

It is not unlike hire purchase. The purchaser has no legal interest in the property until he has paid the final instalment, just as he would not own a consumer durable until he had paid the final instalment under a hire purchase agreement.

Because the rental purchaser is engaged in the purchase of his property, rental purchase falls outside the scope of the Rent Acts, but he is eligible for housing benefit on the rental purchase payments.

As the hon. Member knows, there are precedents for people buying their houses by a mixture of part renting and part buying. Before the introduction of right to buy in the Housing Act 1980, local authorities operated schemes whereby they were able to agree to the price or premium for a council house to be paid by instalments under the provisions of section 104 of the Housing Act 1957. These schemes became obsolescent with the introduction of right to buy and were abolished under the Housing Act 1980. And, of course, we have well-established shared ownership schemes with a slightly different focus. Under these, a person may buy part of a property and rent the rest of it. The shared owner takes on a share of the equity right from the beginning of his agreement, and can buy more as time goes on. We have, of course, recently expanded the scope of shared ownership schemes under the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Rental purchase is, however, rather different from shared ownership. The hon. Member has described schemes under which the legal interest is not transferred to the rental purchaser until he has paid the last rental purchase instalment. It is alleged that under the scheme currently operating in certain parts of England, particularly in the north-west and in the hon. Member's constituency, rental purchasers are taking out agreements which involve loans at very high interest rates — far higher than those on a conventional mortgage; that the payments are consequently high; and that many rental purchasers default on their payments and are subsequently made homeless. I understand that the purchaser takes on full repairing responsibilities in most cases, which would be normal if buying a property outright or on long leasehold, but is not eligible for improvement grants to do any of the work that may be necessary.

It is alleged that the houses which are the subject of the agreement are selling at above market prices, and that such renovation as has been done to them is purely superficial; and that because the purchaser does not have Rent Act protection, nor the statutory protection afforded to mortgagors, the vendor may easily evict him if he defaults on his payments. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has been asked by Shelter to carry out an investigation into the operation of these schemes in the north-west.

Two local authorities have written to my hon. Friend and his predecessor about the alleged deficiencies of the schemes currently operating, and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has held a conference on the subject and promised to send us information about the companies operating in their members' districts. So far my Department has information only about one company—Bradford Investments — which the hon. Member mentioned. We have no evidence that the company is operating illegally, and we have had correspondence with only one current rental purchaser who is dissatisfied with the rental purchase system. We do not know how many people are buying their properties by rental purchase, how many may have defaulted on their payments or had their houses repossessed. We may know more when we have the results of the AMA survey.

I must stress that rental purchasers are not entirely without protection. The hon. Member will know that under the Housing Act 1980 we extended protection from eviction to rental purchasers against whom proceedings for possession are brought through the courts. The court has power to stay or suspend execution of an order for possession for such periods as it thinks fit. So if vendors are trying to repossess their properties, they do not have an automatic right of repossession, and the court has power to impose conditions on the payment of subsequent rental purchase instalments.

I am not of course saying that no hardship is caused by existing schemes, nor am I condoning the terms of particular agreements. I am simply saying that my Department does not have hard evidence about the numbers of people involved as vendors or purchasers or about the type of abuse. It is not, of course, illegal to charge very high rates of interest, though one may deplore it, nor is rental purchase itself illegal. I would certainly advise people entering into any agreement, whether to rent or to buy a property, particularly people contemplating a rental purchase agreement, to look at that agreement very carefully and to get legal advice on it before signing. This cannot be said too often or too strongly.

A rental purchaser has less protection than somebody renting under the Rent Act, or somebody buying property under a conventional mortgage, and, depending on the terms of the agreement, he will probably have wide repairing obligations as well, which he will need to take into account in considering his potential outgoings on the property. I hope that there will be some publicity arising from this debate and that it will encourage potential rental purchasers to consider whether they would be better off in traditional renting or whether they might buy on a conventional mortgage.

I am of course aware that some local authorities are concerned that the rent payments made under rental purchase schemes are very high in comparison with conventional rents, and I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to look into the question of eligibility for housing benefit for those payments. I cannot anticipate the results of my right hon. Friend's inquiries into the operation of the present system, but I can say that he will be concerned to ensure that there is consistency across the whole field of benefit payments and that payment is directed on a fair basis to those who need it. I believe that it will be some weeks before he is able to announce the results of his inquiries.

The hon. Member and some others who have written to the Department have asked that we legislate to outlaw rental purchase. I believe that the sort of rental purchase scheme about which we have heard has sprung up partly as a means of getting round the fair rent provisions of the Rent Acts. We know that there are many devices for evading the Rent Acts—for example, sham licences and holiday agreements which last longer than any holiday could. Landlords resort to these devices in order to obtain a market rent for their properties.

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

The Housing Bill which we intend to introduce later this Session will enable landlords to obtain market rents on assured tenancies, which will give the tenant security and enable the landlord to obtain a reasonable return on his asset. This should encourage more privately rented property on to the market. It should offer a better choice of accommodation to those people whose income and circumstances are presently driving them to take up rental purchase agreements, in the face of shortages of accommodation to rent. It will reduce the incentive to vendors to sell on rental purchase when they can obtain good returns from renting their property.

We do not at present propose to legislate against rental purchase agreements because we do not have evidence that nationally they are causing problems, though in some areas, such as the hon. Member's constituency, they may well be. One does not pass major legislation to deal with a phenomenon about which there is so little information.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising this subject. I hope that he will accept my assurances that I share his concern for those very unfortunate people who have found that rental purchase is not the best means to set about buying a house, and have got into difficulties. I cannot emphasise too strongly that anybody contemplating it should know exactly what he is letting himself in for and should get legal advice before signing any agreement. I believe that the changes in the forthcoming Housing Bill will make rental purchase less attractive both for vendors and for prospective rental purchasers. My Department will study the information we are expecting from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, and any other information that we are sent about the scheme, and my hon. Friend and I will certainly keep the position under review.

I have recently written to the hon. Gentleman and informed him that I hope to be visiting his constituency shortly. I shall be willing to hear at first hand about problems caused by rental purchase. I hope that he will keep in touch with me so that we are fully aware in the Department of the problems experienced by his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 2 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

1. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if there are any plans for further capital investment in the electricity supply industry.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): The electricity supply industry is entering a period of intensive growth and re-equipment and this year intends to spend some £1,300 million on capital investment. In 1988-89 capital investment in the industry will increase and will continue to rise thereafter.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that power workers have done and are doing a tremendous job restoring electricity supplies following the hurricane last month? However, does that not demonstrate once again the vulnerability of our overhead power lines and their detrimental effect on the environment? Will my right hon. Friend take that into account when drawing up investment aims in the privatisation programme to include transmission as well as the generation of electricity?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about the electricity supply workers. I am sure that the whole House would wish to join me in congratulating those workers on effectively rebuilding the rural distribution system, which took nearly 20 years to develop and which was rebuilt in only two weeks.

My hon. Friend may be interested to know that this year and next we shall spend more on the transmission system than on generation. We recognise the need to modernise the system. I am sorry that I cannot promise that we will put all the cables underground. The cost is massive. It would amount to roughly 10 times the cost of overhead power lines. I cannot see any prosepect of being able to afford to make that investment in any time span that my hon. Friend could imagine.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: How would the Secretary of State respond to the remarks made by Mr. John Banham, the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, who said that privatisation would lead to a £1·2 billion hike in industrial electricity prices and lack of competitiveness in British industry? How would the right hon. Gentleman respond to those concerns?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not share those concerns. The truth is that the British electricity industry provides power to British industry at a very competitive price. British industry needs a secure supply, and that means a massive investment programme between now and the year 2000. That programme must be paid for. We are concentrating on having a modern electricity supply industry in the years ahead. That must be a great boon for British industry.

Mr. Rost: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, pending privatisation, major new orders for power stations by the Central Electricity Generating Board should be allowed to go ahead only if they can be justified on real commercial rates of return or by raising money at commercial rates? Otherwise, privatisation may be undermined and private producers who have to raise money at commercial rates of return will be jeopardised.

Mr. Parkinson: I agree that the industry has to raise its money in the market and make investments on a sound commercial basis. That is what it will do. However, we have another problem. We must ensure that the investment programme goes ahead without a hiatus. The present generation, especially of nuclear power stations, is becoming old and a substantial number of coal-fired stations need replacing. We are now entering a phase of massive investment and re-equipment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: What rate of return is the CEGB expected to make on capital investment in nuclear generating capacity? How will that compare with the rate of return that a private, prudent investor might be expected to make on capital investment?

Mr. Parkinson: The two things should be the same. The CEGB and the private investor should get a reasonable rate of return on their investment, and they cannot expect to receive a subsidised rate of return. We are having to raise money in the market, and we have to ensure that it is well invested and that the investor, be he public or private, receives a sensible return.

Coal-fired Power Stations

2. **Sir Trevor Skeet** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take into account the environmental damage caused by gaseous emissions from coal-fired power stations when he considers the relative merits of coal and nuclear electricity generation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I take account of the environmental implications of all forms of electricity generation when considering their merits.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the Minister give his estimate of the cost of the removal of sulphur dioxide, which is causing so much damage and of nitrogen oxide, which is also causing much damage? What is the cost of the abatement of carbon dioxide which is changing our weather and also of metallic substances, which are going into space? Would it not be a good idea to build more nuclear power stations, which have very much less pollution in them? Would that not solve some of our problems?

Mr. Spicer: Coal-fired power stations do emit quantities of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. That is why the Drax A and B and Fiddler's Ferry power stations are to be retrofitted with desulphurisation plants at a cost of £200 million each and why all future coal-fired stations are to be fitted with desulphurisation plants. It is also why low nitrogen oxide burners are to be installed at the 12 largest coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Barron: I am sure that we are all pleased that such a programme is going ahead. However, does the Minister not think it strange that the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) should ask such a question today when only last year he was arguing for a nuclear-free zone in Bedfordshire in respect of waste from nulear generation?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has good reasons for asking all those questions.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that opencast coal is very much cleaner than deep-mined coal, and that one way in which we could solve the problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) alluded would be by expanding production of opencast coal? Is he further aware that the small private sector of opencast producers is desirous of increasing its production but is being prevented from doing so by British Coal, which is taking such a long time to decide on licence applications?

Mr. Spicer: On my hon. Friend's second point, I shall be discussing these matters with the chairman of British Coal this week, and I shall raise that point with him. It is true that much opencast coal has a lower sulphur content than some of the deep-mined coal. It is therefore true to say that more opencast coal would be to the benefit of deep-mined coal.

Mr. Eadie: Will the Minister confirm that all coal is different and that it does not necessarily follow that opencast coal in one part of an area will have the same sulphur content as that in another part of the area? Will he also confirm the CEGB's claim that sulphur emission has declined by 20 per cent. since 1980 and by 40 per cent. since 1970? Will he also confirm that if flue gas desulphurisation is introduced that could be responsible for a 90 per cent. reduction in sulphur emission?

Mr. Spicer: I can confirm the hon. Gentleman's last point. As for his first point, I think that the figure of 40 per cent. applies to sulphur from all industries. I do not think that it is true of coal plants. However, it is certainly true that desulphurisation plants will markedly reduce the amount of sulphur content. It is also right to say that there is a variety of sulphur content in opencast coal, but in this country it has, on average, a lower sulphur content than deep-mined coal.

British Coal

3. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of British Coal at regular intervals to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Hardy: When the last meeting took place, was the Secretary of State advised of the enormous concern within the British mining industry that, despite the enormous increase in productivity, the need to maintain security of energy supply and the importance of the home industry as a base for our mining equipment and engineering industries, there is a great eagerness among his colleagues to see British coal replaced by imports that may be dumped to secure our currency or which may be mined by people who work at unnecessarily severe risk? Is the right hon. Gentleman among the short-sighted and greedy of his colleagues, or does he take the wiser view that prevails among Opposition Members?

Mr. Parkinson: The Government committed themselves in their manifesto to maintaining and working towards a secure coal industry. We believe that Britain's coal reserves are a massive national asset and that, properly developed, the industry has a big future. That is why we have supported a substantial investment programme amounting to £2 million a day. The chairman and I meet to discuss the future of the coal industry because we both want to ensure that it has a good future.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend met the chairman of British Coal, did they discuss the mineworkers' pension scheme, which pays a meagre pension to its members from its £5 billion fund? The independent Nottinghamshire-administered pension scheme run by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers has just increased its payout by no less than 30 per cent.

Mr. Parkinson: I read the report to which my hon. Friend refers, and I hope that Opposition Members will draw their own conclusions. However, I did not discuss it with the chairman of British Coal when I last met him.

Mr. Eadie: When the Secretary of State has the opportunity, will he discuss with the chairman of British Coal the present bad state of industrial relations in the industry? I ask him to consider, first, that the board was found to be deceiving the public by saying that the code of conduct was based on the ACAS formula when it was not. Secondly, does the Secretary of State consider that it is bad industrial relations for the board to say that the industrial action which resulted was not very effective and then to say that NUM members cannot have a 4·8 per cent. pay increase because of that industrial action? Is that not ridiculous?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sorry to have to say that I consider the overtime ban the most ridiculous aspect of British Coal's present industrial relations. It is unnecessary, and it is damaging to the interests both of the miners and of the industry. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will use his influence to bring this wasteful dispute to an end.

As for the code of conduct, British Coal made it very clear that it was prepared to discuss the details. It was the NUM which, for a long time, refused to hold a meeting to discuss it.

The only question now outstanding is whether pit umpires or industrial tribunals are the best way of solving disputes. It may interest the hon. Gentleman to know that over and over again miners have shown that they prefer industrial tribunals. The UDM refuses to use the pit umpire rule because there is no chance of appeal, and the courts cannot be used for that purpose. I urge the hon. Gentleman to ask his NUM colleagues to think again about their mindless and damaging action.

Electricity Industry

4. **Mr. Boswell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he will take to stimulate competition in the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: The introduction of competition is one of my principal objectives, and we are working on proposals to that end.

Mr. Boswell: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. However, does he agree that some measure of pluralism in the retail distribution system, an opening of the ownership of the grid and a measure of competition in generation are the best ways to ensure continuing competition, downward pressure on prices and innovation for the consumer?

Mr. Parkinson: I am not sure that I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. However, I do agree that a monolithic electricity supply industry without competition would be a handicap to the country. There are difficulties about competition in distribution. However, I believe that there is plenty of scope for competition in generation, and we are working on proposals that will produce more competition.

Mrs. Clwyd: If the Government foolishly persist with privatising the electricity industry, will the Secretary of State confirm that the control and financing of our nuclear power stations will remain with the state?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot give the hon. Lady that assurance, but in our manifesto we said that, in addition to coming forward with proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, we would maintain a nuclear programme. I believe that it is vital to do so. Fitting those two commitments together is one of the problems on which we are working and with which we are achieving success.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that due to the fact that generation is the major part of the cost of electricity, there is an increasing demand on this side of the House, and I believe in the country as a whole, for competition to be made available, not only on distribution, but on generation?

Mr. Parkinson: There is nothing new about this as a principle. The 1983 Act envisaged giving private generators access to the grid. At the moment seven proposals are being considered, and the CEGB tells me that it welcomes them. Therefore, what my hon. Friend says is right and possible, and we shall bring it about.

Mr. Prescott: As the Secretary of State has confirmed that he intends to privatise the electricity supply industry, but that he still does not know how that will be done, will he inform the House whether, through the intensive discussions that he is having with Lord Marshall, he agrees with Lord Marshall's view, in the leaked confidential document that was given to his board, that to privatise the electricity industry would, in breaking up the integrated power system, result in the loss of the benefit of economy of scale, seriously prejudice the security of supply and increase prices? Will the Secretary of State therefore confirm that prices are likely to be increased in April, in line with his policy?

Mr. Parkinson: I begin by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities and wishing him well in them.

I have had discussions with Lord Marshall and also with the trade unions and many other people. Those discussions are continuing. I am sorry to have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. Our plans are evolving nicely and we are on schedule. We shall be coming to the House with clear proposals for a restructured industry. I do not accept that the consequences will be as outlined by the hon. Gentleman.

Whether the industry stays in the public sector or goes into the private sector, the rate of return of the industry has to be improved if the investment programme is to be funded. That fact would be true whether the industry were in the public or the private sector.

Coal Mining Industry

5. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in labour productivity in the coal mining industry compared with 1983-84.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the week ending 10 October, average deep-mined revenue output per man shift was 3·62 tonnes—and impressive increase of some 50 per cent. on the average of 2·43 tonnes for 1983-84.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that this substantial improvement in productivity is a great tribute to the miners and the management of British Coal? Does he also accept that there is much potential for further improvement in the next couple of years?

Mr. Spicer: My answer is yes to both parts of my hon. Friend's question. There has been a substantial improvement. Taking the first six months of 1987-88 and comparing them with the first six months of 1986-87, productivity has increased by 15 per cent. However, this has to be viewed in the context of what is taking place in other countries. For instance, productivity in the United States and Australia is four times that of this country.

Mr. Haynes: Does the Minister realise that productivity could be increased even further? Because of the massive pit closure programme, all the skilled men are leaving the industry. I know what I am talking about; I had 35 years underground. Experienced men are being laid off through redundancy. Why does the Minister not have a look at that side of the question?

Mr. Spicer: Certainly there have been considerable redundancies, and I fear that there will be more. However, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, who is extremely knowledgeable about these matters, that a large part of the increase in productivity in the British coal mining industry has been due particularly to the massive investment in heavy duty equipment, which at the moment is going on at the rate of £2 million every working day.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Is my hon. Friend confident that the impressive improvements to which he referred in his answer can be maintained to the point where British Coal will be able to compete in the highly competitive environment of a privatised electricity generation industry?

Mr. Spicer: I am confident that if British Coal maintains its present rate of increased efficiency it will be able to compete effectively in the context mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Oil Reserves

7. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of United Kingdom oil reserves; and how this figure compares with one and five years ago.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): The latest estimates of remaining recoverable oil reserves in discoveries made to date on the United

Kingdom continental shelf are between 710 million and 2,050 million tonnes; this compares with an estimate of between 750 million and 1,880 million tonnes one year ago, and an estimate of between 1,050 million and 2,300 million tonnes five years ago.

Mr. Chapman: In the light of those figures, does my hon. Friend agree that the encouragement of oil exploration must remain the topmost priority? Is he satisfied with the number of applications coming forward? Perhaps he can tell the House how many he has received and how many he has approved in, for example, the past year.

Mr. Morrison: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The Government's policy is to encourage, in so far as it is possible, further oil exploration. I am never satisfied, but the figures for this year for development plans are that we have approved 10 new oilfield developments, and a further 11 are under consideration.

Mr. Kennedy: What is the implication of those figures for onshore fabrication yards such as Highland Fabricators in Nigg? We were pleased that the Minister took the trouble to visit that yard during the parliamentary recess. That yard, a major employer in my constituency and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), is currently experiencing a rundown of employment because of the changing nature of the orders in the North sea and the contracting nature of the prospects for tendering at present.

Mr. Morrison: I learnt a great deal from my visit to the fabrication yards. I appreciate now, if I did not before, the difficulties to which they have been subjected, which have come about in principle because of the drastic cut in the price of oil. We are doing everything we can to encourage orders to go to the yards, through the Offshore Supplies Office. We will continue to do that, and, as I said in my previous answer, the fact that development plans are coming forward and have been approved and that further development plans are being considered are moves in the right direction.

Mr. Hannam: Will my hon. Friend congratulate that private sector industry on the huge success of its developments in making this country self-sufficient in oil for so many years? Will he press the Treasury to ensure that the tax regime is developed in a way that will encourage continuing exploitation of the reserves in the North sea, especially the secondary depletion of existing oilfields?

Mr. Morrison: I agree with my hon. Friend. What has been achieved by the private sector in the past 25 years in the development of the United Kingdom continental shelf is perhaps beyond our wildest hopes and aspirations 25 years ago. Everybody involved is to be applauded. My hon. Friend will appreciate that the tax regime is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but, in so far as I can and where it is necessary, I assure my hon. Friend that I act as a conduit of information to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who will take my hon. Friend's points into account when he forms his Budget.

Mr. Rowlands: Despite the talk of a possible new boom in the North sea, is the Minister aware of the plight of some British-owned supply companies? Is he aware that the share that the British-owned companies have is far less than the much-vaunted and much-quoted figure of 80 per cent. of orders? The report of the Select Committee states that the figure is less than a half. What specific measures does the Minister have to bring forward on the development of contracts for British-owned supply companies in the North sea?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the work done by the Offshore Supply Office, well before my time, has increased the United Kingdom content of all the services, all the fabrication, and so on, that go into the North sea. That has been done on a consistent and continuing basis, and it is something that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will continue to pursue vigorously. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, it is difficult to discriminate between United Kingdom-owned and United Kingdom-based companies. I hope he will agree that the most important thing is to ensure that employment should arise because the United Kingdom-based companies get the orders.

Severn Barrage

8. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on support for the concept of a Severn tidal barrage and for tidal power as a means of electricity generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tidal power will be encouraged provided it remains economically viable and environmentally acceptable. As a result of present studies, some of which I announced in September, I hope that substantive decisions about the Severn will be taken around the end of next year.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for that most helpful answer, following his most constructive comments in the debate last Friday. Will he bear in mind that people in Britain are very much in favour of renewable energy sourses such as tidal power? They regard the Severn tidal barrage as a flagship for the future of renewables and they will look to the Government for considerable help for that project.

Mr. Spicer: As to help, we are providing one third of the current expenditure of £4·2 million, and that is being spent on the studies that are being carried out on the Severn. As to those studies, we hope to reach a point where decisions can start to be made by the end of next year.

Mrs. Mahon: Tidal power certainly should be an option, since I have recently discovered that trains carrying nuclear waste have passed within 10 yards of houses in my constituency. Will the Minister say what extra safety precautions have been taken to avoid a catastrophe in the event of an accident?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that question goes a little wide of the subject. It is ingenious, but a bit wide.

Mr. Stern: In the light of my hon. Friend's reply, may I ask whether he is satisfied that all the questions that are being and will be asked about the potential environmental and other effects of the barrage will be answered by the end of next year, which is the time that he has set himself to make a decision?

Mr. Spicer: I know that my hon. Friend is knowledgeable on this subject, particularly on the point of silting. I gather that he is carrying out some studies and we look forward very much to hearing their results. We shall take into account anything that my hon. Friend has to say.

Electricity Industry

9. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the implications of the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry for British Coal contracts with that industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The taxpayer is funding a very substantial and continuing investment programme for the modernisation and development of British Coal. If properly utilised, that investment, which is currently £2 million per day, should result in British Coal being able to meet the demands of a privatised electricity supply industry efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Barron: Will the Secretary of State recognise that the current joint understanding between British Coal and the CEGB has meant that about 60 million tonnes of coal are sold to the CEGB for a price that is cheaper than it costs to produce? Last year, in response to the massive shortfall in world oil prices, British Coal gave £300 million to the CEGB and gave further reductions in the remaining two years of the current contract. With regard to any break-up as a result of competitive generation, will the Secretary of State ensure that British Coal's case is heard, and heard well, so that it can win all the contracts to carry on its supply to the CEGB and to protect the mining communities of Britain?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot bind the privatised industry to buy its coal from any particular supplier. If British Coal is a reliable, efficient and competitive supplier, I do not see any reason why industries should look elsewhere for their coal. The key is for British Coal to use its investment well, for management and unions to stop wasting time on useless working to rule and overtime bans and to get down to the business of developing modern working methods to use the modern machinery that is available. In that way, British Coal will have a future, but only in that way.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the price of coal has a major impact on the price of electricity? Does he agree that if the electricity industry were to buy coal at world prices, instead of acting as a semi-captive customer of British Coal, the price of electricity for everyone in this country would fall significantly?

Mr. Parkinson: It is clear that the CEGB pays a higher price for its coal than the most marginal world price, but that case can be overstated. If British Coal were to stop supplying, and if the CEGB were to go into the market for 70 million tonnes, the price would change. British Coal must realise that its future is dependent, not on any agreement with the electricity supply industry, but on its performance. If British Coal performs as I believe it can, it has a good future.

Mr. Rogers: Following the right hon. Gentleman's own logic, if he suggests that the coal industry should be shut down, will he urge his Cabinet colleagues to shut down every inefficient farm which results in consumers, including coal miners, having to buy food at well over the right prices? That might stop the hypocritical cant from Conservative Members.

Mr. Parkinson: May I make it clear that I do not want to close down the coal or agriculture industries. Both have a very bright future, but the future of the coal industry —to repeat myself—depends on its performance and not on any understandings between the CEGB and British Coal.

10. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average cost of electricity generated in the United Kingdom compared with the average cost in France.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The average cost of electricity generated in the United Kingdom in 1986-87 was 2·8p per unit sold. It is not possible to quote a directly comparable figure for France because of different accounting procedures.

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for his partial answer, but does he not agree that it is probable that the costs in France are lower because of the larger content of nuclear generation? What success has the British industry had in reducing its costs and improving its efficiency over the past few years?

Mr. Morrison: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's complimentary remarks about my partial answer. He referred to the average costs of electricity generated. It is genuinely not possible, due to the different accounting procedures, to give a directly comparable figure. I can give my hon. Friend the standard tariff for domestic consumers. The cost in France is about 7·94p per unit, and in England and Wales about 6·3p per unit, which is cheaper. But, to qualify that remark, the French figure includes local taxes and VAT. As for productivity increases, I am delighted to say that in England and Wales the operating costs per unit have fallen some 10 per cent. since 1983-84. That is a major achievement, on which the industry needs to be congratulated.

Miss Mowlam: Does the Minister accept that the average cost of electricity generated in the United Kingdom in the future will be affected by the proposed expansions at Hinkley Point? In view of that, will he tell us whether the public inquiry at Hinkley Point will take place before, or after, privatisation?

Mr. Morrison: I certainly would not accept the premise of the hon. Lady's question. As we work towards privatisation I would expect to see further productivity gains, as has happened in the past, and therefore generating costs being reduced rather than increased.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Minister aware that Mr. Baker, the managing director of the CEGB, said in a speech at the CBI conference yesterday that the average price for the publicly owned electricity supply industry in France and Britain was 4·7p per kilowatt hour compared to the average price for the privately owned electricity supply industry in Japan and the United States of 9·6p per kilowatt hour. As this represents a doubling in the price of electricity and as the Secretary of State says that we must expect an increase in prices to deal with the rate of return under privatisation, is that the cost that consumers will pay for the privatisation of electricity?

Mr. Morrison: No, Sir.

Asfordby Pit

11. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum coal production planned for the Asfordby pit.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The performance of individual pits is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I shall ask the chairman of BCC to write to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the Asfordby pit has been held out by the Government as providing the hope of jobs for the many Leicestershire coal miners who have been thrown out of work as their pits have been closed? Is he aware that yesterday, without informing either unions or management, British Coal saw fit to transfer the Asfordby pit from Leicester to Nottinghamshire? Is he aware that this is a political stunt —probably on behalf of the Tory party—and that jobs in Leicestershire are now at risk? Will he at least give us some hope that further pits are to open in the Vale of Belvoir?

Mr. Spicer: The area in which the British Coal decides to run its pits is a matter for that body. I see no logic in the hon. and learned Gentleman's assertion that there is any threat to jobs simply because the Coal Board has moved the pit from one area to another.

Electricity Industry

12. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the percentage contributions to the national grid of the various methods of electricity generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In 1986-87 conventional steam generation contributed just under 80 per cent. of the electricity supplied to the national grid in Great Britain. Nuclear power contributed just under 19 per cent. and the remainder was supplied by natural gas, gas turbines and hydro-electric generation.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. However, will he assure the House that it will continue to be the Government's policy for the nation to rely on multiple supplies of energy from different sources, so that no industry can ever be put to the hazard by political troublemakers at the expense of us all?

Mr. Spicer: The Government certainly intend that there should be a versatility and a variety of energy supplies in this country. We are very fortunate, because not only do we have fossil fuels, but we are one of the leading countries in the world in nuclear energy.

THE ARTS

Haymarket and Phoenix Theatres, Leicester

34. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for the Arts when he next proposes to make an official visit to the Haymarket and Phoenix theatres in Leicester.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I would like to visit Leicester again before too long.

Mr. Janner: I hope that the Minister will come back to Leicester so that he has the opportunity to pay tribute to the excellence of Leicester city council in promoting the arts, and to the work of the Haymarket and Phoenix theatres, which is in jeopardy because of the cuts in the value of the Arts Council grant last year and uncertainty in the future. Will the Minister offer some hope of continuity and permanence in the work of those great Midlands theatres?

Mr. Luce: I know very well the reputation of the Phoenix and Haymarket theatres. That is one reason why I look forward to coming to Leicester again.

The hon. and learned Gentleman referred to a cut in grant. He may like to know that there was, in fact, an increase in the Arts Council grant to the Haymarket theatre of 25 per cent. in two years. That does not imply a cut. The support for the theatre has increased in real terms, which shows that the Arts Council values the work of the theatre in Leicester.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend consider that it would be good for the theatre in Leicester and in other provincial centres if the Arts Council did more to promote the work of touring companies?

Mr. Tony Banks: Tory companies?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend asked about touring companies. He has pointed to something very important —the need for more touring to strengthen the arts in all parts of the country. I am glad that the Arts Council has now established an independent production company, for which it will provide one third of the investment required. The rest will come from the private sector. In return, the Arts Council will promote up to six new touring productions a year. That will certainly benefit the country.

Women Artists

35. **Mrs. Mahon** asked the Minister for the Arts how many exhibitions receiving financial support from the Arts Council were by women artists in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: In the five years up to and including 1986-87 the number of exhibitions at the Hayward and Serpentine galleries, and on tour, that included women artists was 25, 11, 11, 15 and 21.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Minister realise that since 1910 only nine women have had shows at the Tate gallery, as compared with more than 200 males? What does the Minister propose to do to address himself to this blatant discrimination?

Mr. Luce: The figures for exhibitions supported by the Arts Council—both on tour and in London—show that women artists have participated in more than 50 per cent. of all exhibitions. That suggests that we are moving in the right direction. However, it is for women to decide whether to participate.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the relevant question is not whether exhibitions are by women, but whether they are any good?

Mr. Luce: Of course, that is right. Any woman would take it as an insult if, in terms of artistry, she were picked on any ground other than merit.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister aware that there has never been an exhibition by a woman artist at the Hayward gallery? Is he further aware of the real frustration and anger — *[Interruption.]* That is an amazing display of male prejudice by Government Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister aware of the frustration and anger felt by women audiences and women artists all over the country at the discrimination and bias against their voice in the arts and media? If the right hon. Gentleman has any interest in the subject at all, will he fund the Arts Council to do some research, to consult women artists and perhaps make it a condition of Arts Council funding that it monitors and improves the role of women in its administration and its organisations?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman said that there had been no women's exhibitions at the Hayward gallery. In the past five years there have been 10 exhibitions in that gallery that have included women artists. That is clear evidence of women's participation and interest. To suggest that there is discrimination against women in the arts is patent nonsense. What matters is the creation of an environment in which we encourage women with talent to participate. That is a more fruitful way to proceed than that suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cormack: Is my hon. Friend aware of the anger and frustration among the male community at the number of times women feature prominently in works of art?

Mr. Luce: I shall proceed with caution on that question. However, when I launched an "Art in Government" initiative last week, four out of the final six in the competition to spread more pictures round Civil Service offices were women artists.

Opera Companies

37. **Mr. Fearn** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to increase Government aid to opera companies.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to decide how much of its moneys shall go to support opera companies. I plan to help arts bodies generally to increase their income from all sources.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that help for the opera would be forthcoming if the 9 per cent. cut since 1979 to the Arts Council grant were restored? The sum involved is £151 million.

Mr. Luce: It is important for the hon. Gentleman to get his facts straight. The real increase in resources to the Arts Council since 1979 is 15 per cent. Since the hon. Gentleman's question was about opera, I must tell him that 23 per cent. of all resources for the Arts Council goes to opera, which is the most expensive form of art. Some outstanding opera companies in and outside London are helping to generate new opera audiences. The high cost of opera has to be borne in mind.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend tell the chairman of the Arts Council of the enormous support in the provinces for touring opera companies such as Opera 80 and Kent Opera, whose performances are widely appreciated in areas which cannot normally expect to see the major opera companies?

Mr. Luce: Yes. The chairman of the Arts Council is fully aware of that. The standards of excellence in the regional opera companies are extremely high. It is important for the future to generate new opera audiences.

Women

39. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will commission research into the position of women in the arts in Great Britain.

Mr. Luce: No, Sir. I do not consider it necessary. It is more valuable to spend time encouraging women to participate in the arts.

Mr. Fisher: I am sorry that the Minister's interest in research into the arts, which he demonstrated in his support for the Policy Studies Institute report, which we wait with impatience, does not extend to this important subject, which affects 52 per cent. of audiences. Indeed, women make up more than half the audiences of the performing arts. Does the Minister not understand that the problem is deep rooted? If his mind is not entirely closed, he should welcome research.

Mr. Luce: There are some non-Government bodies undertaking research in that area. I have already said that it is more productive for me, to spend time not carrying out or launching research, but encouraging, more women to participate in the arts, if they so wish. That is a more useful way of going forward. That is why I have written to every sponsoring body of the arts — that is, bodies that use taxpayers' money—asking them to ensure not only that they are pursuing equality of opportunity policies, but that, when considering nominees for their boards, there is always a woman on the short list.

Mr. Leigh: Is it not a grotesque and ludicrous excrescence on the face of artistic freedom to suggest that a person's sex is of the slightest interest in the assessment of merit in the artistic world? Have we not today been treated to a farrago of feminism gone mad from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher)?

Mr. Luce: Many women would take it as an insult if they were selected on any basis other than equality of opportunity and merit. If they qualify for the job, based on their qualities and talents, that is fine, but only on that basis.

CIVIL SERVICE

Public Appointments (Women)

71. **Mr. Butler** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what progress he has made in encouraging women to apply to the public appointments unit.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The public appointments unit has co-operated fully with the women into public life campaign and the number of women's names coming forward from this and other sources is showing an encouraging increase.

Mr. Butler: I assure my right hon. Friend that I am not part of the farrago of feminism and that my interest is spontaneous. However, can he say whether the number of women on the public appointments unit list has risen?

Mr. Luce: A year ago the number of women on the list was 18 per cent.; today it has risen to 27 per cent. I regard it as an encouraging sign that more and more women are willing to have their names on the list.

Ms. Armstrong: May we offer the Minister our deepest sympathy for having arrayed behind him people who have no appreciation of the important contribution that women do, and can, make to our society, especially in areas where they can contribute to the ideas and thinking of the public service? Is he aware that we wish to support him in ensuring that women make a full contribution? Is he further aware that 20 per cent. is not a full contribution? If he were serious about appointing people on merit, the figure for women would be 52 per cent.

Mr. Luce: I wish to make two points to the hon. Lady. First, Parliament could set a slightly better lead in the number of women Members. Secondly, if organisations were to follow my example they might be better off, because in my Office my permanent secretary, my principal private secretary, my assistant private secretary, my special adviser and my press secretary are all women.

Mr. Gow: If my right hon. Friend looks to his left at the second Bench above the Gangway, will he not see five hon. Ladies who are Members of this House? Is it not an act of grievous discrimination against men that that Bench should have become the prerogative of hon. Ladies?

Mr. Luce: I take my hon. Friend's point. We must get away from the idea that there should be a statutory number of one sex or the other. People must be promoted on the basis of merit, and on no other basis.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Minister realise that there are many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of women whose skills and experience could be of great use on public boards? Will he try to find more and better ways of letting women know how they can apply? Many women from small women's groups in the community—for example, the Women's Institute—do not know the procedure for doing so. Will he ensure that he advertises this so that there is a better spread of women?

Mr. Luce: I welcome any opportunity to make sure that women are aware of the existence of the public appointments unit and aware that they can have their names considered for that unit and go forward for consideration on a short list. That is why, in the past year we have undertaken a major campaign to make that opening available to as many women as possible. I welcome the chance, on this occasion, to make that clear.

General Medical Council

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister for the Civil Service when the Lord President of the Council next expects to have an opportunity of reviewing the procedure rules of the Professional Conduct Committee of the General Medical Council (S.I. 1980, No. 858.)

Mr. Luce: These rules on the responsibilities of the General Medical Council are subject to the need for Privy Council approval of any amendments. I understand that the General Medical Council has a number of amendments under consideration but that they are unlikely to be made before next year.

Mr. Spearing: When that time comes, will the Minister and the Lord President bear in mind that schedule 4(5) to the Medical Act 1983 gives them powers to require further review? Is the Minister aware that, in a recent note to Members of this House, the chairman of the General Medical Council said that the council's principal task

> "always has been, that of informing and protecting the public".

Would it not be a good thing to review the rules in the light of those excellent precepts, especially paragraph 60 of the current statutory instrument relating to the availablility of transcripts of the hearings of the GMC? Is the Minister aware that, in a recent tragic case, the wife of a deceased gentleman was asked to pay £400 for the transcript of the case heard by that council? Does he think that that charge needs review, and is it in line with the precepts that I have just quoted?

Mr. Luce: On that specific case, I understand that the GMC is not considering a possible amendment. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it costs £400 to obtain a transcript if the party is found not guilty. In those circumstances, it is considered to be improper to use taxpayers' money to provide a transcript. Of course, if the party is found guilty, the transcript is provided free of charge. That is the position as it stands, and I believe that it is a reasonable position.

Mr. Forth: When considering these matters will my right hon. Friend give some thought to the increasing abuse that many medical practitioners make of their position when they are prepared to intimidate and frighten their patients for blatantly political purposes? Does he not believe that it is high time the GMC looked into that and perhaps amended its rules to protect patients against abuse by their practitioners for political ends?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend may be right, but it is not really a question for me, but for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Dr. Marek: I always thought that the Minister was a reasonable man, and I was extremely surprised to hear him say that he thought that £400 was a fair sum to charge for providing a transcript. It is not reasonable, and justice cannot be done if the average person seeks redress at the GMC. I know that the case has been judged, but there must be ways of providing transcripts at vastly cheaper rates than £400. Will the Minister look into this matter? I ask him to consider seriously that sum of £400, which is not a reasonable sum to charge.

Mr. Luce: I shall, of course, draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Lord President. However, the point I was making was related to the earlier question put by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). There is a policy whereby, if the party is found not guilty, it is not considered necessary to incur taxpayers' expenditure to provide a transcript. If the party is found guilty, obviously it is right to provide the funds for that transcript.

Executive Officer Recruitment

74. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if the review of executive officer recruitment has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the results.

Mr. Luce: The review is nearing completion and I expect to receive a report on it shortly.

Mrs. Bottomley: Can my right hon. Friend inform the House what aspects of executive officer recruitment the report will cover? Will he assure us that the intention of the report is that we have efficient and effective recruitment of executive officers — men and women — and that it is not planned to give special priority to women?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that last point. The main criticisms relate to the recruitment time scale and the suitability of some recruits for specific types of executive officer work. The report will address those matters as well as, for example, the need to have greater flexibility in recruitment arrangements and the likely cost implications of selection methods. As I have said, the report is due shortly.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give us details of the procedures that are to be adopted when executive officers and others in the security service make complaints to an ombudsman? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the reports that have appeared in the press about these changes in the security service should have been notified to the House and not made the subject of press leaks?

Mr. Luce: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Payroll Giving

75. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when staff in his Department will be able to make donations to charities by deduction from salary under the payroll giving scheme.

Mr. Luce: Arrangements have been made with the Charities Aid Foundation by the Treasury to allow civil servants paid through the Chessington computer centre, which includes my Department, to make tax-free donations to charities of their choice. The necessary application forms for this will be available from the foundation as soon as possible. The Government have now made the payroll giving scheme available to nearly 300,000 civil servants. I hope that other employers will follow this lead.

Mr. Yeo: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on implementing these arrangements for civil servants? Will he monitor the response that this scheme receives from the Civil Service so that in a year or so we may know how large the donations have been? Secondly, is it possible for hon. Members and the staff of this place to take advantage of the scheme?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend's last question, which is an important one, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend heard what he had to say. I can assure my hon. Friend that monitoring will take place. The important thing is that employees in Government services should have a chance to participate. If each one of them contributed the full amount, £35 million could be raised for charity. We now want to see as many other employers as possible following this lead.

Abdul Behvand and Parivash Moosavi (Asylum Application)

3.31 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the treatment of Abdul Behvand and Parivash Moosavi, and their application for asylum to enter this country".

The background to this case is that Mr. Behvand has been in active opposition to the Khomeini regime in Iran for many years. He worked in the oil industry and was active in promoting independent trade unionism. This marked him out for opposition by the Iranian Government. Indeed, three of his colleagues were executed for their opposition to that Government and to the war. Several times in the past few years Mr. Behvand has been arrested and beaten up while in custody in Iran. That caused him to go into hiding, from which he managed to escape from Iran briefly into India.

After arriving in India, Mr. Behvand and his wife were able to travel to Sweden this summer, where he applied for political asylum. After that application had been made, they were held in detention for one week. The application was refused and they were put on a plane, accompanied by two policemen, to travel back to Iran. They arrived at Heathrow airport in transit to take an Air Iran flight direct to Teheran. It was not until they arrived at the transit lounge at Heathrow that they were able to make contact with me and the representatives of various refugee organisations. That was a month ago.

It was then that they made an application to enter this country and for their case to be properly considered. They were taken to the Harmondsworth detention centre, given temporary admission and allowed to remain in a hotel in west London until this Saturday morning, when they were told to report to Heathrow airport for interview about their case.

When they arrived at Heathrow airport on Saturday — a day on which no court is sitting and when no lawyers or members of this place can be contacted — they were told that they would have to leave Britain that afternoon to return to Sweden, where their application for political asylum had already been rejected.

I made a number of requests throughout Saturday and had a long conversation with the chief immigration officer to ask that the case be deferred so that legal considerations could come into play and they could be allowed to remain in this country so that a proper asylum application could be made. At that point the immigration service bundled this family on a plane some two hours before it was due to take off. In an act of sheer desperation, Mrs. Moosavi slashed her wrist. The air crew of Scandinavian Airlines refused to fly the plane with the family on board. Accordingly they were taken from the plane and given temporary admission to this country until 3 November, which is tomorrow.

I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker, and finish my application. This tragic story——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had his time and has made his point.

Mr. Corbyn: I have not finished.

Mr. Speaker: There is a three-minute limit.

The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the treatment of Mr. Abdul Behvand and Mrs. Moosavi and their application for asylum".

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that the matter is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Sylvia Wright (Imprisonment)

3.34 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the case of Sylvia Wright,"

a constituent of mine who is 56 years of age and severely disabled, and who was thrown into gaol last week because she failed to pay a £110 fine, at a time when strenuous efforts were being made in the House by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister to underwrite the underwriters so that they would not go to gaol. This case is another classic example of there being one law for the rich and another for the poor.

A few years ago, Sylvia Wright suffered from breast cancer and had to have a breast removed. She receives the pension for the severely disabled of £37 a week. She has never appeared before a court previously and has never had a police record. She had no representation when she went to the Derbyshire magistrates court, with the result that those heartless people threw her into New Hall prison in Wakefield for 30 days. Since then I have been constantly in touch with the Home Office to try to secure her release — *[Interruption.]* It is high time that those Tory Members who are baying showed a little compassion for this woman who, when she is at home, spends most of her time looking after two handicapped boys. She does not have a husband to look after her. I want her back in her home at 48 Byron street so that she can carry out that job.

The whole case stinks. We have recently seen examples of those in high places being able to get away with transgressions of the law. When Mr. Keith Best, a former Conservative Member, was put in gaol for about 48 hours, every Tory Member was squealing to high heaven, with the result that they got the Lord Chief Justice to release him. It is high time that people such as Sylvia Wright received the same treatment. Many City spivs somehow manage to escape gaol. Mark Phillips received only a token fine; he did not go to gaol or lose his licence. There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.

I want a debate on this matter to replace this afternoon's debate on a Bill which attacks people in poverty. This issue concerns a more important subject. Sylvia Wright should be released from prison.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "Mrs. Sylvia Wright's imprisonment for non-possession of a television licence".

Again, I have listened with care and concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said about his constituent, but I regret that the matter is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

State Security

3.38 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the time of discussions in the House on the Massiter affair and security, I asked the Prime Minister whether she would consider setting up a post of ombudsman or counsellor so that those staff in MI5, MI6 and GCHQ who are in difficulties because of policies that they are asked to implement would be able to discuss their difficulties with a higher authority. The Prime Minister gave me a not unhelpful answer. However, I have been waiting about 18 months for the result of her considerations.

Therefore, it was surprising and, I considered, a discourtesy to the House that this weekend I read her decision in a newspaper that was briefed by the journalists at No. 10. That is not a proper way to ascertain the Government's decision on this most important issue.

I ask you, Sir, whether you have heard from the Leader of the House that, as, according to one newspaper and, I understand, copied in another, the Government have made their decision, and as the Minister for the Civil Service said this afternoon that it was a decision for the Prime Minister and was in her hands, we would have an oral statement today. No other form of statement will do on such an important issue.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On the same point——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me. The whole House knows that whether or not there are statements from the Government Front Bench is not a matter of order. The Leader of the House is present and I am sure that he will have listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said. There will undoubtedly be an opportunity to raise this matter on Tuesday and Thursday when the Prime Minister is at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I cannot deal with the matter.

Mr. Banks: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: It cannot be further to the point of order because the subject of the point of order is not a matter for me. It is not one of order.

Mr. Banks: It is about the order of the House, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said that I cannot do anything about the matter. I have already said that there will be opportunities later this week to raise it.

Mr. Banks: But, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Ordered,

That the draft Building Societies (Provision of Services) (No. 3) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Building Societies (Limited Credit Facilities) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill which I commend to the House today is a short one, but it achieves a good deal in a few clauses. Most important, it provides the background for yet another major extension of our training programme for young people who have left school at 16 or 17 and who have not found work. It also reinforces the contributory principle which has underlain the qualification for national insurance benefits since the time of Beveridge. The Bill provides a statutory basis for payments to those in greatest need during exceptionally cold weather, and, following certain legal judgments, it restores the original intentions of Parliament concerning attendance allowance and the calculation of earnings of claimants' dependants.

I begin with training. The House will be familiar with the background. Before 1979 there was no national programme for the training of young people. From nothing, we have built up, first through YOP and since 1983 through the YTS, to today's position where we offer a guaranteed place of quality training to every 16 and 17-year-old in the country. The scheme has so far helped well over 1 million youngsters. Two thirds of them have then gone straight into jobs, or into further education or training. The quality of the training is appreciated by the trainees who have shown in polls that by a huge majority they consider their YTS experience worthwhile. Over 100,000 employers are now participating, demonstrating their commitment to producing a work force of greater kills to meet the demands of today's job market.

The Government's view is that we cannot and should not abandon all interest in the education and training of our young people who have left school aged 16 but have not been able to get a job. Until their 16th birthday the Government are responsible for seeing that they get full-time education. Thereafter, they are free to decide what to do—to continue their formal education or to enter the employment market. For those who have been unable or unwilling to do either, society has, until this Government's youth training programme began, been content thereafter to let them sink or swim; no matter that the world now demands for most jobs higher skills than are readily attainable at school.

We could not accept that view. The Government's financial commitment to youth training now runs at over £1 billion a year. As the length of YTS has grown and as the guarantee of a place is firm, unemployment for 16 and 17-year-olds need no longer exist.

Furthermore, the training allowances for those on YTS have been set at a rate well above the basic supplementary benefit rates for most young people. As I said, unemployment for young people need not exist. They have every incentive, including financial incentives, to avoid it, and now they have every opportunity as well.

That has raised the question in the public mind—is it then right to pay benefit to those who refuse a place, have left school and are not in work? Is that right in two senses? First, is it right to draw young people into a benefit culture when the opportunity is there for the taking to acquire the skills and experience to get on to the employment ladder, to be independent and self-reliant? Secondly, is it right to ask taxpayers, many of them far from well off and many of them young, to subsidise those who deliberately choose to ignore this opportunity? We propose——

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Secretary of State has referred three times to those youngsters who deliberately choose not to go on YTS. He will be aware that the Bill does not propose to withhold benefit from those youngsters who deliberately choose not to go on YTS. It proposes to withhold benefit from all 16 and 17-year-olds, many of whom have never been offered a place on YTS, never mind refused it, and at least 2,000 of whom tried to get a place on YTS last year but could not find one.

Mr. Moore: Intimately related to the Bill, as I will explain in a moment, is the opportunity of a guarantee, as expressed in the election manifesto, to ensure that all children, post September 1988, are guaranteed a YTS place. There will of course be exemptions, which will be covered in the Bill.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Moore: I will continue for a little and then give way, as is my custom.

We included the proposal in our election manifesto that we would guarantee a place on YTS for every school leaver under the age of 18 not going directly into a job. We said in the manifesto that we would take steps to withdraw entitlement benefit from young people under 18 who chose to remain unemployed. I believe that that answers the point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in his intervention.

The manifesto was fully endorsed by the public on 11 June. We are now putting before the House the legislative implications of our manifesto commitment. That YTS guarantee in the manifesto, the bridging allowance in the Employment Bill that will be discussed in the House tomorrow and the benefit changes in the Social Security Bill make up the new arrangements for the under-18s, so that no young person who is able to take up a YTS place will have the option of living off the taxpayer.

Mr. Nellist: My question is in two parts. Is the Secretary of State's guarantee on a par with the guarantee offered in the Tory party manifesto on child benefit? Secondly, is it not true that young people today do not need coercion on YTS, but jobs? There are 2,700 youngsters on YTS in Coventry, 4,000 16 to 18-year-olds were unemployed in July this year, but there are 481 vacancies at the jobcentre. The official unemployment figures for Coventry as a whole show that 22,000 people are unemployed. That means that there are 47 unemployed people for every vacancy. Instead of conscription on to YTS, we could do with another 46 jobs for the unemployed to bring full employment to the area.

Mr. Moore: The public expressed their view of the Conservative party manifesto at the general election on 11 June with regard to the opportunities for youngsters. I will consider that matter later in my remarks.

I want to explain how the system will work. When a youngster leaves school at 16 or 17 having decided not to take formal education further, but does not immediately go into work, his parents will be able to claim child benefit——

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Moore: I hope to cover many points in my speech, including those that the hon. Lady might wish to raise.

As I have said, the parents will be able to claim child benefit for an extended period provided—and this is the key proviso—that the child is registered at a careers office or jobcentre or on a YTS course. For summer leavers, the period runs another four months until the end of December and for Christmas and Easter leavers it runs an extra three months. Benefit stops of course as soon as the youngster takes a job or YTS place.

By the end of that extended child benefit period, we guarantee to have arranged a YTS place for any youngster who wants one. I emphasise that point to the hon. Member for Livingston. The scheme of course is not compulsory.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moore: When the child benefit period runs out, there will be no income support for under-18s except in very special cases generally where for one reason or another it is impossible for the youngsters to take up a YTS place. Those exceptions will be spelt out in regulations to be made under the Bill.

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Moore: Perhaps the hon. Lady will allow me to complete this passage. It might be helpful if Labour Members allowed me to express the position clearly. As always, I shall then be happy to give way, although it may be that we can avoid the need for the hon. Lady to ask questions that I am now seeking to answer.

We will ensure that those young people who are not currently required to be available for work—the severely disabled, the long-term sick and one-parent families, for instance—will not be adversely affected by the change. They will continue to receive benefit without any time limit. Others, such as orphans and youngsters who are necessarily living away from home because of a risk of physical or sexual abuse, will be entitled to income support during the child benefit extension period only. During this period they will be able to take advantage of the YTS guarantee and secure a training place which will carry with it payment of the training allowance at a higher rate than their benefit, so enabling them to continue to live independently.

I recognise that it will not be possible to prescribe in advance all categories of young people for whom, exceptionally, payment of income support will be appropriate. The Bill therefore gives the Secretary of State a discretionary power to direct that, exceptionally, a young person should be treated as though he is in one of the prescribed groups. This power will be used in circumstances in which it is judged that severe hardship would result if income support was to be withheld.

If a young person has started a YTS place or a job and for one reason or another the place or job comes to an end before his 18th birthday, he is guaranteed another YTS place. This YTS place might take several weeks to arrange. In the meantime we shall be paying him the YTS bridging allowance, and provision for that is made in the Employment Bill that will come before the House tomorrow.

Ms. Armstrong: The Secretary of State said that young people will be guaranteed a place of quality on the YTS scheme,but his colleague told me in answer to a question in July that at present the quality of YTS could not be guaranteed, and he admitted that my area in particular had enormous difficulty in finding sufficient places of quality that will produce a skill at the end of the training period. That is because mine is an area of high unemployment. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that YTS places are of quality, and what tests will there be to ensure that the young person can legitimately say, "This scheme is of a quality that will enable me to get a job at the end of it"?

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will be addressing the specific guarantee offered within the YTS scheme, and I am sure that he will assure the hon. Lady and the House about the extent to which the scheme will give an absolute guarantee of a job or a replacement job. That will provide the kind of quality assurances that the hon. Lady seeks. The absolute guarantee is expected to come into effect in September 1988, so there is still a little while before then. However, I expect that the hon. Lady will wish to address that point to my right hon. Friend tomorrow.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, to the extent to which this new regulation will get us away from the suggestion that the YTS scheme is some kind of punishment but rather that it is a wonderful opportunity for people to learn some skill, it will be widely welcomed? Can he possibly reassure those excellent YTS managers in my area who have expressed to me some anxiety that they may be faced with one or two unwilling conscripts whereas up to now they have had nothing but creative volunteers for whom they have provided excellent experience?

Mr. Moore: I am delighted that my hon. Friend has drawn attention to what I said earlier about the outstanding success of our attempt to ensure that we have a better trained population who will be needed for the new work skills. Obviously my hon. Friend will want to draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment tomorrow, not only about the success of YTS but also about the way in which it can obviously be improved.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I have so far given way with considerable ease, but I now wish to continue.

Let me make it quite clear—and this is important—that the purpose of these proposals is not to save public expenditure. On the contrary, the net effect of these arrangements will be to add to public expenditure, not reduce it. The saving on benefit payments covered by the Bill will be £84 million in a full year, net of higher costs of child benefit. That, however, will be more than offset by the additional cost of the YTS programme.

The arrangements will fulfil our manifesto commitment, including our promise to look after those who cannot be available for training. Our mandate is clear:

[Mr. Moore]

public support is overwhelming. I have little doubt that our proposals would also be supported by Beveridge if he were alive today. Beveridge wrote that

> "for boys and girls there should ideally be no unconditional benefit: their enforced abstention from work should be made an occasion for further training".

It comes as no surprise that the Labour party has forgotten its Beveridge. Nor is it surprising that, as usual, Labour Members are out of touch with the requirements of today. Their opposition shows a staggering indifference to the needs of the young and the legitimate rights of the taxpayer. However, I predict that before too long the designer Socialists will ensure as spectacular an about-turn on this issue as we witnessed on council house sales.

The Bill also contains measures that emphasise the contributory principle in qualifying for national insurance benefits, and reinforce the original purpose of unemployment benefit. That purpose was to insure those who are accustomed to earnings from employment for short periods of unemployment while they seek work. Clause 5 strengthens the connection between previous contributions and entitlement. The Bill provides that, to qualify for unemployment or sickness benefit, a person must have paid, or been credited with, national insurance contributions in the past two years, not just the last year. It is now possible for a person on average earnings to fulfil the last-year condition on national insurance contributions paid simply on nine weeks' work. Once the Bill becomes law, it will be possible for such a person to qualify on the basis of nine weeks' work in each of two years. In addition, for unemployment benefit alone, the person must have paid contributions in one of those two years, not, as now, in any year.

The latter condition will not apply to sickness benefit, to ensure that a person who believes that he has recovered from a long-term illness is not penalised for returning to work and then falling ill again, only to find that he cannot obtain benefit because the relevant year contains only credits and no paid contributions. Such a person need not be deterred from returning to work, because he can be confident that if he has the misfortune to fall ill again he will continue to qualify on the basis of the credits awarded to him while he was ill.

As part of this package of contribution changes I propose also to amend the Social Security (Credits) Regulations so that credits for short-term benefits will no longer be awarded to people entering the national insurance scheme for the first time—mainly, of course, young people—to help them to satisfy the contribution conditions at an early stage. Otherwise, we should have the curious effect that the people least affected by the change requiring contributions to have been paid for two years would be youngsters who had never been in employment, and yet who would receive such credits to give them a flying start. It makes no sense to make unemployment benefit more easily available in such circumstances, and there is no longer the same need to make sickness benefit more easily available, as severe disablement allowance is now available in appropriate cases without any contribution record. But credits will continue to be awarded for those in full-time education or training after school for any tax years after and including the year in which the person reaches age 18, and the provisions for awarding credits for long-term benefits, such as retirement penion, to young people will remain unchanged.

Mr. Robin Cook: Before the Secretary of State moves on to the next clause, may I invite him to consider the combined effect of the two clauses to which he has just spoken? Let us suppose that a school leaver obtains employment after leaving school, works for 18 months and is then made redundant on the basis of "last in, first out". He finds that, after 18 months steady work, he is now unemployed. Under the clause to which the Secretary of State has just referred, there is no prospect of his having made contributions to unemployment benefit; and, under the first clause to which the right hon. Gentleman addressed himself, he will no longer have any entitlement to income support for those under 18. Is the right hon. Gentleman really suggesting that the school leaver should be denied any benefit—that he should go back home, and his parents should draw child benefit?

Mr. Moore: No, I am not. He will be entitled to the bridging allowance, as well as to the YTS opportunities.

Clause 6 extends a principle that is already a feature of our law. Unemployment benefit was never intended for those who have retired and no longer seek work. That is why, since 1981, those over 60 receiving an occupational pension of more than £35 a week have had their unemployment benefit abated. Since 1981, however, the picture has changed. There has been a considerable growth in the number of people under 60 who are receiving occupational pensions. It is entirely consistent with the original intentions of unemployment insurance to propose that abatement should apply from the age of 55.

Mr. Nellist: Why has the Secretary of State increased the hardship by saying that abatement should apply from the age of 55? Anyone with an occupational pension of over £35 a week will lose, pound for pound, his unemployment benefit. If the Secretary of State is not prepared to withdraw the clause, why has he not at least index linked the £35? As it was introduced six years ago, it should now be over £48. Those who take early retirement would not then lose up to £700 in the first year of unemployment. A millionaire with, say, £100,000 of investment income a year will not lose a penny, but a worker in, say, Talbots of Coventry who has paid into an occupational pension scheme will lose, pound for pound, everything over £35 a week.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is making a series of different points, which I imagine he will want to raise in Committee.

I accept that there has been no uprating since the figure of £35 a week was established. The hon. Gentleman asks why no change is being made at this point. The prime reason is the changing pattern of occupational pensions. The last change was made in 1981. For economically inactive men aged 55 to 59—not working, not seeking work, the long-term sick and those with occupational pensions—the figure was approximately 29·6 per cent. Today the figure is 43·6 per cent. There has been a radical change, and it is one of the factors that has to be taken into account, as well as the relationship between the real reason for unemployment benefit and the impact on a person's income. Unemployment benefit will not be extinguished for a single person until income reaches £66·50. For a married couple the figure is £85·90.

Other clauses in the Bill arise from recent legal decisions. Attendance allowance was first introduced in 1971. Its success as a valuable contribution to the extra needs of the long-term sick and the disabled has exceeded every expectation for it. About 600,000 now receive it and Government spending on it has risen under this Government by £500 million in real terms, or about 140 per cent. All of this occurred on a very broadly accepted view of what sort of care need was envisaged by Parliament in establishing the day and night time care conditions. But a Court of Appeal decision in the case of Mrs. Moran seemed to challenge what had been accepted for years.

The court decision seemed to suggest that one of the night time conditions for the allowance could be met if, in order to prevent substantial danger, it was necessary for the carer simply to be on hand. The implication was that actual intervention by the carer need be comparatively rare, and for most nights of the week the carer's sleep could be uninterrupted. This interpretation threw the law into confusion. It undoubtedly cut across the Attendance Allowance Board's understanding of what it was intended to mean. This Bill would restore the law to what it was believed to be by emphasising that for the night time condition to be satisfied active supervision was envisaged —a wakeful and watchful presence. We have consulted the Attendance Allowance Board on the change and it is in complete agreement with our approach. This Bill would leave the alternative night time condition relating to the person's need for help with bodily functions absolutely unchanged.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): After the Government lost in the courts in the case of Moran against the Secretary of State they moved the goalposts in the House of Commons. The Minister has obviously never looked after a sick or elderly person, otherwise he would never have put forward this proposal.

Mr. Moore: Because of the inaccuracy of the hon. Lady's remarks, I see no reason why I should refer to personal issues. I am seeking to address the issues that relate to the Moran case. The law, and the practice of the law, as interpreted by Parliament, was as it was, but the courts took a different view of the law. The Government are seeking to put the law back on all fours with what it was previously.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, as Mrs. Moran was one of my constituents. Does not part of the misunderstanding arise from the fact that the Secretary of State thinks that Parliament interprets the law? Parliament lays down the law. The tribunal system and the courts then interpret the law. Did not the Secretary of State mislead the House when he suggested that there was some uncertainty about the law? By three to nothing the Court of Appeal threw out the Government's case. When the Government said that they might go to the House of Lords, the Court of Appeal was very tough and said that the Government would be wasting their time. The Government did not go to the House of Lords. They came back to this place to try to overthrow the Moran decision.

I have two questions for the Secretary of State. First, when will Mrs. Moran be paid? Secondly, does not clause 1 of the Bill, which takes the attendance allowance away from tens of thousands of people who may be eligible for it, tarnish the image that the Minister put forward last week, when he suggested that he was making great advances for the disabled?

Mr. Moore: I have made it quite clear that the Government are seeking to put the law back to where it was and as it had been interpreted by Government and Parliament. I cannot at this stage say when the position with regard to Mrs. Moran will be finalised. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is out of my hands. I wonder whether he would mind repeating his second point?

Mr. Field: The first point that I put to the Secretary of State is in his hands. The tribunal has ruled and the Court of Appeal has ruled. Mrs. Moran has waited for many months for her benefit. When will she be paid? Secondly, last week the Secretary of State tried to appear to be an effective Minister who supports the disabled. Does it not therefore tarnish his image if he intends to take benefit away from tens of thousands of very disabled people?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that his first point relates to the Attendance Allowance Board. Both the Government and Mrs. Moran are awaiting a decision on that point with great interest and urgency. The Government's proposals in this Bill seek to put the law back to where the Government thought it was. The hon. Gentleman referred to tens of thousands of very disabled people. Examination so far has uncovered only 700 cases where there is expected to be a different interpretation.

In clause 9, similarly we propose that for the purposes of entitlement to an increase of benefit for a dependant, an occupational pension received by the dependant——

Mr. Robin Cook: My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) asked the Secretary of State when Mrs. Moran will be paid. Will he answer that question?

Mr. Moore: I said—I thought with clarity—that the Attendance Allowance Board was considering the case. When it has completed its examination, we shall look again at the matter.

Mr. Frank Field: If the Secretary of State is not disputing the decision by the Court of Appeal, why, four months later, is Mrs. Moran still waiting for her payments?

Mr. Moore: I am now speaking for the Attendance Allowance Board, but I am not yet aware of its view. The board has to be satisfied as to the position and conditions. I have not yet been advised that it is.

Mr. Field *rose*——

Mr. Moore: With respect——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has made it clear that he does not wish to give way.

Mr. Moore: This matter has take up considerable time. If there is a need for further clarification, I will be happy to ensure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled makes clear Mrs. Moran's position by the end of the debate. I know that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has an honourable tradition of fighting for his constituents.

Mr. Field: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you advise me on the matter of furthering

[Mr. Field]

my constituent's interests. There is no dispute about Mrs. Moran's circumstances. The case has been to the tribunal and the Court of Appeal. I am anxious to ensure that she is paid before the Bill becomes law because clause 1 is about denying her benefit——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair. He has made his point.

Mr. Moore: Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has made his point. However, to reassure him, because there is a legitimate point beyond the case of Mrs. Moran and there may be other cases in the pipeline, I will ask my hon. Friend the Minister to help in such matters before the Bill becomes law. It may be helpful if we include advice on that in the reply to the debate.

In clause 9 we propose that for the purposes of entitlement to an increase of benefit for a dependant, an occupational pension received by the dependant is to be treated as if it were earnings, whether or not the dependant also has earnings from employment. This proposal follows a decision of the social security commissioners which showed up unintended inconsistencies in the law. Again, I believe that the spirit of the law is clear. Dependency additions are intended for those whose dependants have little of no means of supporting themselves. Occupational pension is as much as any other source of money.

Additionally clause 2 completes the Government's changes to the industrial injuries scheme by providing the same pension to industrial widows as to national insurance widows. The cash advantage that the majority of industrial widows enjoy over national insurance widows has been frozen at 55p ever since 1967, under successive Governments. Following consultation on this subject and on the other reforms of the industrial injury scheme which we have already carried through, we made provision for this change in the Social Security Act 1986. However, we thought it right that existing industrial widows should continue to receive a retirement pension based on their own contributions on top of the widow's benefit. The Bill therefore replaces the 1986 provisions to achieve this. Future industrial widows will continue to have a particular advantage, which is that they will not have to meet a contributions condition. They will be able to receive national insurance widows benefit including, where appropriate, the new £1,000 tax-free cash grant payable on bereavement.

This clause also replaces reduced earnings allowance for those retiring in future by a new benefit called retirement allowance. The new benefit is intended to compensate broadly for reduced pension entitlement brought about by reduced earnings following injury, and will be uprated in line with inflation.

Some clauses in the Bill are required to tidy up the law or put matters beyond doubt. Clause 7, for example, makes clear that local authorities can, in an emergency, make an agreement with me to make social security payments on the Government's behalf and that I have the right to refund them for the payments and their reasonable costs. Clause 3 and clause 10 will ensure our ability to introduce family credit and the social fund's loans and grants system smoothly next April.

Those are purely technical amendments, but the House may like some account of those affecting the social fund, which are set out in schedule 3 of the Bill. The amendments in paragraphs 4 and 7 in particular are designed to clarify my powers to allocate and reallocate money from the social fund, and to give directions and guidance to social fund officers. As well as restating the existing powers in the Act, paragraph 4 makes it explicit that I can vary allocations in the course of a year if necessary — for example, to accommodate an unforeseen contingency such as a hurricane or to match a new local office catchment area. It also spells out the possibility of making allocations of recoveries from loans if we decide to do this in the years later than 1988-89. Paragraph 7 gives greater detail about the powers under section 33 of the 1986 Act to give directions and guidance to social fund officers, specifically in relation to maximum and minimum payments and payments in instalments or lump sums. It also enables me to establish and clarify whether loans or grants are appropriate to meet particular needs and to remove from the social fund officer the duty to determine whether to award a payment in certain circumstances. That would be relevant, for example, in the case of repeat applications made within six months without a change of circumstances.

Clause 10 also enables us to continue a scheme for exceptionally cold weather payments after this coming winter. The arrangements for this winter were, of course, announced last week and continue the criteria which enabled us to bring timely extra help to nearly 1 million people last winter. That was double the number who had received help in any previous winter. The criteria for triggering the payment to those groups most in need were quite clear. The improvement to the scheme announced last week by my hon. Friend the Minister of State makes claiming the special payments easier. Once a claim has been made during a qualifying period of cold weather, it will be treated as a claim for any subsequent unusually cold spell which triggers payments. The present statutory basis for exceptionally cold weather payments ends with the abolition of single payments as part of the social security reforms. Clause 10 would enable us to continue such payments beyond this coming winter. The payments will be grants from the social fund, analogous to the grants which we have been making since April 1987 from the fund for maternity and funeral payments. There has been some debate in the press about this and it may be helpful for Labour Members if I make it absolutely clear that that is outwith the amounts I indicated for the social fund cash limit on Tuesday.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): There are hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of pensioners who are dependent on that extra £5 a week during cold weather. Will the Minister confirm that, although the present system is mandatory and one that the Government and the DHSS are bound to honour, he intends to introduce a discretionary system so that people will not receive payments as of right?

Mr. Moore: That is quite wrong. As I have said, the exceptionally cold weather payments, as with maternity and funeral payments, are regulated and not discretionary. They are outwith the cash limits, but they come from the social fund.

This is an important Bill. It contains a variety of provisions. Although some are purely housekeeping, others, as hon. Members on both sides recognise, are of greater significance. For instance, our proposals for modifying the contribution conditions for short-term benefits will strengthen the link between benefits, participation in work and the payment of contributions. The proposed extension of the abatement of unemployment benefit brings the arrangements more into line with retirement patterns in the late 1980s. Both these amendments produce modest, but necessary, savings in public expenditure. We are also taking steps to prevent new interpretations of the law resulting in increases in benefit expenditure, and to ensure that the important social security reforms, which come into force next April, will operate as intended. The Bill fulfils at the earliest opportunity our commitment to the electorate to take measures to prevent young people from going straight from school into reliance on state benefits. We propose an increase in public expenditure to give them the opportunity of good quality training with a reasonable weekly allowance. This demonstrates our determination that they should be helped to make the very best of their talents, to make something of their future, and to build prosperous and personally satisfying lives.

I commend the Bill to the House.

4.18 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): This Bill has a certain familiar ring to it. First, it provides the annual amendments to the Social Security Act 1986. It is only a year since the House passed that Act, which we were told at the time would be a major piece of social security legislation, comparable in its own way to Beveridge, which would weather the test of the next 40 years. There have been only two parliamentary sessions since we passed the Act and in each of them the Government have presented us with a Bill to pour mortar down the cracks that have already been discovered in the 1986 Act.

I should begin by mentioning, charitably, to the Secretary of State that we have uncovered a provision in this Bill that makes nonsense of one of the sections that remain of the 1986 Act. In charity to the parliamentary draftsmen, we shall assume that it was a deliberate error to see whether Ministers could spot it. We shall not spoil their fun by pointing that out to the Minister, nor will we spoil our fun in debating the third annual amendment to the 1986 Act in 1989.

The second familiar ring to the Bill is that it runs in a well-worn Government groove in that they have presented us with yet another social security Bill that excludes further groups of claimants from benefit. One potential result is that 170,000 unemployment claimants could drop off the unemployment register. Once again, the House is being invited to vote for a cut in registered unemployment, not by providing more work for the unemployed but by erecting even more obstacles for those who receive the benefit that obliges even this Government to count them as unemployed. I therefore regret that this new Secretary of State has been guilty of a such an example of lateral thinking and has presented us with a Bill that merely extends the work of his predecessor.

I am aware of the conventions of the House, and I have guddled around to find something in the Bill that I can welcome on behalf of the Opposition. That is the greatest challenge that the Bill presents to any constitutional Opposition. The best that I can come up with is to welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has included provision for severe weather payments, which gives us a guarantee that some payments will continue in 1989 and beyond. But that is as far as I can go. With the best will in the world it is impossible to work out what that scheme will be. Schedule 3 says:

> "Payments may also be made out of that fund"—

the social fund—

> "in accordance with this Part of this Act, of a prescribed amount or a number of prescribed amounts to prescribed descriptions of persons, in prescribed circumstances to meet expenses for heating which appear to the Secretary of State to have been or to be likely to be incurred in cold weather.".

I am aware that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be as mystified as I am about what we are being asked to vote for in that schedule. It is plain that the House is being put in the position, as it frequently has been over the past few years on social security legislation, of giving the Secretary of State power to pay whoever he likes at whatever level of income he chooses.

Since the Secretary of State is left with a degree of discretion by that paragraph, I put it to him, in considering how he interprets it, that there are a number of improvements that he could make to last year's scheme, which proved so restrictive that in February the only pensioners who qualified were those living in or around Okehampton and Cornwall.

One change that the Secretary of State should consider making is the removal of the ludicrous requirement that any seven-day cold spell must begin on a Monday. Unfortunately, in the past the frost has proved incapable of grasping the administrative convenience of starting any cold snap on the beginning of a working week. I hope that when the Secretary of State considers these prescriptions he will provide for the scheme to cover any seven-day period.

But if that provision is unsatisfactory, the remainder of the Bill is flatly objectionable. I turn to the most profound change of all. Since 1948, the qualifying age for social security has been 16 years. The Bill raises that qualifying age to 18 years. It is an odd time to choose such a change, because in 1948 few school leavers were unable to obtain work. If ever there was a time for removing benefit on the ground that those who were not working were workshy, surely it was 1948, when the age was chosen as 16 years. Even as late as the mid-1970s, over three fifths of school leavers went straight into work. Last year, less than one fifth of school leavers were able to obtain work. Yet, at a moment when it is more difficult than at any time for the past 40 years for those who are leaving school to obtain a job, they are to be denied the right to any benefit if they fall unemployed.

The Bill does not follow what the Government said in their election manifesto. They said that they would withhold benefit from those who deliberately chose to be unemployed. There is no evidence of a serious problem of youngsters refusing to go on YTS. The latest monthly figures relate to May 1987, when 17,500 youngsters entered YTS. In that same month a mere nine youngsters had their benefits stopped under the 13-week rule for unreasonably refusing to go on YTS. It would therefore be something of a sledgehammer to crack a nut to present the House with a Bill to resolve a problem created by nine people per month. However, that is not what the Bill does; it denies benefit to everybody under 18 years of age.

The latest figures show that 92,000 16 and 17-year-olds draw supplementary benefit. As Lord Young has said that the Government intend to deny benefit to those who choose to lie in bed, it is worth considering who are those

[Mr. Robin Cook]

92,000. Perhaps the largest group are those who are taking advantage of the 21-hour rule to take part-time education. According to the Government's own estimates, about 30,000 of that 92,000 are currently studying part-time in colleges or in further education. Under the 21-hour rule one can study for two A-levels. For those youngsters who choose that option it may be an entirely rational choice. It will give them a qualification to go on to further and higher education that YTS would not. I would have thought that a Government that keep telling us that they are in favour of expanding choice for the individual would have hesitated before removing that choice from 30,000 youngsters.

A growing number of teenagers are homeless. In the main they do not leave home for flippant or trivial reasons but because of intolerable tension at home. I was glad to hear the Secretary of State say that benefit will still be paid to those who have left home because of violent or sexual harassment. As someone who represents a constituency with a large number of teenagers, I am able to say that the most common single reason why teenage girls leave home is sexual harassment by a stepfather or step-figure within the home. I welcome the fact that it may still be possible for such youngsters to obtain benefit, but the mind reels at the thought of those girls having to prove to a social security officer sexual harassment in the parental home as a qualifying condition for benefit.

The Secretary of State is in a better position than anyone else to know — given his Department's difficulties with regard to Cleveland — how difficult it can be to establish sexual abuse or harassment. I would not wish to send constituents along to the DHSS office to discuss such matters over the table. Even if they succeed in obtaining benefit, on the terms that I understood the Secretary of State to explain to the House, it will be only for a limited time, until they go into YTS.

The problem in that regard, as Opposition Members will be aware, is that no board and lodging allowance is attached to YTS. The moment one enters a YTS scheme one may qualify for a higher weekly benefit, but one will lose the benefit necessary to keep a roof over one's head. How the Secretary of State imagines that in those circumstances one can maintain an independent existence defeats me.

Among those 92,000 people are a large number for whom work and unemployment are intermittent and recurring experiences. Far from being workshy, the teenage unemployed make desperate attempts to obtain work. They demonstrate the flexibility that the Government keep preaching to the rest of the work force. In any three-month period, one out of every five teenagers will experience unemployment. At any one time, one in eight teenagers will be in temporary employment. A large part of that teenage work force is taking work where it can find it and holding it for as long as it can. The Government are saying that every time teenagers fall through a hole in the system and drop out of work, through no fault of their own, they will not qualify for benefit; they will have to return home and ask their parents for pocket money.

I asked the Secretary of State about the school leaver who worked for 18 months after leaving school, but who then became unemployed and who, under this measure, could not obtain income support. The Secretary of State responded by saying that he would be entitled to a bridging allowance only if he opts to go on a YTS project. In effect, the Government are saying that someone who may have worked for 18 months, and who in the course of that time may have obtained relevant work experience and possibly become semi-skilled, should not expect to look for work again but should accept that the sole way in which they can receive benefit is by agreeing to go on a YTS project. That is precisely what the Government are saying in this measure. They cannot escape the fact that they have taken national insurance contributions from such a person for a year and a half but are now turning round and denying that person any form of benefit.

I have spelt out the reasons why we object to this measure in its human terms, but let the House be clear about the fact that we openly reject the principle that YTS should be made compulsory in the way in which it has been made compulsory by the Bill. Moreover, just about everyone associated with YTS does the same. The Youth Training Board and the Institute of Careers Officers have rejected this principle. The MSC has rejected this proposal and, as late as July this year, wrote to the Government saying:

> "The Commission's position on this matter is clear. It has been repeated many times, most notably as one of the 5 cardinal principles of the design of the Y.T.S.. We have always recommended that the scheme should be one in which participation is voluntary, whether by the employer or the young person. That remains our view."

It does not lie with the Secretary of State to take credit for the success of the scheme run by the MSC when he so flatly rejects its advice about what will make the scheme succeed in the future.

This proposal for youngsters must be seen in the context not of a plan for Government training but of what the Government have done to the labour market for teenagers. This proposal follows previous Government measures such as the young workers scheme, which subsidised the poverty wages of teenagers, or the removal of the protection of the wages councils to anyone under 21. Now, with this measure, they are creating a pool of labour which will be deskilled and casual and which will be looking for temporary jobs. The Government are effectively taking these young people one step further towards forcing them to provide cheap labour for any employer who is prepared to exploit the opportunity that the Government are creating for them. For that reason, as well as because of the human consequences, when the Division is called we shall vigorously oppose the Bill and that measure within it.

Mr. Nellist: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although there may well be many working on the ground in YTS who are attempting to give some element of training, the real reason why the YTS was set up was revealed by Sir John Hoskyns in 1981, when he was a member of the Prime Minister's think tank and wrote the paper on the scheme? He said that the scheme was designed to increase the differential between adult and youth wages. Over the past six or seven years the scheme has continually been used to drive down the general level of young people's wages.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend is right. It is clear that, on average, the real income of those below 21 has declined over a decade during which the real income of those over 21 has increased. It can only be a matter of time—if the House lets the Government get away with this measure

—before the Government come back with similar measures for the group between 18 and 24 to compel them to enter into mandatory forms of training as well.

Clause 1 hits the smallest number of claimants of any clause, but that does not remove the fact that it is the meanest of all the clauses. It reverses a court decision. Having been beaten in the courts by Mrs. Moran, the Secretary of State is using his majority in Parliament to beat Mrs. Moran in Parliament. In a parliamentary answer the Government gave the categories of people who might benefit from the Moran judgment:

"people who suffer from epilepsy, diabetes, haemophilia, heart attacks and angina, or multi-sensory handicaps; elderly people who suffer attacks of confusion; and children who are mentally handicapped or hyperactive, or who suffer from asthma or cystic fibrosis." —[*Official Report*, 23 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. *78*.]

It would be difficult to come up with a list of more vulnerable people who more clearly need as much help as they can get. Clause 1 is specifically devised to stop them getting the help to which the court ruled they were entitled.

There is one particularly objectionable feature of the clause which my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) tried to draw to the attention of the Secretary of State. Since the Moran judgment some 6,000 people have applied for attendance allowance on the basis of that judgment. We know that it was 6,000 because the Government admitted that figure as late as July this year. On all previous occasions when social security legislation has been changed to deny benefit, it has been accepted that those who have lodged their claims are entitled to have them assessed and the benefits paid at least up to the date when the law was changed. Clause 1 does not do that. It employs a cunning form of wording by which it will apply to any applicant whose claim has not yet been determined by the Attendance Allowance Board.

I must pick up the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead. As far as we are aware and in so far as we can make sense of the comments of the Secretary of State, Mrs. Moran's application has not yet been determined by the Attendance Allowance Board. The Secretary of State said clearly that the case was before the board. On that basis, it is difficult to understand how Mrs. Moran will obtain payment of the attendance allowance if the Bill goes through Parliament before the Attendance Allowance Board reaches a decision on her case. I am bound to say with the greatest respect and affection for Mrs. Moran that, even if the board lets her case through, there is no hope of the other 5,999 getting through.

Mr. Frank Field: My hon. Friend was paying such careful attention to the Bill's wording that he did not have a chance to look at the face of the Secretary of State as he was reading it. The right hon. Gentleman looked surprised on hearing his interpretation. Will my hon. Friend give way to the Secretary of State so that he can clarify this point?

Mr. Cook: I should be delighted.

Mr. Moore: I was looking surprised because, although I understand the intricacies of this matter, I made it clear in answering one of the many interventions of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear that we shall look more than sympathetically at any amendment that might be addressed to the clause to ensure that any cases in the pipeline—*[Interruption.]* If I may, I should like to explain this important point. It covers many individuals. When the Bill was drawn up we sought a commencement provision that was simple to understand and apply. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister wants to be precise when he concludes the debate and to show that we will taken into account what might be called pipeline cases.

Mr. Cook: I began by saying that this was the second annual Bill to amend the Social Security Act 1986. This is a new first in social security legislation in that we have an undertaking to consider an amendment before the opening speeches have even finished. It would be churlish, however, not to welcome what the Secretary of State has said. I press him on this point: when that amendment comes forward, it must in all conscience, protect the position of all those 6,000 applicants who had lodged claims before Second Reading.

I move from the clause that affects the smallest number of claimants to the one that affects the largest number—the one that will remove unemployment benefit from 350,000 claimants by tightening the contribution rules. Most of those 350,000 claimants will qualify for income support, but the Government's estimates tell us that 50,000 of that 350,000 will get none. Even those who get some will get income support at a lower level than unemployment benefit. One can make two points on this proposal. First, it will affect tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of claimants who have paid national insurance contributions for decades but whose contributions just happen to be defective in the two relevant years. Secondly, it will hit the low paid worst because they need longer in which to accrue the necessary number of contributions. They are then caught in the trap of being paid least while at work and they are now also to be paid least when they are out of work.

The next largest group of claimants affected consists of mothers and their children who are to lose welfare food. The Maternity Alliance advises me that no fewer than 220,000 mothers and children will lose their entitlement to welfare food or free milk. That entitlement is worth £1·75 per week per person entitled to the milk or £3·50 if, as is likely, two members of the household are entitled to the benefit. One consequence of the change is outstandingly perverse; irrespective of their income, pregnant girls under the age of 16 will lose entitlement to free milk daily during the pregnancy. That means that the very group of people most likely to give birth to underweight babies are to be denied free milk. In other words, the mothers most in need of nutritional help will be certain not to get it. I suppose that that is in line with the Government's criteria; the fact that they need the benefit most is the most sensible reason for denying it to them. As the Secretary of State seems to be undertaking to amend the Bill, I hope that when he considers the clause he will reverse its effects to ensure that free milk is available to pregnant girls under the age of 16.

I turn to the part of the Bill which deals with the second age group most affected by the increase in unemployment over the past decade. Those who have suffered most from the unemployment crisis fall into two groups. We have already discussed school leavers and young people. The second group constitutes older members of the work force who find that when redundancies are thought necessary they are singled out for early retirements. If they foolishly volunteer for redundancy and leave the factory they find that it is extremely difficult to get work again outside.

[Mr. Cook]

The Bill lowers from 60 to 55 the age at which unemployment benefit is reduced by any occupational pension received by the claimant. As a result, 27,000 men and women between the ages of 55 and 60 will lose all entitlement to unemployment benefit. I have two observations to make. First, the clause affects the very people towards whom the Government might be expected to feel warmly. They have shown thrift and foresight in providing for themselves — qualities that the Government constantly seek to urge upon the work force. They have provided themselves with an extra income against their retirement. Now, as a reward for taking the Government's advice, they are to have their right to unemployment benefit taken away, even though they may well have paid national insurance contributions for the 40 years since they entered the work force.

Secondly, the Government cannot get away with presenting the proposed further reduction in the age level as an extension of the principle which says that those over the age of 60 have already retired. When introducing the provision for those aged between 60 and 65, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Patrick Jenkin, said:

> "Unemployment benefit is intended for unexpected and unforeseeable contingencies. It really cannot be said that retirement at the end of a pensionable career—this clause applies to people over 60 years of age — constitutes unemployment in the accepted sense of the word." — [*Official Report*, 15 April 1980; Vol. 982, c. 1046-47.]

Is any member of the Treasury Bench willing to stand up and say that unemployment at 55 does not constitute unemployment in the accepted sense of the word and that it is better regarded as retirement? Unemployed people over the age of 55 do not regard themselves as retired. Indeed, the Government have unveiled the results of a survey showing that only 3·5 per cent. of those between the ages of 55 and 59 who are out of work regard themselves as retired.

One third of those between the ages of 55 and 59 are now out of work and by 1990 more than half of them will be out of work. Indeed, that is already the case in the north and the north-west. They are out of work not because the north and the north-west are more affluent or because there is greater emphasis on leisure and early retirement but because that is where the redundancies take place. The more that older workers become unemployed, the more necessary it is for them to have unemployment benefit and the less case there is for taking their entitlement away from them.

In total, the Bill would extinguish the right of 400,000 claimants to benefit. It would reduce the right to benefit of a further 300,000 claimants. The odd thing is that most of those 700,000 people will live in Conservative Members' constituencies. Unfortunately, that is inevitable, simply because there are so many Conservative Members. The kindest malediction that I can offer any hon. Member who votes for the package of cuts is that those of their constituents who are affected by turn up at their surgeries and demand to know why he or she did so.

In the financial memorandum I cannot find a single clause that will result in a net increase in expenditure. According to the financial memorandum, the total saving to the Department of Health and Social Security will be £275 million. Tomorrow, the House will hear the Autumn Statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We understand that the Chancelor is likely to tell us that tax revenues are buoyant and that public sector borrowing is down. He will undoubtedly tease us on the subject of his Budget intentions but it is most likely that he will leave himself room for a further cut in income tax next March. This Second Reading debate provides an ironic counterpoint to tomorrow's statement on the Government's expenditure plans. We believe that there can be no case for the Government cutting benefits for the poorest while they are able to find the money to cut the taxation burden on the wealthiest. That is why we shall vote against the Bill tonight.

4.46 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): The Bill is a matter of high political contention. Passions will run high during the next few hours. The usual dogmas will be aired—probably by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We shall hear of the problems of inertia in social security and social security payments. We shall hear much of reforming zeal, whether successful or unsuccessful, from both sides of the House. But we are really talking about legislating for people and their families.

I shall concentrate on what is common political ground. We need go no further than clause 1 to find the provision concerning the attendance allowance. One family in my constituency has two haemophiliac children, one of whom is affected with the AIDS virus. He is HIV positive. I have been fighting a battle on that family's behalf to try to ensure that they receive attendance allowance. One would think that that would be basic and simple enough. My efforts have failed and the case has brought to my attention some of the nonsense that we talk when discussing these matters of high political contention. Instead we should all be trying to solve the problems of individual families such as the family that I mentioned.

Some 1,200 haemophiliacs in this country are now HIV positive. They have been contaminated by blood products from blood donations in the United States and the Third world. It is now required that such blood products be treated, so that we can now ensure that they will not infect those whom they are supposed to help. However, the United Kingdom is not self-sufficient in blood products, despite the promises of successive Governments since 1977. Thank goodness, we have moved a long way to achieving the aim. However, many of those who have been infected would not have been infected had we been self-sufficient before.

Many of the 1,200 people—such a tiny number, but we still cannot get it quite right—are ill and cannot work. Some have infected their wives. Some are children. All of the 1,200 are subject to the fear and prejudice—understandable though they may be—of the public. None of them can have life insurance to protect their families. None of them can have children without the risk of their children contracting AIDS. None of them can have endowment mortgages and none can be married or have a girl friend without the risk of infecting their partners. A total of 57 haemophiliacs have AIDS and 41 have died. That burden is in addition to coping with haemophilia, a life-threatening disorder. I had a haemophiliac in my class when I was a teacher. I know of the harrowing difficulties that he had to face every day of his life, without the extra problem of AIDS.

The urgent need is for the Government to provide a special weekly benefit to provide life insurance for the dependants of sufferers and for mortgage protection for the home. In addition, the Government should set up a discretionary fund to help victims and their families. That would go a long way towards easing the financial, family and social burdens suffered by such people.

The Select Committee on Social Services recently accepted that compensation and special life insurance arrangements for haemophiliacs deserved careful consideration. Understandably, the Government are worried about the implications for negligence claims. I accept that the NHS was acting in good faith in providing blood products which, tragically, were contaminated. I do not believe that blame attaches to the Government. This is not a party political matter. The strength of feeling on both sides of the House is illustrated by the early-day motions tabled recently.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): What is the Government's reaction to the hon. Gentleman's representations on behalf of his constituents?

Mr. Key: I am coming to that. I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman exactly what happened. An all-party meeting is to be held on Thursday to discuss this matter and representations are being made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

This is a matter of good government. I admired the speech by the Secretary of State in September when he outlined the inescapable choices for health care provision. We have been challenged by him to think the unthinkable. That is right. We all support, at the least, the safety net provision in the Health Service. When the individual cannot cope, try as he might, the state will uphold him with dignity. Where the market cannot provide, the state has a role.

No insurance company can be expected to insure inevitable certainty. I challenge my right hon. Friend to take a bold political decision and to instruct the lawyers in the Civil Service to find a formula which will erect a ring fence to protect this special category.

For this small, unique and tragic group the unthinkable has happened. It is unthinkable that any British Government should fail to respond. It is not enough to say that all the usual social security benefits are available for these sufferers. They are there to be tried, but the family to which I referred failed in its attempts to get the attendance allowance. The family has suffered enormously socially. The child was expelled from his playgroup by the democratic decision of the other parents. I can understand that, but what a tragedy it is. The child now attends a normal primary school where welfare assistants are with him from the moment he enters the school gates to the moment he leaves. He can never be left alone, so night-time care is essential.

In that respect clause 1 is important because it redraws the boundaries for attendance allowance. It will make it more difficult for such children and their parents to get attendance allowance. I urge my right hon. Friend to give careful consideration to the effects of that clause on haemophiliacs.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the hon. Gentleman also urge the Secretary of State to bear in mind that, because of the nature of haemophilia, haemophiliacs often belong to the same family? Three members of one family in my constituency are affected and the most appalling burdens are placed upon that family.

Mr. Key: That is the point. The condition runs in families. Often two or three children in one family are affected, and that compounds the financial and social burdens.

The normal social security arrangements do not necessarily apply to such families. They have to fight every inch of the way. I am busy supporting the appeal by the parents to which I have already referred. Have we all to fight that hard every inch of the way for every family who are unfortunate enough to have haemophiliac children who are HIV positive? What quality of life will a family have if they have to spend their entire time fighting for social security benefits? What effect will it have on the children?

I salute the courage of those who are struggling to create a spring for their children when they know that they will probably never see a summer. Those families deserve, and must surely receive, compassionate treatment from our Government.

4.55 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), for two reasons. First, he raised an issue of enormous importance. I am sure that the Secretary of State was aware of the support from his own Back Benchers for the hon. Gentleman's speech and I am certain that we shall return to the issue on a number of occasions. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman deserves to be congratulated for keeping in order. That shows that he is a skilful parliamentarian.

It is a convention to congratulate a Secretary of State when he comes before the House to present his first measure. I do not congratulate the Secretary of State this afternoon, not because of any lack of generosity of spirit, but because I believe that the Secretary of State himself is unhappy with the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman bravely indicates his disagreement, but I shall illustrate, by pointing to five clauses, how the Bill is in direct contradiction to the Secretary of State's speech prior to the Tory party conference, about the welfare society that he wishes to create under his stewardship.

In that speech the Secretary of State emphasised the need to encourage independence. I do not think that that is the whole of the remit for any welfare society, but it is important and therefore moves which take us away from that objective are serious.

Let us examine clause 1 of the Bill which is intended to overturn the success of one of my constituents, Mrs. Moran, and the lawyer who helped her, Nicholas Warren. If we are to believe what the Government spokesman said to the Court of Appeal, that was a success, far in excess of what the Secretary of State has defined today.

I thought, like the hon. Member for Salisbury, that the move would extend the scope of the attendance allowance to those people who are disabled and were excluded. We thought that it would provide extra help for people who are caring for others, accepting that where that help was not provided by the families, the state would provide the care.

We must examine the Secretary of State's rhetoric about his wish to extend independence. If clause 1 is passed it will be more difficult for families to survive and to care in the community for people whom they love. It will be easier for them to crack up and easier to deliver such people from their families to the state for it to care for them.

[Mr. Frank Field]

I ask Government Members to think carefully about where the measure will lead us. They might not be affected by some of the cuts and changes of this Bill, but they will be affected by the move which I have just described. One of the great successes of the attendance allowance scheme is that it is not class based. It cuts across classes and helps all families who care for someone who needs care and attention, day or night. There will be pressure about the Bill at the surgeries of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen. I hope that that pressure arrives before Report stage.

The next clause contradicts the Secretary of State's declared aim for a welfare state. It removes people's entitlement to unemployment benefit until they have paid even more contributions, and makes it more likely that they will be dependent on means-tested supplementary benefit. Again, we must ask the Secretary of State what his rhetoric means. The national insurance scheme is the means by which many working people collectively obtain security against the form of dependence that he wishes to reduce, yet the Bill will increase the number of people who have to seek means-tested assistance. Is that the Government's aim? Is that what the right hon. Gentleman was outlining in his speech before the Tory party conference?

I wish to put a slightly different emphasis on the clause affecting the entitlement to benefit of 16 to 18-year-olds than did my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I would not oppose the change if the Secretary of State would assure us that the proposed training schemes will be of such a standard that we would be happy to go on them ourselves or to send our children. I would be less worried about the change if that condition were fulfilled.

I should also be less anxious if people with a genuine grievance about the quality of their training had the right to an effective appeal and could appear before a tribunal before the punishment period of 13 weeks had expired. The Secretary of State may know that representatives of various London boroughs brought many claimants to the House today to brief us for the debate. One of the many urgent issues raised was the length of time that claimants must wait before their appeals are heard. In my constituency claims lodged in January are being heard this month. A welfare rights worker from Greenwich told us that the borough is now hearing cases which were lodged 16 months ago.

I hope that the Secretary of State will satisfy us about those two matters. Will the YTS schemes be good enough for our families? What is he proposing to do about the appeal system so that those who have a genuine grievance about the quality of their training or who are in dispute with their employers who bully them—some employers do bully their employees, although most do not, thank goodness — can appear before an appeal tribunal quickly?

The other important matter which causes the Secretary of State disquiet is the social fund. We know from leaks during the summer recess that, when he saw this provision in the draft legislation, he was so horrified about how it would work that he sought to have it removed. He was anxious that the social fund should not be cash-limited, as it will now be. I do not know whether the report in *The Guardian* by David Hencke was completely accurate. I am happy to give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to correct the record, but I think that he has a good nose for trouble and smelt the difficulties that he would face as a Minister, just as many constituents will have to face appalling difficulties if the provision goes through unamended. Indeed, he was so anxious to scrap the proposal that he was prevented from doing so only by the former Secretary of State when he said that the Government would lose face if the change were accepted. The Secretary of State may lose face, anyway. How much better it would be to lose face earlier in the day rather than later.

I am not one of those who claim that he has lost face over clause 1. I am rather pleased with the announcement that he made about it, if I understood him correctly. I wish to ask the Secretary of State a question, and will be happy to give way so that he can respond. Are we clear that, before the Bill reaches the statute book, all those—not just Mrs. Moran—with claims pending for attendance allowance will be given a decision, and that they will not be caught by any retrospective legislation under clause 1?

Mr. Moore: I thought that I had made the position clear—these are the pipeline cases. In all those cases it is important to use precise words because we are covering particular claimants. My hon. Friend the Minister will reiterate precisely the position when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Field: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his reply. Matters are becoming clearer to me and, therefore, to our constituents.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, the Government are penalising those who have provided for their retirement, who will lose the employment benefit for which they have paid. It is not a charitable handout; they earned it. The Secretary of State knows that if he was running a private company and tried to change the rules in this way, he would end up in the divisional court, the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords, and would no doubt lose his case.

What message can we take from this debate to those who have put away money in the form of occupational pensions, who will be penalised by the Government? What do we say to those who come to our surgeries and say, "We have responded to the themes of the Thatcherite Governments, we have tried to look after ourselves, but in return we will lose our occupational pensions"? Those pensions will be taken into account when housing benefit is computed, will make them ineligible for supplementary benefit, and now they lose when claiming unemployment benefit. How do we address that group of our constituents on any of the questions of equity, but especially as the Government say that they want more not fewer people to be independent of the state?

I end as I began, by saying that I am sure that this rather miserable little measure is not one of the right hon. Gentleman's choosing. He inherited it. The more that he tucked down his head today and tried to read through his speech, the more I became convinced that he was unhappy with it, as he should be. No other social security Minister has had to come before the House to introduce so many cuts in benefit and to make so few advances in the welfare state. Above all, he should be unhappy because in the summer he confidently outlined the structural changes that he wanted to make to the welfare state to encourage independence and lessen dependence. The sad aspect of this whole ragbag of a measure is that, while it takes away many benefits from large numbers of people, it does not structurally alter the welfare state one little bit.

5.8 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to address this House for the first time. I confess that I rise with some trepidation, but fortified in the knowledge of the kindness with which it is customary for right hon. and hon. Members to hear the first speech of a new Member.

I take great pleasure and pride in having the honour to represent the constituency of Chelmsford and in succeeding its distinguished former Member Norman St. John-Stevas, who for 23 years diligently served the people of Chelmsford. I know that in this House he was renowned as a witty and formidable debater and his lasting achievements will be his championing of the arts and the Select Committee system that was established while he was a pioneering Leader of the House of Commons. This House's loss will be another place's gain.

It is with pride that I would like to describe my constituency. It consists of Chelmsford itself, the county town of Essex, and a number of small, attractive villages ranging from Boreham in the north to Margaretting in the south. In its time, it has been the home of Sir Walter Mildmay—who served the great Queen Elizabeth I as a counsellor with distinction and loyalty—to Trollope, to Goldsmith and to Sir Nicholas Tindal, who became a celebrated chief justice and showed great courage in defending the hapless Queen Caroline.

During the past 25 years Chelmsford has changed radically from being a small, quiet market town constituency—proud to have been the first town in the country to light its streets with electricity—to being the third fastest growing town in Europe. It has fortunately avoided the social problems that often accompany such rapid expansion. It ensured that, as the whole East Anglian region developed economically, it led and not followed. My constituents have played a vigorous and successful role in increasing the prosperity of the region. It is fortunate that, at less than 6 per cent., the rate of unemployment is well below the national average. That can be partly attributed to the fact that its local industries are broadly based. It mixes a strong manufacturing base with a thriving service sector.

As some hon. Members may know, it is the home of the jewels in the crown of defence contractors. Marconi Communications Systems, in the teeth of fierce overseas competition, only two weeks ago secured a potential multi-billion pound order to supply high frequency anti-jamming equipment to the United States navy. Marconi Radar supplies the Royal Navy with the Sea Wolf. Marconi has been in Chelmsford since 1899, and it was due to the innovative powers of the young Marconi that, in 1910, Dr. Crippen was arrested on the SS Montrose for murder, and in 1912 a number of lives were saved when a distress signal, designed by Marconi, was picked up from the stricken Titanic.

The embryo of broadcasting took shape in Chelmsford in 1920 when Dame Nellie Melba broadcast the first song recital from the Marconi works in New street. In addition to Marconi being the largest single employer in my constituency, employing more than 8,000 people, there are a number of other manufacturing companies—such as RHP, which provides ball bearings, and Britvic—which provide valuable employment.

Chelmsford has the second largest commuting population in the country, with more than 12,000 brave people using Network SouthEast every day to travel to Liverpool street to work in the city and other parts of London.

I want to say something about the National Health Service in Chelmsford. We have two excellent hospitals —St. John's, which is in my constituency and which is a major maternity hospital for the area, and Broomfield, which is just outside my constituency boundaries, but which provides health care for all my constituents. During the election many people to whom I spoke on their doorsteps said that they were confused by what they were reading in the newspapers about conditions in the Health Service. They had used the facilities in my constituency and had nothing but praise for the dedicated staff in the hospitals and the first-rate equipment that provides excellent health care. Frankly, they resented the attacks on the Health Service that were being made day after day. They, with first-hand experience through the care they have received, know quite condfidently that the Health Service is safe in the Government's hands.

It was interesting that, on my visits to local businesses during the summer, time after time entrepreneurs told me that they could not find skilled workers to fill the many vacancies in the East Anglian region. They welcome the fact that the Government have placed great emphasis on training, especially for youngsters through the youth training scheme and the technical and vocational education initiative. However, many of my constituents have been bewildered that youngsters of 16 and 17 have been able to spurn school work and YTS and move effortlessly, and seemingly without shame, on to supplementary benefit. That is why I am sure many people in Chelmsford and especially employers, will welcome clause 4 of the Bill.

Many of my constituents are concerned—as is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—about the dependence mentality in modern Britain. I share and echo that concern. The Conservative Government are committed to providing material help to those who genuinely need it, allowing those who are under-privileged and less well-off—through no fault of their own—to share in the greater prosperity of the new Britain that we are creating. But we are also, rightly in my view, concerned that the taxpayers' money that we use for such acts of compassion should go to those in genuine need. I do not believe that the calculated choice of state-subsidised indolence qualifies as genuine need or should divert resources from more deserving cases, such as the elderly, the disabled, the handicapped and those who live in areas less fortunate than my own where the economic revival has been slower to occur.

My constituents will welcome the commitment that the Government are giving to young people by providing for every person under the age of 18 a place on YTS except when they are still in full-time education or in employment. Just as important, my constituents realise that the proposals before us tonight provide a means of encouraging more youngsters to acquire skills and valuable work experience so that they are then better qualified to compete in the highly competitive jobs market.

[Mr. Simon Burns]

I do not want to impinge on your patience any longer, Madam Deputy Speaker, especially as I am always mindful of an incident that occurred in the Chelmsford shire hall in 1938. That incident was the last recorded episode of spontaneous combustion when a garrulous lady blew herself into flames at a hunt ball.

5.16 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Before I commence my speech, may I say how much I enjoyed the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). The hon. Gentleman has impressed us considerably with his first speech. I was especially impressed when he mentioned that unemployment in Chelmsford was 6 per cent. In my constituency it is 17·8 per cent., so I envy him that. He certainly told us a good deal about the history of Chelmsford, and I know a lot more about it now. I hope to visit Chelmsford one day. I feel that he will be a great asset to the House and I know that hon. Members on both sides will congratulate him on his maiden speech.

The Bill consists of a series of mean-minded schemes whereby the Government can claw back money from those who need it most. It will also allow the Minister to alter the mistakes in the Social Security Act 1986. Clause 1 displays a particularly mean and small-minded attitude to the relatives of ill and disabled people. It undermines much of the progress that has been achieved and will, in the long term, cost the taxpayer more and cause even more problems for those relatives.

Clause 1 is yet another example of the Government moving the goal posts when they have lost an argument. The clause reverses the effect of Moran *v.* the Secretary of State for Social Services. That case entitled a severely disabled person — for example, someone subject to epileptic fits and who requires the presence of someone on "standby"—to the higher night time rate of attendance allowance. If the Bill is passed, the person providing that supervision will be required to be awake for a prolonged period or at frequent intervals before the claimant can qualify for that rate. Precautionary supervision will not be enough.

Clause 2 means that the reduced earnings allowance will be paid to people who have suffered accidents at work, or who have suffered from an industrial disease, and as a result cannot earn as much as they did before. Previously, REA was payable after retirement, but was frozen at the amount payable immediately before retirement. As I see it, clause 2 and schedule 1 will remove entitlement to REA after retirement if the amount of REA payable was under £2. For those whose REA was £2-plus, a retirement allowance will replace REA. That allowance will be 25 per cent. of the REA payable, or 10 per cent. of the maximum level of disablement pension, whichever is less. However, it will be uprated annually. Before the Bill is passed those entitled to REA after retirement will continue to receive it, but the amount of the payment will be frozen and not updated.

I also note that the total amount of industrial injuries benefit, including REA, payable after retirement is to be cut from 140 per cent. to 100 per cent. of the maximum rate of disablement pension. Industrial death benefit is to be abolished for deaths occurring after 11 April 1988 with the higher weekly rate of IDB being restricted to the level of widows' pensions. The net effect of these petty cuts is to reduce the protection available to victims of industrial accidents and disease, particularly after they retire. The cuts will be particularly felt by those who become victims towards the end of their working lives. The cuts will save only £3 million in 1989-90, rising to £11 million in 1990-91.

With regard to clause 3 of the Bill, why is the Minister so anxious to change from primary legislation to regulations? Is it because it will allow the Minister to avoid future detailed parliamentary scrutiny?

What of clause 4? It is the avowed aim of the Government, and particularly of the Secretary of State, to support individual independence, yet clause 4 will have the opposite effect. By removing 16 and 17-year-olds from income support the Secretary of State is forcing thousands of young people into dependency on their parents while reducing the amount of money available to their families for their upkeep from £19·40 a week to £7·25.

What will happen to young people who have left home and are estranged from their parents? What will happen to those who left to avoid domestic violence of child abuse? What will happen to young single parents or those young people abandoned by their parents? They are able to claim income support only if they are specially exempt by the regulations; otherwise they are at the mercy of the Secretary of State—and we all know that his record of generosity is far from good.

Potentially, clause 4 could lead to unimaginable hardship for some young people. Many young people will be forced to take up a YTS that is totally inappropriate or face a life of poverty. Some young people may even be deprived of any independent means and may be forced to turn to crime.

By this legislation the Government wish to withdraw benefit from young people who choose, deliberately, to be unemployed. However, there is no evidence that that is a particularly large group. Regulations already exist to reduce the benefit of those who refuse to take up YTS or leave early for no good reason.

Official figures show that between December 1983 and April 1987, some 25,502 people suffered a reduction in benefit for voluntary unemployment. Of those, the vast majority were early leavers from YTS, and only 2,225 had refused an offer. On average, each year 8,000 young people leave YTS early and only 750 people refuse to enter a scheme out of a total of 1·6 million people. In other words, the scope of the proposals is out of proportion to the size of the problem. The Minister is using the proverbial sledgehammer to crack a nut.

In clause 5, the contribution conditions for unemployment and sickness benefit are made stringent—claimants will have to work continuously for a two-year period. This will seriously hit many young people, married women and seasonal workers, forcing them back to dependency on means-tested benefits. I am informed reliably by the citizens advice bureaux that this will enable the Secretary of State to save £10 million in 1988-89, rising to £70 million in 1990-91. But at what a shameful cost.

In regard to clause 7, will the Minister tell us which other bodies will be entitled to arrange to pay benefits during an emergency? Will this be a back-door way of introducing privatisation?

Clause 10 gives too much power to the Secretary of State, who will effectively be judge and jury on the running of the social fund. I am extremely concerned about the power of the Secretary of State when he seeks to allocate and reallocate funds as he sees fit. If he can reduce the funds available without warning the social fund and social fund officers, he could put those officers in an intolerable position. They would be unable to advice claimants adequately because they would not be sure whether funds would be available to meet claimants' needs. Such a system would be completely inflexible and a recipe for disaster. Once again, there is potential for considerable hardship and distress if loans that are expected to be repaid are not repaid.

I am extremely concerned that the money available for severe weather payments should be included in a separate budget from the social fund, because of the difficulty of predicting demand. It is vital that old people should be able to put their heating on in the extremely cold weather that we experience every year, secure in the knowledge that they will not be forced into debt. Why is there no provision for a right of appeal against the refusal of any claim for a severe weather payment? That appears to be extremely unjust.

I congratulate the Minister, because the Bill is more carefully drafted than most, but many of the proposed cuts in national insurance-based benefits seem counter-productive; they will lead to an increase in claims for the means-tested income support. The Government clearly feel that this can be financed by the cuts in income support for 16 and 17-year-olds.

There are so many cuts and retrograde steps in the Bill that will hit parents, children, elderly, disabled or sick people that we will most certainly be voting against it.

5.27 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I, too, would like to offer my warm congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on a graceful and competent maiden speech. He has a perfect right later to have a small celebration of his great success. One of the things I admired about his speech was his firm adherence to the tradition of the House—the oak of tradition which has given us the Galleries, the panelling, the seats and the Floor of the House, and much more—the confidence of hundreds of years. More of the new Members coming into the House would do well to follow the example of my hon. Friend by having a great respect for tradition.

This debate reminded me of when I visited Disneyland some two or three years ago. In the haunted castle section I saw a picture which, when viewed from one point, was extremely beautiful, calming and even uplifting, yet from only two or three steps away was horrible, wicked, evil and cruel.

I have listened with interest to the speeches of Opposition Members and I find them extraordinary. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) has claimed that the Bill is intended to be used to claw back money from those who need it most. That is untrue. More money is to be made available under family credit for those who need it most, which is what we all want. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has spent his time in the Chamber this afternoon failing to hear what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had to say. Some of his criticisms of the Bill were based on false conclusions and did not reflect my right hon. Friend's explanation of this measure. If the hon. Gentleman had listened, at least one or two of his worries would have dropped from his shoulders.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The hon. Lady claimed that the Government are being more generous to those who are in greatest need. How is it that the parliamentary draftsmen have made the terrible mistake of identifying a net saving if the Bill's provisions are implemented?

Dame Jill Knight: I have already said that public money should be directed to those who need it most. The Government should be given credit for directing more money to those who are in that position and for not paying out money to those who do not need it.

It is time that someone spoke on behalf of those who have to foot the bill. The letters in my mailbag and the remarks that are made at my surgeries often reflect considerable anger that money is provided for people who do not need it. The social security budget is running at about £44 billion per annum, which is a tremendous sum. Those who contribute towards that sum from their hard-earned wages, salaries or whatever have the right to know that their money is being used to help those who are in need and not wasted on those who are not. Many who pay taxes are less well off than some of those who receive benefits. It infuriates the poorer taxpayer when he finds that he is paying out money to youngsters who choose deliberately to remain unemployed.

It is right that the Opposition should draw attention to youngsters who are trying to get jobs but cannot do so, but it has been outlined clearly that the training system that is to be offered to them is such that if they refuse to take a place on it they will forfeit unemployment pay. What is so bad about that? The people of West Germany and other European countries have already introduced a regulation that denies unemployment pay to youngsters who choose to remain unemployed and not receive training. We always hear a great deal about other European countries when it suits the Opposition's book to make comparisons, but in this instance our European neighbours take exactly the same approach as ourselves.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): If the hon. Lady wants to draw a comparison with West Germany, would it not be fairer to give a fuller account and contrast the level of youth unemployment and youth opportunities in that country with those in the United Kingdom and the attendant real value of benefits as a proportion of a national wage in West Germany as opposed to one here? I think that she will find that benefits in West Germany provide a considerable contrast to the paucity of benefit levels here.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. The Germans take the reasonable and sensible view that is being taken on the Government Benches, and surely that is right. He knows as well as I do that comparisons of welfare benefits between one country and another are almost impossible to make in a reasonably short speech.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Has my hon. Friend considered whether the Hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is aware that the amount paid in wages to someone undergoing tuition or an apprenticeship in West Germany is infinitely less than the sum paid in Britain?

Dame Jill Knight: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is so aware. That is why I said that he could not get away with it.

[Dame Jill Knight]

I am most anxious that the need of industry for better training of young people should be met. It is unfortunate that at present it is not. I am pleased that part of what we are discussing will lead to an improvement in training.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston, (Mr. Cook), who made his speech and rushed off for something that is doubtless terribly important, having left a most competent deputy in his place, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), said that he was concerned that young girls would no longer be able to leave home unless they could prove that it would be difficult and perhaps unhappy for them not to do so. He gave the example of young girls being subjected to sexual harassment.

The taxpayer expresses concern from time to time that he should be forced actively to encourage young children to leave home. Let it be clear that young girls who leave home are in considerable danger, as are young boys. Many of them come to London, and I do not wish to dwell on the fate that awaits some of them. It is true that taxpayers' money has actively encouraged this to happen in the past, and it is no bad thing if we are moving away from that.

Ms. Armstrong: I am sure that the Hon Lady will be aware that there are other emotionally stressful situations, such as those that are being experienced in Cleveland. It remains unclear whether, after a couple of months, there will be the entitlement to benefit. This is an issue that needs to be clarified and I thank the hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene.

Dame Jill Knight: I am all for clarification. I can assure the hon. Lady that the concern to which I have referred exists. It is no part of the taxpayers' remit to break up families or to assist young ladies who would be infinitely better cared for in their own homes. That is all that I am saying.

We have heard a good deal about the attendance allowance. Again, this is an example of the Disneyland picture. I understood that the attendance allowance was introduced so that those entitled to it—those who need it to be looked after day and night—could be cared for adequately. The Government are not moving the goal posts. Instead, they are providing clarification. I have fought Governments over various welfare benefits in my time as much as anyone else——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I shall finish the point that I am making before giving way again.

It was always clear that the attendance allowance was introduced to assist those who need care day and night, and who, without such care, would be a danger to themselves or others. I have always understood that to be the nature of the allowance.

I remember being greatly upset about the case of a constituent amputee who was unable to receive the benefit to which I thought he was entitled because his leg had been amputated one inch lower than the point that would have triggered the payment of benefit. I was angry about that man and fought his case hard. However, in the final analysis it was not, of course, for me to say whether he should get attendance allowance; it was for the doctor who cared for him to say whether he could walk with the help that he had received.

Surely it is not for us to say whether a person needs constant attendance. We give that responsibility to doctors by saying, "Does the patient need constant care? If so, the constant care allowance will be payable." As I understand it, that has not changed. However, the courts, as courts do sometimes, throw a different interpretation on what the rules were thought to be. I am afraid that I do not consider that the provisions are moving the goal posts in the way in which some Opposition Members appear to think.

I turn now to the single payments that are to be abolished by the Bill. Considerable annoyance has been expressed to me by people who have seen entire flats, from the carpets and curtains to three-piece suites, being furnished by the DHSS. Many people have said to me, "I have a job making ends meet. I need a new carpet in my sitting room but I would not dream of asking the taxpayer to pay for it."

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: No, I shall not give way. I must be allowed to finish my sentence.

It seems that nothing will satisfy Labour Members other than more and more taxpayers' money being poured out whether or not people are in need. I advise those Opposition Members that many thousands of people in this land do not look to the DHSS to provide them with a new carpet. They save up for it in the normal way as all of us have done.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. Will she join me in deploring the way in which the DHSS is deliberately delaying making single payments for furnishings, floor coverings, cookers and clothing in advance of the social fund so that hundreds of people in my constituency, and in others in inner urban areas, are denied any furnishings for their flats and are forced to sleep on the floor because of the incompetence of the DHSS, which is not making the single payments that it is required to make by law?

Dame Jill Knight: It is outrageous for the hon. Gentleman to use his position in this House to attack good and efficient servants who try their best to carry out the remit that has been laid upon their shoulders.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. If he has something to say he should say it in his own speech. Does he honestly think that anyone should be allowed to go along to a DHSS office and say, "I haven't got a carpet but I shall take a cheque right now, thank you very much"? I am afraid that I do not agree with that.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he does not know what he is talking about.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: No, Opposition Members must recognise that DHSS money is not automatically endlessly supplied to people who simply feel like asking for it. Where there is real need——

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: Just a minute. Where there is real need the DHSS will pay. The hon. Gentleman is asking that there should not be any proof of real need, and on that point I cannot agree with him. I shall give way to the hon. Lady now.

Mrs. Beckett: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. She has accused my hon. Friend of not knowing what he is talking about. I recommend that the hon. Lady read the fifth report of the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's own advisory body, which states:

> "some expenses cannot realistically be budgeted for from within present benefit rates."

That was before the Government lowered the present benefit rates in their uprating statement the other day.

Dame Jill Knight: That is nothing like what the hon. Gentleman said. That fact is that those who need help to furnish their flats or homes can get loans for special items under this measure. That is right when 95 per cent. of people pay their own bills and save up for what they need. Those people have the right to ask us in this House to ensure that we are careful with their money. I should add that those loans are interest-free, which is a very good thing.

I direct my hon. Friend's attention to the abolition of the weekly additions — the heating, diet and laundry payments. I understand that most such additions will be covered safely by the new premiums. However, I wonder whether there is not a little break in the net. I refer especially to some disabled people who are newly reaching the stage of needing multiple additions. It is possible that they might be worse off. I know that the Government do not intend that those in real need should be worse off as a result of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider the position of those few people who may be caught in that trap. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not like it, but I shall speak whether or not they do.

In a letter that I have received from the Maternity Alliance, and which I have read carefully, it is claimed that clause 11 cuts eligibility for welfare milk. The letter states:

> "Two hundred and twenty thousand families on low incomes and on family income supplement will lose the benefit."

I turned keenly to clause 11 to see what it stated. Clause 11 is a perfect example of the art of the parliamentary draftsman in that few people can understand more than two or three words of it. However, it is absolutely clear from clause 11 that the Maternity Alliance's charge is not borne out. As I understand it, welfare milk for pregnant girls under 16 will be provided where the girl is part of a family that receives income support—I hope that the position is as I have understood it—and that if such a girl is a member of a family that is in receipt of family credit, the family will receive £2·55 per week instead, with which to buy the milk. Therefore, I cannot see that such alarmist suggestions are true.

I was amused that page two of the letter states:

> "I would ask you to support an amendment either in Committee or at the third reading designed to protect the right of pregnant women and children to free welfare milk."

I can remember a time when schoolchildren left their milk, especially girls, who thought that it was a fattening drink, in scores of bottles in the playground. Therefore, I am certainly not prepared to ask that all pregnant women or children always receive free welfare milk.

As I said earlier, if people are poor and cannot afford what they need I shall fight for them to my last breath. However, I shall not support those who are wealthy enough to pay for what they need getting it from the taxpayer who is poorer than them.

This afternoon we have heard Opposition Members say that public money should continue to be paid to people who choose to be unemployed, who become unemployed by choice, and to people who, according to the doctors — it is not our judgment — do not need constant attention. According to Opposition Members, people who would be able to furnish their flats by saving up should instead be paid out of the public purse, and income support should continue to be paid to encourage youngsters to leave home. Opposition Members take an extraordinary view of the Bill. I know that my hon. Friends will join me in the Lobby in supporting the Bill most fervently.

5.49 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on his speech. I certainly enjoyed the first part and I believe that he knows a great deal about Chelmsford, although not much about youth unemployment and the problems that it brings to families and neighbourhoods.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) made her usual controversial speech without facts and she certainly did not listen to some interventions. It was most unfair to make a little remark about my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) not being present. I do not know why he left the Chamber, but I must congratulate him on his foresight.

It is less than a year and a half since we last debated a Social Security Bill. Now we have another Bill which not only amends the bad legislation of the past, but which, despite the Government's denials, undoubtedly introduces new cuts for those in need of help and those on the lowest incomes. It was said that during the passage of the Bill in Committee in 1986 at least 1 million words were spoken, and my right hon. and hon. Friends and I who are here today will no doubt be present tomorrow to start yet another such batch of words.

Mr. Corbyn: We still have our voices.

Mr. Michie: As my hon. Friend says, we still have our voices. One million words are a great many words. I do not mind one million words being spoken, but I object to the fact that, despite them, we did not change the Government's mind and that millions of people are affected by the legislation.

In Committee in 1986, a Conservative Member confessed that the legislation affected just about every family one way or another. All have old people, many have claimants and many have children and disabled people. Although this Bill is not as large as the 1986 one, it will have similar effects on many thousands of families. It makes me wonder what goes through the minds of Conservative Members when, last week, they endorsed millions of pounds to subsidise the underwriters of the City and at the same time drafted legislation taking money from the poor, the vulnerable and those least able to defend themselves. I wonder what goes through their minds when they remove the rights and entitlements of

[Mr. Michie]

people who cannot articulate for themselves, unlike so-called underwriters who can and do so with greater influence. To take money from the poor is unjustifiable; to introduce new devious regulations which make it harder for those who cannot defend themselves to claim and receive entitlements is unforgivable.

It is not easy to make claims on behalf of constituents, especially claims for attendance allowance. I am glad that there seems to be some movement on that for those who need that allowance. It is difficult enough now, without any change in the regulations to make it more difficult. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends have fought cases for attendance allowance and lost them under the present legislation, never mind the new. I fought a constituent's case for two years and believed that we were near to winning it, but, unfortunately, he died a week before the final decision was to be made. There is no compensation for that. His widow had looked after him for two years while we argued the case. He was 60 years of age and only five stone in weight. I do not know what we must do to prove that someone is ill and needs constant attention. It is bad enough now, never mind in future.

Young people and families will be severely affected by clause 4. Obviously, the hon. Member for Edgbaston thinks that none of the needy will lose money, only skivers. I object to her suggestion that some of my constituents who will lose money under the Bill are skivers. They are not skivers by any stretch of the imagination. They have told no lies and their needs are great. But Government Members cannot recognise those needs through the glass of a champagne bottle, as they are viewed in some Tory constituencies.

It is a con to say, "We are extending family allowance. Aren't we generous?" We all know what the legislation is about; it is about saving money. The Government will pay £7·50, which is a frozen sum, and avoid paying income support. That is what the Bill is about and there is no argument about it. I would have more respect for the Government if they said that, instead of claiming that they were helping all those in need. Once again, the unemployment statistics are being massaged as the legislation ensures that 17-year-olds must stay at home with their parents, whether or not they are welcome and whether or not their parents can afford it.

The Bill will cause massive hardship to many families who are already suffering from unemployment and deprivation, particularly those in our northern cities. Therefore, I hope that the Government have the heart to change it and protect families in greatest need.

As usual, married women will suffer yet further cuts or at least have some of their privileges, rights and opportunities removed under clause 5. Entitlements will be more closely tied to full-time and continuous work. Obviously, that is not the case for many women who take time off for maternity leave or to look after the family. That always seems to be the job of women and I hope that one day we shall change that. Then, of course, more men in the House will moan about the lack of opportunity in legislation, such as in this Bill.

Each clause and schedule will be closely examined and opposed in Committee, whether it deals with attendance allowance, family credit, income support for young people, the reduction of the earnings allowance, industrial injuries and benefits, or a range of other benefits, such as severe weather payments and pensions which will also be adversely affected by the Bill. Those of us who serve in Committee will challenge all the Bill's propositions, if necessary line by line as we have done previously, to protect the poor, the old, the needy and the disabled in our constituencies. They are not getting a good enough deal now, without our taking further moneys from them.

5.57 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I am bound to express several reservations about the Bill, but I shall not elaborate on them clause by clause because I hope to have the honour of contributing in Committee or during the remaining stages of the Bill. That will provide an opportunity to ask Ministers to expound precisely on the impact of aspects of the Bill which are causing me and others considerable anxiety.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I consider the philosophy of the Department in introducing the Bill and the forecasts of what future policy is to be on the whole problem of the welfare state. I should like particularly to consider the economic factor, the relationship with the tax system and the social factors involved in the whole business of the redistribution of income. If we do not have a clear idea of our strategy we may make serious mistakes in our tactics.

Obviously, the Government have done a great deal to redress the balance between energy within the economy and inertia. We want to release the dynamic forces which will make the country more prosperous and find ways of getting rid of the various problems which prevent people from achieving the best for themselves and their families in creating wealth and making themselves independent citizens.

In the higher income ranges, the Government have released an enormous amount of energy and they are very much to be praised for that. There is still more to be done. I should like to see the end of higher rate tax altogether. I said that as long ago as 1971 when I served as a member of the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill and I have not changed my view. It must be counter-productive to bring pressure to bear on the people who are best able to create wealth and use the best discretion in the way in which they handle their investments. However, that is by the way.

At the lower levels of income, the Government have unfortunately not been successful in overcoming the problems of inertia among very large numbers of people. Britain today has the look of a country where there is not a large number of people available to do low-paid work. That, of course, is not the case; it is an illusion which we have brought on ourselves because our system for the redistribution of income is so very unsatisfactory.

I want to give the House some figures. The figures for the number of people claiming supplementary benefit clearly shows us that there has been a steady increase in the size of what one might call the static element in the economy — the people who are not or should not be contributing anything in terms of the creation of wealth. The Library has very helpfully provided me with the figures today. In November 1977, the number of supplementary benefit claimants was 2,991,000. By 1981-82, the figure had risen to 3,725,000. By February 1986, it had gone up again to what one might call the disastrous figure of 4,938,000. Those are claimants; I am not referring to their dependants. But by February 1987, the provisional figure for those claiming supplementary benefit had gone over 5 million, the exact figure being 5,008,000.

We do not know what the figures for the current year or next year will be. There is good reason for hoping that the figure will have declined somewhat, partly because of the extremely welcome reduction in the number of people unemployed and partly because a certain number of people are now able to rely on their occupational pensions in retirement instead of having to claim supplementary benefit in order to have enough to live on.

However, if we want to gain a measure of the true extent of the static element in our economy, we have to look at the total number of people, including claimants and dependants, in a single figure. That figure has risen from 4,759,000 in November 1977 to a figure that we now believe must be over 8 million, possibly as much as 8·5 million.

The steady rise in the number of people engaged in the redistribution of income industry handling that number of claims and looking into the number of people who need such support, is adding nothing to real wealth. I do not know the size of the redistribution of income industry, but when we take the private sector into account as well, including all the small employers giving a lot of time to the calculation of PAYE, the industry must employ at least 150,000 or perhaps 200,000 people. Between the lot of them, they are not adding a single pound to the actual output of the nation.

I want to consider the total number of people in Britain on income-related assistance before I leave that point. I do not think that the House has really appreciated the impact of an answer that I received from the Department of Health and Social Security on 14 April 1986. My right hon. Friend who is now Chief Secretary to the Treasury —I welcome his appointment there—stated that for the most recent available date, then 1983:

> "an estimated 14 million people were living in families receiving supplementary benefit, housing benefit or family income supplement."—[*Official Report*,14 April 1986; Vol. 95, c.*271*.]

What a very discouraging environment for so many of our young people, if we think of the number of young people among those 14 million living in a state of dependency on means-tested benefits of one kind or another.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been greatly praised by members of all parties because she has revived people's ambitions to take work in order to better themselves and free themselves from dependency. All Conservative Members would wholly endorse that. We also believe in the Prime Minister's maxim that people should save, be thrifty and careful with their means so as to build up a nest egg for themselves and their dependants.

When the Prime Minister says those things, she touches a chord to which everyone responds — or should respond; but among the 14 million people receiving means-tested benefit there will be a very large number who unfortunately will calculate that what the Prime Minister has to say about work and thrift somehow does not apply to them, because if they take the sort of work which they are likely to be able to obtain — which will provide rather low wages—they calculate that by the time that they have paid for decent clothes to maintain their appearance at work, travelled to work and met other incidentals, the family will be less well off than if they continued to draw benefit and remained in idleness. Of course, a very large number will also calculate that if they enter the black economy—continuing to draw benefit but also doing something from time to time to get a little money from here or there—they will be doing the best thing of all for their families.

It is not a satisfactory social or economic situation to hold such a large number of people in dependency on means-tested benefit; and it is a matter for regret that my hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in his decision this year not to uprate child benefit, has tipped another 40,000 or so people on to the heap who are already dependent on means-tested benefit and no longer able to class themselves as first-class citizens.

When one considers the social factors of a nation where such a very large number of people are dependent on means-tested benefits, what would one expect to find? What would we expect to happen when so many people have to see themselves as having a subordinate status? Child allowances, whether in the form of child benefit or the allowances to people claiming supplementary benefit, are really rather modest in relation to the actual cost of raising a child in decency. So one would expect to find an increase in the number of broken marriages. One would expect to find a rising number of children in one-parent homes. One would expect to see anxiety showing up in the consumption of tranquillisers and other drugs that actually undermine people's capacity for work and also lead them into criminal activities.

The persistence of evidence shows that subordinate status corresponds to the likelihood of below-average maternal and infant health; and of course we know from the perinatal mortality figures that social class is a very important corresponding factor in ill health. One would expect to find low school achievement where there is a high proportion of people living in conditions where they are obliged to rely on income support—for example, in the inner cities where the depressed tone of home life is reflected in below average academic performance of children and their participation in school life.

One would also expect to see a rise in crime. One would expect people desperate for more money from one place or another to indulge in handbag snatching, burglary, mugging, trading in stolen goods and the growth of the black economy, as they are stimulated by low income and the sight of plenty enjoyed by the more fortunate members of the population. One would expect to see a look of stagnation in our inner cities where a large number of people are of subordinate status and do not find it worth while to take regular paid work.

Of course, those are the things one would expect to find where there is such a large number of people dependent on means tests; and that is, indeed, exactly what we do find. The Government are faced with a serious problem.

Does the Social Security Bill help? Is the strategy of the Department right? I am bound to say that I do not think that the Bill significantly helps. In some ways, it seems to me that it actually makes matters worse; and I am not confident that the Department's strategy is right.

The existence of this large subordinate element is particularly adverse for women in Britain. One reason is that the tax system is not yet based on a unisex principle. In addition, when women take unskilled work, which is what is often offered to them when they belong to this unhappy subculture, they are generally very low paid. However, when families break up it is the mother who is generally left with the responsibility for the children, and

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the extra allowance that we pay for one-parent families does not go very far when the rent has to be paid and the children fed and clothed.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I look a little more deeply at the implications of what is now known as targeting, which a few years ago was called selectivity and before that used to be called the means test. It is not just the alienation of a large part of the population or the reluctance to work or save that creates this large mass of inertia that is holding back the performance of the economy. There are other problems which we must analyse and find solutions for.

Let us consider for a moment the reluctance to claim which people feel when benefits are targeted via the means test. We know that child benefit achieves almost 100 per cent. take-up but unfortunately we have learnt that the take-up of family income supplement is as low as only 50 or 60 per cent. Although we hope that the new family credit will achieve a higher take-up and confer more benefit, it will not hit the target 100 per cent., and no one claims that it will. Therefore, for a large number of people, targeting will miss the target. That is tragic when one considers the plight of very low-income families with children to look after.

People do not claim partly because of pride, and those are possibly the people whom we respect the most. At the other end of the scale, failure to claim is also due to incompetence, such as the inability to read and write or an inability to find one's way in English, as with many of my own constituents. Equally, the reluctance may be caused by the struggle of claiming, the hours of waiting, the humiliation and the circumstances in which people must make their claims in the DHSS offices. It might also be calculated that there are certain snags, because if people take work that does not last very long, they may find themselves in a very bad state thereafter.

Another problem about targeting which the Department should take into account is that it does nothing for people who are just above the level at which they are entitled to claim. Those people deserve our consideration. I am not happy about this emphasis on targeting, and I therefore wish to comment on income support in relation to income tax and national insurance.

It is rather an anomaly that we have brought down income tax to 27p for investment income, but for the working population income tax still stands at 36 per cent. That is because national insurance has been virtually taken into the income tax system and taxation therefore bears more heavily on those who work for their income than on those who depend on income from investments. It is almost as if we have got it the wrong way round; but that is how it is.

There are three grounds of entitlement for positive payments in our income support system. The first is proof of need, which is the basis for entitlement to supplementary benefit and the other means-tested benefits. There are also the national insurance contributions, and they are substantial. The national insurance contribution is a heavy tax to pay on top of the standard rate of income tax. It produces entitlement to the basic pension, to unemployment and sickness benefit and to certain other national insurance benefits which people are able to claim without proof of need, but on evidence of their contribution record. The third positive payment system is the citizenship entitlement. That allows people to claim child benefit. There can therefore be positive payments on grounds of need, on the record of one's contributions or simply because of citizenship. The Department has never really clarified its intentions as to which of those grounds of entitlement it favours.

There is another hidden welfare state that does not produce positive payments but which achieves the same result by negative allowances. That is the hidden welfare state which is contained within the income tax system. A single person is allowed to deduct from his or her income £2,425 before paying tax, which, if my calculations are right, has a net worth of about £900 a year at the present standard rate of tax. However, a married person is entitled to claim £3,795 before paying tax. That is a difference of £1,370, and, with income tax at 27p in the pound, I calculate that it puts the married person at an advantage of £370 a year over the single person on the same income.

We have now abolished the child tax allowance, which was a further way of differentiating between people with different family circumstances and which originated at the end of the 18th century with William Pitt. We now pay a child benefit instead, which is worth £377 for each child. A married person therefore pays £370 less tax than a single person on the same income, and a married family with a child gets a further £377 of net spending power for each child in the family. Had the amount been raised this year in accordance with the principle that we apply to the married person's benefit and extended to child benefit on the Lawson-Rooker-Wise formula the benefit would have gone up by another £16 a year. One might say that, in taking that sum away from 6,750,000 mothers — or whatever the number is this year—my right hon. Friend is not depriving them of a great deal; but his decision has caused much concern both in the House and throughout the country because of the implications of his gesture at this time.

I should like to think that it is simply that, in the struggle with the Treasury for resources to improve other parts of the welfare services, my right hon. Friend has been obliged to make a concession of some kind. I do not know whether that is true, but I would like to think that it is. In that case, one can possibly make an excuse for his having decided not to uprate the child benefit this year because currently other things are being introduced that will add to the outflow of money to people who need it. I hope that before the Bill leaves the House it will include a provision that adds child benefit to the other benefits hidden within the tax system and which go up with the cost of living in line with the Lawson-Rooker-Wise principle.

Child benefit is something that we should discuss, because, although an uprating is not in the Bill, there are references to it in the legislation. I do not think, therefore, that I shall be out of order if I say a few words about it. Let me run quickly through some of the arguments used by people who have not thought very deeply about child benefit. They say that it churns money around—takes it away and hands it back — and that that is not a practical method of administration. In fact, child benefit is by far the cheapest benefit that we have. No case work is involved, it can be handled by computers, and it is paid every week regardless of the ups and downs of family income. The churning argument does not convey very much meaning in the computer age.

It is also said that the rich do not need it. When I tackle people who say that, they always admit that tax cuts for wealthy people are good and are part of Conservative strategy, but they do not like the idea of rich people drawing child benefit. There are 4 million people who pay more in tax than they receive in child benefit, and for those 4 million it preserves the differential in favour of the family with children, compared with married couples with no children to support. Cutting the real value of child benefit, or cutting it out altogether, would narrow or eliminate the differential between families with children and those without. I cannot see why we should take away that differential in any particular area of the income scale.

Dame Jill Knight: Has my hon. Friend had the experience, as I have, of receiving communications—in this instance, it was a telephone call—after last week's discussion? A couple told me that they drew their child allowance only twice a year, to take on holiday as an extra sum. Does my hon. Friend approve of that?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Some people make their own choices about how they handle their family budgets, and we believe in people making their own choices. What we need to know is whether the children in that family are deprived or neglected when their parents spend that money on a holiday. How people handle their own budgets is a matter for convenience and discretion.

What is undeniable is that, if there were no child benefits—particularly for the 2·5 million who receive more in child benefit than they pay in tax—there would be much more deprivation among children. They would be expected to go on wearing shoes that do not fit any more for longer, or to eat carbohydrates instead of protein. There would be other reasons for the living standards of our child population being depressed. Some parents may not feel disposed to give up things to which they have become accustomed, and may feel that the children do not need quite as much as they would have spent on them if there had been more money coming in.

However, to say that child benefit should be ended because some parents waste it is like saying that education should be stopped because some children waste their time at school. I do not know whether the memory of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) goes back as far as mine, but I can remember what children looked like in south Wales during the depression, and they do not look like that in Britain now. One reason for that is that mothers have child benefit—albeit a small amount, but money in their own handbags—and the vast majority of women, thank God, spend it for their children's benefit, because they really care about their children. Of course, it is easy to find examples of people who do not, or do not seem to. That does not mean, however, that the 99 per cent. of mothers who are careful, and who do their best for their children, should be forced into deprivation.

Cutting down the real value of child benefit, or cutting it out altogether, narrows or eliminates the differential between families with children and families without them. I do not see why that differential should cease to exist for people who are better off. The Lawson-Rooker-Wise principle, which I think has been adopted on both sides of the House, preserves in real terms the differential between single people and married couples in the tax system. But it is not quite true to say that, when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor proceeds to a further cut in the standard rate of tax, he leaves the hidden welfare state with the same relationships between the different elements.

Cuts in the standard rate actually diminish the difference. A cut in the standard rate across the board is to the greatest advantage of single people, because they do not receive the tax concessions that are given to married couples. I believe that this year's tax cut was to the advantage of single people to the tune of about 50p a week. That is not very much, but another 2p off would make it £1 a week, and so on, by comparison with married couples on the same income.

One of the main objectives of tax cuts is to overcome the poverty trap, and to give the subordinate community more incentive to work. However, the percentage of total income taken in income tax from the national average wage of a married couple is now down to only 16 per cent. There is not much scope left for further large cuts in income tax. The idea of bringing in initial low bands of income tax, which is sometimes recommended, is, I believe, administratively impossible and a nightmare.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): My hon. Friend is quite correct in saying that the average amount of income tax payable in those circumstances is 16 per cent. What matters, however—and this is relevant to what he said earlier—is the marginal rate of tax. That is what gives the disincentive about which we are so concerned. The marginal rate, if we take into account the base rate of income tax and national insurance, is 39 per cent.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention. It is true that, for those entering work from part of the static society, the marginal rate of tax is likely to be 36 per cent. if they are receiving a worthwhile wage. But it is not that element that creates the poverty trap and fences people in. It is the loss of benefit that hits them suddenly and creates the disincentive to improve their lot.

Of course, I welcome reductions in taxation—who would not? However, if we are to do something about the enormous, inert mass of people in a subordinate position, it is on the benefit side that we need fresh ideas. Tax cuts go to the entire population, and are not targeted at the people whom we are trying particularly to help. That is why we need to concentrate on what happens to the benefits if we are the do something significant about the poverty trap.

I know that many people say, "This is a humiliating handout. It would be nicer if we could stand on our own feet and not be dependent on this kind of credit." I am not certain how many people feel humiliated about drawing child benefit, but nearly 100 per cent. take it up, and the people to whom I have just referred, who are on modest incomes and are just above the benefit level, really need it. I do not think that we should think only in terms of the parents who are able to send their children to Eton. Among the 4 million who draw child benefit but who pay more in tax than they receive in benefit there may be 1,000 Eton parents. However, the vast majority of couples with two children, particularly those on the national average wage or thereabouts, actually value the £14·50 net of tax that is coming in each week, especially as it is paid directly to the mother.

I believe that the right solution is to revive the concept of national insurance. The way to do that is to look again at what used to be called the tax credit system, but which I now prefer to call the basic income guarantee. I do not

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want to delay the House with too many further arguments, but I should like to say a few words about the basic income guarantee.

I think that we are all agreed, on both sides of the House, that in no circumstances will we force people through the bottom level of destitution so that they are unable to sustain life on the incomes available to them. If we insist that everyone must have some kind of basic income guarantee, let us try to provide it a little better than we do now. I do not like the strategy of the Department in this Bill, which seems to be to chivvy the inert element in the economy into the productive area by reducing the amount of benefit in certain cases, and restricting the eligibility for benefit in others. That is an unsatisfactory approach in a society that is able to look forward confidently to further tax cuts for those on the productive side of the economy.

Surely it would be better to give the millions who are now obliged to depend on means-tested benefits, with the resulting loss of self-respect and motivation, a helping hand. We should let them have an opening, an opportunity to choose to work to better themselves or to put savings aside for their dependants that is not, substantially, a fruitless waste of effort.

Let me read a few words from a document published in 1979. It states:

> "Our social security system is now so complicated that even some Ministry officials do not understand it. Income tax starts at such a low level that many poor people are being taxed to pay for their own benefits. All too often they are little or no better off at work than they are on social security.
>
> This was one of our principal reasons for proposing a tax credit scheme. Child benefits are a step in the right direction. Further progress will be very difficult in the next few years, both for reasons of cost and because of technical problems involved in the switch to computers. We shall wish to move towards the fulfilment of our original tax credit objectives as and when resources become available. Meanwhile we shall do all we can to find other ways to simplify the system, restore the incentive to work, reduce the poverty trap and bring more effective help to those in greatest need."

That is from the Conservative manifesto for the general election of 1979. Another paragraph in the same section reads:

> "We welcomed the new Child Benefit as the first stage of our tax credit scheme. One-parent families face much hardship so we will maintain the special addition for them."

I could also read from the White Paper "Proposals for a Tax Credit System" that was published in 1972, but I shall confine myself to two sentences of it. It says:

> "The tax-credit scheme cannot of itself offer a complete solution to all the problems of poverty. But to those within it, and this includes the great majority of people at work and everyone in receipt of the main national insurance benefits, it offers the prospect of a system of family support which would be easier to understand than the present one, which would provide its benefits largely automatically and which, being integrated with the tax system, would extend the benefit of tax allowances to people who have insufficient income to pay tax."

That White Paper was studied by the Select Committee on tax credit that was headed most ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark). I am sorry that he is not here now. Perhaps I might remind the House of the conclusions of his Committee after it had studied the tax credit proposals. It said:

> "The effect of the scheme is to give the same treatment to the very large majority of the population, with scope for differential treatment by giving selective help to those in greatest need and levying differential taxation on the highest paid."

Had I been my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South I should not have added that. But the report continued:

> "It would spread the effects of fiscal policy systematically. It should therefore be adopted; but in recommending the scheme we are not endorsing any particular level of tax, or credit or relativity. Selection of these levels will remain the essential ingredient of the policies of the Government of the day."

The objections to tax credit, brought out subsequently to those reports, were twofold. The first was that it would cost too much. The second was that the computers were not ready to do it. On the question of what tax credit would cost, a tax credit scheme — or basic income guarantee—could be pitched at any level of benefit and at any level of tax. It could be made revenue-neutral. It could even be introduced in such a way as actually to reduce the outgoings from the state.

On the question of computers, the right way to introduce computers into the redistribution-of-income industry is to do the thinking first: to decide what it is that we want computers to do, now that they are available, and then to start on the choice of equipment and writing the programmes. We see in today's edition of *The Guardian* the tangle that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is trying to cut through by new policies covering computerisation; but there is also a separate programme for the computerisation of the pay-as-you-earn system.

Much of the work that is being done by these two teams working on computerisation, who are taking all these years to get on with their job, is entirely wasted, for the simple reason that the thinking has not been done first. They are therefore trying to produce a system that will afterwards be a flexible one, rather than to set up a system that meets the requirements that have been designated from the start. If we had started in 1979 on a revenue-neutral tax credit scheme, it could now have been working for several years and we should not be faced with the huge inert mass of unemployed and unhappy people that we have at the present time.

A later occasion may possibly be the right one for me to make specific recommendations as to the way in which a super-simple basic income guarantee could start to be introduced, even in the next Budget. If they are interested in it, I shall be glad to write to my right hon. Friends.

The effect of the reform in the first place would be to reduce administration dramatically on the tax side for small employers and large employers too, and also for the Inland Revenue. There would be savings on the benefit side, too, because I am convinced that if we offered a basic income guarantee which was worth even half of what people are entitled to claim in supplementary benefit, hundreds of thousands would exercise the choice not to claim the balance of their supplementary entitlement but would prefer to go out into the world of work, keep their savings and avoid the humiliation of having to claim means-tested benefit.

There would of course be very substantial savings if we could induce a large number of people to rely upon a small basic income guarantee instead of the full amount of their supplementary benefit. Those savings could then be put into making the level of the basic income guarantee more satisfactory and a better stepping stone for those who want to lift themselves out of dependency. I believe that a basic income guarantee would give hundreds of thousands of people the opportunity take work without breaking the law and without hardship to their families.

I shall say no more at this point, but I hope that what I have said in this speech will be noted by my right hon. Friends. I hope that some study will be made of the possibilities of a different strategy from the Department's present course, which I am convinced is socially divisive, economically most unsatisfactory and truly disastrous for Britain.

6.35 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): In my work with the disabled over the past eight years I have seen the consequences of this Government's policies on the disabled. Far from targeting the cash on the disabled, the Government have tightened the screw.

The biggest losers under the new Bill will be new disabled claimants. Some of them will lose over £3,500 a year. Severely handicapped people living at home, perhaps with elderly parents, will lose help to heat their baths and rooms; they will lose assistance with laundry costs; they will lose cash for warm replacement clothing; they will lose a contribution to their diet; they will lose any special money for blindness. There will be a net loss of £72 a week over our present system, after payment of the new income support and the highest rate of the new severe disability payment.

Last week the Chancellor of the Exchequer provided a platform for the profiteers. Today the Government had the chance to provide a platform for the poor, but instead of doing just that the Chancellor will in future years save over £42 million from 360,000 disabled people who need help with laundry. The Government will save £7 million from 69,000 incontinent disabled people who need baths. The Government will save £5·5 million by cutting out of the present system 63,000 handicapped people who need clothes. As part of a £400 million cut, the Minister will save a further £49 million from 164,000 especially disabled people who receive a special heating addition.

The Chancellor's savings do not stop there, because 2,800 kidney patients will lose over £1·5 million as part of an £80 million cut, while 4,500 housebound handicapped people will lose up to £48·70 a week — and more. Furthermore, 35,000 blind people will lose up to £7·70 a week to save the Chancellor £2·5 million. Moreover, 6,000 people with relatives in hospital, whom they are visiting, will lose £1·5 million, as the fares to visit their relatives are withdrawn.

The Prime Minister claims that she wants to set people free. Where is the freedom for the senior citizens who will be unable to heat their baths or their rooms? Where is the freedom for the blind householder who cannot afford a telephone? Where is the freedom for the kidney patient who cannot afford a proper diet? Because of this measure, they have no freedom. Sadly, that is how this Government apparently want it to be.

6.38 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I shall not take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). How anyone can make sense of them, after the Government have spent £2·5 billion more, in real terms, since 1979 on the disabled, I do not know. The Government have spent 70 per cent. more, in real terms, than they did in 1979, and they intend to spend an additional £60 million next year on the disabled. It does not therefore seem to be worth while to take up the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

However, I wish to comment on the speeches of two other previous speakers. I refer, first, to the new hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). As has been said already, he made an exellent maiden speech. I went to speak for him several months ago, and I was very impressed. On behalf of his 12,000 commuters, he was busy travelling up and down on the train in an effort to improve the services that the commuters receive. Clearly, virtue was rewarded, and we welcome him to the House.

I want to speak in more depth following the remarks of my extremely distinguished hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). He has studied the question of income maintenance and family support in great depth and with great knowledge. He appreciates the profound questions involved. He is not somebody who considers short-term political interest; he has a real understanding of the incredibly complex network of social security benefits and tax supports. He spoke with feeling about the need for a basic income guarantee.

The area with which I am most concerned is the danger of failing to co-ordinate a strategy for the support of children. He rightly said that we provide benefits for those in financial need, for disablement and on terms of citizenship. Many of us feel that as a country we rightly support the vulnerable in their old age and in their youth and that, rather than a preoccupation with the redistribution of income between families with or without children, it should be seen more in terms of income maintenance throughout a lifetime.

For those hon. Members who are concerned about whether families are genuinely in acute financial need when receiving child benefit, I should like to make two comments. First, many people receive mortgage interest relief regardless of their financial need. Indeed, the better off one is, the more one benefits from that. I am aware of no plan to turn mortgage interest relief into housing benefit.

Secondly, it is increasingly said that there is a profound distinction between receiving a benefit and a tax relief. I appreciate that the ground has changed in this respect. Over a decade ago there were those who argued—I was among them although I was not at that time a Member of the House, but I spoke to a Committee in the House—about the importance of changing child tax allowance to child benefit. Nobody begrudged the well known Duchess of Westminster, who always seems to be mentioned in this context, having some financial recognition for her children, but it was argued that it was not right that she should have a greater recognition for her children than others. The child tax allowance meant that her needs were more greatly recognised. Therefore, child benefit, which gave all children equal financial recognition, was more appropriate.

We now live at a time when the social security budget is running at £44 billion. Understandably, every benefit is the subject of the greatest scrutiny. There are some who argue that benefits should be provided only to those in financial need — there are many other examples where benefits are allocated in terms of citizenship or disablement, but I understand the point—and if that is an overwhelming view, I would reluctantly support the reintroduction of child tax allowances. Now that the rate

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

of tax has been reduced so dramatically, the powerful arguments that appertained 10 or 15 years ago are no longer so powerful.

I would argue, in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, that child benefit has the advantage of having no stigma attached to it. It is easily taken up and provides a continuous form of income. In his statement last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State understandably decided to give much more financial help to low-income families because, as he argued, 3 million children would not benefit from the increase in child benefit. Therefore, he rightly gave more money to income support and family credit. The same process takes place when those families want to go to work. It is only by having child benefit that they do not then suffer from the poverty trap.

A further point in support of child benefit is that low-income families are frequently in a state of uncertainty and change. It is easy when describing a benefit structure to envisage every family as being financially static throughout the year. It is easy to imagine them like a photograph in which people are earning a certain amount and their responsibilities and accommodation are static. The reality for low-income families—my first job was working for the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) doing a research project on the budgeting of low-income families—is that they are in a frequent state of flux. People's domestic situations change, their income changes with longer or shorter hours and their accommodation changes. Therefore, child benefit provides the stability that is required.

I feel deeply and strongly that it is high time that 16 and 17-year-olds were no longer able to claim benefit in their own right. Many teachers have complained to me that it is difficult to secure regular attendance at school from 16 and 17-year-olds or those even younger. They have complained that it is easy and enticing for youngsters of that age to leave school, do nothing and claim social security—*[Interruption.]* I am interested by the reaction of Opposition Members, following the remarks of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I urge Labour Members to study the *New Statesman* with more care. A month ago the writers of an article on the youth training scheme said:

> "The youth training scheme . . . has emerged with real potential for improving education and training beyond 16 . . . Yet it too has been largely scorned by the left. There are signs that belatedly some of these schemes are now gaining support in Labour circles. As one of the most senior officials of the Labour-controlled"——

Ms. Armstrong: Will the hon. Lady accept that part of the agrument in the article was that we should encourage more young people to stay on in full-time education by making sure that they have the income support to enable them to do so? Will she acknowledge that that is the thrust of the argument?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady is not correct. The article is arguing strongly in favour of staying on at school. I will read a few more sections to make the point. The article does not mention income support for those staying on at school. Perhaps the hon. Lady would prefer to find separate ammunition for that point.

The article goes on:

> "As one of the most senior officials of the Labour-controlled ILEA told us 'You could argue that the MSC has done more for improving the opportunities of working-class children than the ILEA has ever done.'"

On the matter of staying on at school after 16, the article said:

> "Labour has been guilty of an abysmal lack of vision for the mass of pupils. The contempt for the YTS of many on the left has been proved wrong."

We have seen further examples of that today. It goes on:

> "YTS, as Tessa Blackstone remarks, is the first time this country has really done anything to help working-class kids after 16."

The article went on:

> "When Neil Kinnock spoke in the north in the election campaign, he deplored the fact that at 16 school leavers couldn't get jobs. This may be understandably extending sympathy to youngsters, but it is a naive and dangerous message. In our knowledge-based economy, there will be no decent jobs for the uneducated in future: Labour economists all say the same—everyone needs a broad-based education till at least 19, and throughout life. Young people must not be encouraged to think that they should be getting work at 16. On the contrary the message should be—as it is in France—that staying on is the norm."

Mr. Robin Cook: I assure the hon. Lady that her commitment to further education is most welcome. In the light of that commitment, will she address her mind to the problem of the estimated 30,000 16 and 17-year-olds attending further education colleges under the 21-hour rule who will be unable to do so if the Bill is enacted because income support will be withdrawn? Does she think that a youngster who is studying for two A-levels would be better off spending his time on a YTS course? Is that the best future that the hon. Lady can offer that teenager?

Mrs. Bottomley: I would be the first to argue that there could be more rationalisation of the mechanisms for providing assistance to those in further education or for those who are receiving education maintenance allowances. The basic point of the Bill—which the electorate thoroughly appreciated in the election campaign—is that there can be no justification for offering 16 and 17-year-olds who are living at home an allowance to stay at home except in exceptional circumstances or while they are bridging the gap before a training scheme.

I spent many years working with youngsters who, after the age of 16 years, were turned out from the education system with nothing to show for it. The YTS has been a most remarkable achievement. My hon. Friends will have visited many projects in their constituencies; a month of two ago in my constituency I visited a YTS course on computer familiarity. I saw there youngsters who had failed or been switched off by school, yet they were interested and motivated by training and learning and developing their skills. The former chairman of the MSC pointed out that of the 400,000 youngsters who had taken part in the scheme in a given year, their average level of achievement was one CSE.

Much more can be done. If we look at the factors that lie behind poverty, three essential aspects emerge: first, staying on at school or training; secondly, the length of time that a man or woman spends in his first job; and, thirdly, family breakdown.

The remainder of the Bill is concerned with tidying up or rationalising measures. Mention has been made of the social fund. I welcome its establishment. The single payment system had become the tail that wagged the social security dog. It was unpredictable, unfairly distributed throughout the country and consumed the most ludicrous amount of time. I support adequate basic scale rates and a social fund that can do the job properly. In terms of providing assistance to those low-income families who are in work rather than just dependent on benefit—as will now be possible for maternity payments and funeral grants —it is a great step forward.

Again, I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington about creating a dependency culture.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the hon. Lady accept that the vast majority of people who apply for a single payment do so because they are poor? Under the social fund rules they will be invited to incur a debt to the social fund. Those poor people will now not only be dependent on payments such as those that they can get, but on repaying a debt that, because of the nature of their income, they cannot afford.

Mrs. Bottomley: Those who are on low incomes fall into different categories. Some will be on a low income in the long term but others will be on a low income between like events, so the facility to obtain a loan will be extremely welcome. I do not agree with the hon. Gentlemen that there is a coherent link between those who claim single payments and those who do not. It is by no means the case that those who are the hardest up claim the single payments. Those who claim the single payments know how the system works. Above all, the social fund provides a more flexible method of response.

Mr. Darling: Will the hon. Lady accept that if Parliament sees fit to set up any benefit system, it is only right that everybody should apply for it? If some people know the ropes and can apply, all credit to them. We should be trying to create a system where everybody receives that to which they are entitled. Tory Members oppose child benefit because it has a high take-up rate and is easy to understand.

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not think that the hon. Gentlemen can be addressing his remarks to me, since I argued in favour of simplicity and proper scale rates, not a Legoland welfare state.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that for two years running many of my constituents applied for £800 for identical items and were startled when they did not receive that amount for the second year?

Mrs. Bottomley: That is one of many similar examples. The point is the vast amount of time that is taken up in administering the single payment system.

As to the concern that the welfare state builds up like Legoland, where one benefit is added to another, I noticed that in the social security uprating statement there were no fewer than seven *Hansard* columns of benefits. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) spoke of the needs of haemophiliac families, and I have a similar example in my own constituency. I debated as to the right way forward if we are not to tack on yet another benefit or yet another case to that total for which one needs not only to have stayed on at school for two years but another 10 years to master the different intricacies of the system.

I applaud the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who said that he is determined to rationalise further our welfare payment system. My right hon. Friend is right to emphasise that the thriving economy and welfare of our people depend on wealth creation rather than wealth distribution. The Government can afford to pay £44 billion on social security, with yet further increases, because of their success in mastering the economy. Pensioners, for example, have experienced an 18 per cent. increase in real terms since 1979. This, and more, can be achieved because of our economic success and growing prosperity.

6.57 pm

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): At the beginning of her speech the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West said that she admired the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) because he was not guided by short-term political interests. If the hon. Lady admires the hon. Gentleman for that, I am sure that she will vote against the Bill because it is guided by one thing only—short-term political interest.

I thank the hon. Member for Kensington for his clear and deep understanding of the importance of the child benefit legislation. He clearly understands the importance of paying that benefit to women so that they can use it directly for children. I hope that those on the Government Front Bench were listening to that point.

I emphasise another point that the hon. Gentleman made—the importance of people who fall just below the benefit level. Many people in my constituency—many widows who receive a pension from ICI or British Steel —fall just below that benefit level and, as a result, experience hardship. I hope that the Ministers were listening to the hon. Gentleman's comments. In view of his detailed and caring understanding of the Bill, I hope that they sign him up for the Standing Committee, to which he would make a useful and valuable contribution.

I emphasise the importance of placing the Bill in the context of social security legislation that has gone before it. The Government and the two previous Tory Governments have constantly attacked the social security system. I shall give a couple of examples to support that statement: the failure to uprate child benefit in line with inflation, and the cut in the single payment that was introduced in August 1986. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who was quick to criticise other people for not being in the Chamber, has now left. She clearly failed to understand the importance of single payment benefits and of the cut that has been experienced since August 1986. That is a cut of 50 per cent. The number of people receiving single payments fell from 2·4 million in the first six months of 1986 to 1·25 million in the first six months of 1987. That meant an expenditure cut from £173 million to £49 million. If the hon. Member for Edgbaston had stayed, she would have seen the importance of those single payments.

The Government's changes to the attendance allowance in clause 1 show right at the beginning of the Bill the type of cuts that the Government want to impose on people receiving some kind of benefit. Those who are already severely disabled will face greater difficulty.

The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), who has also left the Chamber, made a useful contribution about the importance of considering haemophiliacs suffering from AIDS. A 16-year-old teenager in my constituency is in that position. I hope that Ministers listen carefully to hon. Members when they talk about the importance of considering other people in this category.

[Miss Marjorie Mowlam]

It is important to realise exactly what the Secretary of State is doing with clause 1. He is reversing the decision reached in the law courts in the case of Moran *v.* the Secretary of State for Social Services in March 1987. The Government lost a point in the courts, so they are moving the goal posts by changing the law. Many people will be handicapped by this change. The lawyer speaking on behalf of the DHSS in the Moran case listed the groups who would be handicapped.

Mr. Robin Cook: He was a Government lawyer.

Miss Mowlam: That is absolutely right. That Government lawyer said:

> "It will affect, the Secretary of State believes, potentially a large number of claimants, because it affects not only epileptics which is the case before your lordships, but probably also diabetics, mentally retarded children, hyperactive children, asthmatic children, children with cystic fibrosis, certain cases of elderly people who suffered severe attacks of confusion, certain cases of strokes, and, in some cases, haemophiliacs possibly."

That is a detailed list of the claimants who will be affected by the changes in clause 1. It is interesting that the Secretary of State has said that 1,200 people will be affected, whereas during the Moran case the Government talked about many thousands. Clearly, there has been a jiggling of the figures. As soon as we have a law that is implemented sensibly and humanely, thereby benefiting those whom it was intended to assist, the Government change the rules.

I want to talk about clause 4 only briefly because my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has already spoken eloquently on the importance of this clause for young people. No young person over 16 and under 18 will be entitled to income support unless, to quote the Bill,

> "it appears to the Secretary of State that severe hardship will result to that person".

The Secretary of State will decide what is severe hardship. Ironically, when the Social Security Bill was discussed last year in Standing Committee a Conservative Member— the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell)— proposed an amendment along the lines of clause 4. The then Minister for Social Security—the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton)—spoke against it, saying:

> "Unless or until we could offer an absolute guarantee that a training place would be available on the day that a young person left school or otherwise became entitled to supplementary benefit, or unless we were prepared to leave such a young person without support until a place was available, there would have to be a surrogate social security system to fill that gap." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*; 4 March 1986; c. 547.]

The previous Minister for Social Security clearly understood the problems that a clause such as clause 4 would present.

The Cleveland county careers office cannot guarantee every 16 or 17-year-old a place on YTS. It is impossible. This must mean that the Government are now prepared to leave young people without support. I should like the Minister to offer us an alternative explanation, if he can, because Cleveland can see no alternative.

The previous Minister for Social Security was keen to say that certain disabled youngsters who received financial assistance would also be ruled out under the earlier legislation and would continue to receive assistance. We are interested to know exactly which disabled young people in the 16 to 17-year-old grouping are involved under this legislation. Clearly, there are people who are disabled to such an extent that they would fit the category without any question marks being raised, but many other young people with limited disabilities would have trouble on some YTS schemes. Will they fall into the net? Will they receive any income support as a result of this legislation? Will the Minister force managing agencies to take on young people? Unless employing managing agencies are forced to do so, there will be no places available.

I should like the Minister to look closely at lines 17 to 20 of clause 4(2) on page 4 of the Bill which imply that every young person who claims entitlement on the ground of severe hardship will have no right to appeal to a social security appeal tribunal if refused payment. This will happen because there is no right of appeal against the decisions of the Secretary of State. Is there a chance for young people to appeal? If not, much of what we have heard from the Government about individual freedom, choice and rights is clearly empty words meant for elections and not for the next four years of Government.

Clause 10, with schedule 3, refers to cold weather payments. There is a tendency among Conservative Members to talk before elections about pensioners when it suits them and after elections to forget pensioners— because there are only two pensioners in the Cabinet— and the problems they face. Must we wait, as we waited last year, for 700 old people to die of hypothermia before we look more carefully at cold weather payments? Must we wait for about 35,000 old people to die from cold-related illnesses, as they did last year, according to Age Concern? Must we wait for the Government to look at those figures before they consider the payments in more detail?

Of course we are pleased that cold weather payments are subject to regulations and are not discretionary, but we should like the Minister to consider a number of aspects. Why is the trigger level at 0 deg C? Is that too harsh? Should it be relaxed? Is the present £5 payment sufficient, or is it, as many Labour Members think, totally inadequate to meet the bills that many will face in cold weather? Are the cut-off points—under two years and over 65 years—right? Many would argue that up to four years or over 60 years are much more realistic levels for the operation of cold weather payments.

I hope that Ministers have listened to the arguments on the Bill's details which have been put in all honesty by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Member for Edgbaston emphasised the problems that she perceived and referred to people receiving benefits as though they were scroungers or skivers. The hon. Lady clearly does not hold surgeries or talk to her constituents. Week in, week out at my surgery I see constituents who do not have a bed to sleep in, who do not have cooking utensils. These people are not skiving or using the system; they are desperately in need. The Government should realise that and understand the problems that people face. They should also look again at their arguments. They say that they do not want to create a culture in which people depend on benefits. The way to change matters is not to start fiddling around with benefits and depriving those at the bottom end of the scale but to look at the labour market and to start to create the jobs that will solve the problem for them.

7.10 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Redcar (Mrs. Mowlam). She made an able and telling speech, although I did not agree with much of it. Her speech was not as controversial as those of my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) appeared to have been—judging by the noise from Labour Members. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), I hope to pour some healing balm upon the debate and introduce another thoughtful note.

I welcome the Bill in general because it continues the reform that we have set out to achieve of the vast and virtually incomprehensible mass of benefits that we have inherited, created by ad hoc decisions over 40 years. Clause 4 in particular, seems to constitute a return to the form of social insurance envisaged by Beveridge. Beveridge had it in mind when he put forward his scheme that if there were an unrestricted right to benefit there would be a danger that people would come to rely upon it and that it would sap their desire to work in certain circumstances. Beveridge said that after three or four months of unemployment, work should be offered instead of benefits. I remind Opposition Members—in case they missed the opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—that Beveridge wrote:

> "for boys and girls there should ideally be no unconditional benefit: their enforced abstention from work should be made an occasion for further training."

Mr. Corbyn: While the hon. Gentleman is on the subject of William Beveridge, will he accept that Beveridge also wrote "Full Employment in a Free Society" and was concerned about the elimination of poverty through the creating of jobs in society? The Government, on the other hand, are hell-bent on punishing the poor for being poor and on making the poor pay for the Government's impoverished economic policies.

Mr. Hamilton: It seems to me that the only punishment being inflicted on the poor in the hon. Gentleman's constituency is that they should have him as their representative, and he should remember that Beveridge was writing in rather different times on the subject.

Conservative Members contend that the development of the benefit system and the tax system that it has spawned to pay for itself has been a major cause of Britain's relative economic decline—certainly until 1979. The changes that we are now making will reverse that state of affairs. As we know, unemployment is falling faster in this country than anywhere else in the developed world.

While the Bill is good in itself, we need to go further and faster. I confess to having been disappointed by the results of the Fowler reviews. We have not done enough to deal with what my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington refers to as "churning", but which I prefer to describe as a vast exercise in carrying coals to Newcastle. We take money out of a person's pocket with one hand, only to put it back with the other. During the process, we have to pay administration costs and we create disincentives because of the high levels of taxation necessary to finance the process.

We should go further to reduce benefits and taxation while continuing to provide a safety net for those in real need. We need only look at the tables produced in "Economic Trends" from time to time. The latest figures on the effects of taxes and benefits on household incomes were published in July 1987. The figures show the extent of this exercise in carrying coals to Newcastle. The net beneficiaries of the welfare state in its present form are those on very low incomes indeed. The vast majority of people are paying for their benefits, and more than paying for them. Even for those on incomes as low as £3,500 a year — in some cases less — the break-even point is reached. It is not sensible or desirable to have a system in which probably as many as two thirds of the population — and perhaps as many as three quarters — pay for benefits out of their own pockets.

If we are to achieve our objectives of becoming a low-tax society, with all the economic incentives that that implies, we must deal with that problem. We need an even greater dose of radicalism than we have had so far. I suggest that we should be radical in the opposite sense to that recommended by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington in relation to child benefit. I appreciate my hon. Friend's arguments about basic income guarantee. We have rehearsed those arguments in the House on a number of occasions and I am always interested to hear what he has to say. However, I do not believe that a basic income guarantee can deal with the fundamental flaw in the present system, which is the necessity for the disincentive of higher marginal rates of taxation in order to provide universal benefits. It would be much better to seek to target the benefits more directly and distinctly. In that sense I take the opposite view from my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington about the form of social security that we require.

Others of my hon. Friends—most of whom are not in the Chamber at the moment—take a different line again. They are what we might call the Contras of the Conservative party. They inhabit the jungles and thickets of places such as Old Bexley and Sidcup and Chesham and Amersham and from time to time they come out in their guerrilla war against the Government to take pot shots at my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and others. Last week I heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) call my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State following his statement about child benefit, "insensitive". I can think of some of my right hon. Friends to whom the word "insensitive" might apply but I have never thought that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State fell into that category. For my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham, distance is lending disenchantment; the further he moves from the Government's general aims the more difficult he finds it to understand what we are trying to achieve.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham is joined in his opposition to the Government's aims by Opposition Members who have now become the yuppies' greatest friends; not only do they want to help the American underwriters, Goldman Sachs, but they want to provide child benefits for those on the highest incomes. They want child benefit to be increased so that the person paying income tax at the marginal rate of 60 per cent. derives the greatest benefit, equal to about £18 a week. They also want to increase it in such a way that the poorest people in this country gain nothing. That is what the effect of an increase in child benefit would be because for every increase in child benefit, other income-related benefits would have to be reduced.

Child benefit, which now costs £4·5 billion a year—10 per cent. of the social security budget — is a vast weight upon the economic, productive system of this country. The cost is equivalent to 4p on income tax., to a

[Mr. Hamilton]

20 per cent. increase in all personal allowances and to 4 per cent. on VAT. Child benefit is extremely poorly targeted. As has pointed out, the Princess of Wales is a beneficiary of child benefit. I know that Labour Members—with the exception of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—support the monarchy, but I had not realised that their enthusiasm for the institution went so far as to require the subsidy that it receives to be increased.

Child benefit is poorly targeted and the majority of its funds are wasted. The standstill in child benefit rates this year is welcome but I should like to move towards its abolition and to a complete rearrangement of benefits for children in poorer families.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): How would the hon. Gentleman reply to his hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) and others who say that the level of take-up for family income supplement, for example, is so pitifully low that we must be missing many that we wish to target? How will he overcome that?

Mr. Hamilton: The child benefit system should remain a cash benefit for those below the income tax threshold and become an allowance for those above the threshold. I would gross the benefit up so that the individual subject to taxation is as much in pocket as if he had a cash benefit. We would then concentrate on reducing the marginal disincentives to work inherent in the present high tax rates.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I respect my hon. Friend's arguments, although I do not agree with him at all. I wonder whether he is anxious to reduce the rate of tax, the benefit of which goes mainly to single people and simultaneously to end the distinction between the money we leave in the hands of married couples and in the hands of married couples who also have children to support. What is wrong in thinking that we ought to help people with children to support and not put them on the same basis as other couples without families?

Mr. Hamilton: Not having children myself I cannot be expected to support my hon. Friend in that. The system that I propose would not work in quite the same way that my hon. Friend envisages. I am suggesting a child tax allowance, grossed up for tax purposes according to one's marginal rate of tax. It will not be spread among childless couples, but targeted upon couples with children.

Mr. Kennedy: Even if that were to work—I am sceptical—will we not lose the beauty of the child benefit system which is that it finds its way directly to the caring parent? Nine times out of 10 that person is the mother. Would not that safeguard be lost under the hon. Gentleman's proposal?

Mr. Hamilton: One cannot generalise in that way. I know that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) is gallant but not everyone behaves in that way. To say that some fathers might not be so careful to protect their children's interests whereas mothers would is not borne out by experience. There is no way of knowing what the difference in take-up rate would be, but I cannot see any logical reason for saying that fathers are less likely to be solicitous of the interests of their children than mothers.

My proposal would go a long way towards restoring some of the essences of the welfare state. After all, in 1949 a married man with two children had to earn twice the family allowance trigger point before he paid any tax at all. Today, that married man with two children qualifying for supplementary benefit pays income tax on 25 per cent. of the supplementary benefit rate. That is ludicrous. People designated as being way below the poverty line are subject to income tax. It cannot be right to preserve a system under which people receive benefit from the state as well as being major contributors to the income tax system.

I believe that low taxation will encourage people and help to relieve absolute poverty. That is what we are about in the Conservative party. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in a thoughtful speech recently, the welfare state has been with us in a variety of forms for a long time and Conservative Governments have made considerable additions to it over the years. I believe the evidence to be incontrovertible. The low tax economies around the world have the highest economic growth and therefore the highest ability to relieve poverty in its absolute sense.

A report published by the World Bank compares the growth rates of high-tax and low-tax countries. Twenty countries were examined. The low-tax countries had a 7·3 per cent. growth per annum in the 1970s compared with 1·1 per cent. in high-tax countries. There was a 9 per cent. growth in employment opportunities in low-tax countries compared with less than 1 per cent. growth in high-tax countries. As the report said, higher rates of economic growth allow an expansion of the tax base, which generates increased revenues to finance the more rapid expansion of expenditure on Government services such as defence, health and education.

I do not accept that reductions in taxation will be obtained at the expense of those on low incomes. Lower taxation is the engine of growth, which gives us greater resources with which we can then reduce the burdens of the less fortunate in our society. We shall never bring tax rates down sufficiently so long as we continue with universal benefits such as child benefit.

I applaud the Secretary of State's speech on 26 September on the future of the welfare state. He said:

> "Dependence in the long run decreases human happiness and reduces human freedom. We believe the wellbeing of individuals is best protected and promoted when they are helped to be independent, to use their talents to take care of themselves and their families, and to achieve things on their own, which is one of the greatest satisfactions life can offer . . . welfare measures, if they are to really promote economic and social welfare, must be aimed ultimately at encouraging independence, not dependence."

I believe, therefore, that a reduction in the universality in benefits with a reduction in the tax rates which are necessary to pay for them, would bring about that independence to which my right hon. Friend addressed himself in that speech. Many people have been made more dependent because high taxes have removed their independence. Many millions of people have been pauperised by the welfare state which was designed to assist them. It has achieved the opposite.

The Speenhamland system has been reborn in the second half of the 20th century. Not only does the system sap the individual's independence, it fails to provide adequately for those in need. A good example is the death grant with which the Government have dealt. It was a miserable £30 which did not even begin to pay for the cost of a funeral. It was a universal benefit to which everyone was entitled, but now we can provide for those in real need at a distressing time without spreading the benefit among those who do not need it. I should like that principle to be extended to other areas of the welfare state.

I welcome the Government's broad theme in the Bill and in last week's statement on upratings. I particularly welcome clause 4. It represents a welcome step in the right direction even if it applies at present only to those in the 16 to 18-year-old group.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) if he was saying that the change proposed in the Bill represents a change in the principle of the social security system. When the present system was introduced in the 1940s, 15-year-old school leavers were never entitled to claim national assistance immediately, as it was payable only from the age of 16. We propose to introduce a provision applied during the regime of a Labour Government. In effect, we are returning to a system which Beveridge advocated and which the Labour Government of the late 1940s accepted.

We are not making a huge jump in principle by making the change in clause 4. It is a common-sense measure which will be widely welcomed throughout the country. It can never be right for us to subsidise deliberate idleness, nor can such idleness be right for those who may be tempted to be sustained by it. Young people have everything to gain from training and career development. They have nothing to gain from simply sitting on their backsides on the dole, for whatever reason. The measure is designed to reduce that temptation and, therefore, it is greatly to be welcomed.

We have made enormous advances in the introduction of training for young people since 1979. We should never forget that virtually nothing was done for the training of young people until this Government came into office in 1979. The youth opportunities programme and later the youth training scheme, now extended to two years, have benefited more than 1 million people since 1983.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) appears to believe that training began only in 1979. Does he know anything about the industrial training boards, which produced very good trained people, yet were abolished by this Government? Does he not know that we had an excellent apprenticeship system which paid the rate for the job as the young person grew older?

Mr. Hamilton: We discussed the arguments for industrial training boards in the last Parliament. I know that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) wishes to introduce a 1 per cent. training levy on employers to extend the industrial training board scheme, although those boards were not as successful as the hon. Lady might think. Many employers who had to pay for the boards did not regard them as cost-effective. Previous Governments, both Conservative and Labour, have done little in this direction, so this Government deserve credit.

Since 1983, 1 million youngsters have benefited from the youth training scheme and more than two thirds of them have gone into jobs, further education or other training schemes. We must be concerned about the other one third. That is one of the reasons why we introduced this clause. During the debate on the Employment Bill tomorrow, we shall be able to fit the remaining pieces into the jigsaw and that will greatly benefit young people.

We are making this change in the interests of young people. If young people have come to the job market in recent years with exaggerated expectations which could not be met and, as a result, remained unemployed unnecessarily, that is possibly due to their diminished means of fulfilling those expectations. That, in turn, is a result of the failure of our education system, particularly in the deprived inner-city areas, not least because of the anti social attitudes of the Labour councils which control those areas, but I do not intend to go into that matter.

I welcome clause 5 because, under its provisions, we shall return to the principle of social insurance which Beveridge supported and which dates from the beginning of the national insurance system in the early years of this century. Unemployment benefit was never intended for those simply taking early retirement. I know from personal experience, however, that that has been a widespread feature. Indeed, my father retired early and availed himself of unemployment benefit because he was entitled to do so under the rules of the scheme. Millions of people have done that. In my constituency in 1979, ICI employed some 20,000 people, a great many of whom retired early under the excellent ICI pension arrangements. It is probable that thousands of them availed themselves of unemployment benefit, although they were by no stretch of the imagination unemployed.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: I am reluctant to give way again because I am aware that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

The Government are restoring the national insurance system to the purpose for which it was founded. Far from what the hon. Member for Livingston said, we are not moving away from the radical scheme of Beveridge—rather, we are completing the scheme that he envisaged. I would like the Government to go further and faster down that road and reduce the burden of the welfare state and reduce its scope so that it covers only those in real need.

7.36 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): It is clear that parsimony and meanness are the hallmarks of this legislation. Indeed, the main objectives are to reduce public expenditure and take away people's rights. It was well planned, because, in a letter to me of 11 February 1987, the former Under-Secretary, the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Sir N. Lyell), said:

> "In recent years the rate of increase in the number of single payments has grown out of all proportion to the numbers on benefit. For example, in 1985 over 4 million single payments were made at a cost of around £308 million—increases of over 40 per cent. in numbers and costs in that one year alone. No Government responsible for proper planning and control of expenditure could regard this level of growth without concern."

The Minister stated that the cost of single payments in 1985 was £308 million. Yet this Government, defying the Social Security Advisory Committee's advice that the social fund was unworkable without an expenditure of £350 million, are now budgeting for £200 million. We assume that that £200 million will include loans to be repaid to the budget by poor people. They often live in miserable circumstances — the sort of circumstances apparently unknown to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), whose interventions were tragedies dressed as comedies.

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Some 6,000 people claiming attendance allowance are having their cases determined by the Government, yet, taking the April 1988 uprating into account, the Government will save only £60,000. If epileptic, diabetic and other disabled people — some 300,000 of them — were to claim, the cost would be only £3 million in a social security budget that this Government claim will cost £44 billion.

The Government must make up their mind why they are reversing the decision of the Court of Appeal. Are they saying that the judges misunderstood the law, or are they saying that the law was wrong? If the former, why did the Government not appeal to the House of Lords? I suggest that it was because the House of Lords may have given the same answer as the Court of Appeal.

I must raise a point about young people and income support. The infamous Lord Young said that young people are lying in bed in the morning. I wish that he would come to my constituency in Liverpool and utter those words. I do not know what the Merseyside police bill would be, but I would take a chance on it. Another Tory who addressed the Tory party conference at Blackpool said that people in Liverpool and on Merseyside were not trying to find work. He said that if only they would come down the motorway to Bournemouth, where he lives, he would show them how to get work. They took him at his word, hired a coach and went to Bournemouth. That Tory had to have a police cordon around his house because of the wrath of the Merseyside people. When he was approached, he had to withdraw his comments. When the Merseyside people went to the jobcentre in Bournemouth, they found that there was no question of finding a job easily or of obtaining accommodation.

The Government recently commissioned a survey that showed that the number of unemployed school leavers who preferred to go on the dole rather than remain on benefit amounted to only 0·2 per cent. In other words, more than 99 per cent. — on the Government's own figures — are eager to find work and training. If this measure is passed, the Government will have to find an extra 100,000 YTS places, at the very least, to accommodate all those unemployed school leavers who require assistance. Currently, 70,000 to 80,000 school leavers have not yet had the offer of a YTS place. Will unemployment benefit be ended after the first, second or third offer?

Many young people want to undertake real courses. I know that some YTS courses have their attributes, but there can be no doubt that many are regarded by young school leavers wanting additional educational training as nothing more than Mickey Mouse courses. Indeed, some of them have been proved to be just that. Some youngsters opt to study part-time courses at colleges of further education. At the college that I attended before I came to this House, numerous young people were studying for three A-levels. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned two A-levels, but it is possible to do 18 hours a week — six hours each on three A-level subjects. Those young people are gainfully employed studying to improve their prospects, but they will now suffer through the further education cuts.

Many people who are remote from colleges of further education opt for a correspondence course. What will happen to them? Will their unemployment benefit be docked because they have taken a course with the Rapid Results College or some other institution? Is that the Government's answer to those who really want to find work and do far from lie in bed all day? This is supposed to be the Government of choice, but what choice will they offer those young people? How will they police the system? Will there be an army of snoopers? I am sure that that is on the cards.

The social fund proposals remove the right to additional help for the major expenses not covered by weekly benefit. Even under the present system of single payments, many people find it difficult. They rely on single payments for the provision of, for example, a gas cooker. They are often forced to go to a second-hand salesman who would sell them a cooker that might be dangerous or might break down in a relatively short time. Now, under the three-year rule introduced by the Government's regulations in August, those poor people often have to go without any cookers.

The social fund payments will not be administered in an objective way. Indeed, there will be no payments, only loans. Such loans will be given to people who are in dire need and who will have great difficulty in finding a way to repay them. Those loans will depend upon the subjective decisions of managers and social fund officers at local DHSS branches. If the social fund budget is to be limited to £200 million, will it include the amount owed by claimants on outstanding loans? There is nothing in any statement that I have seen to refute that suggestion. In fact, only £60 million has been set aside for grants, yet the social fund is supposed to cover maternity and funeral loans as well.

There is no doubt that when more and more poorer people are forced by the cash-limited social fund to look elsewhere — indeed, there is a provision in the Bill that they should go to other bodies first; voluntary organisations have been mentioned — they will go to local authorities. Those local authorities are already hard-pressed. Indeed, at present local authorities are unable to stand by their present statutory and legal obligations.

Let us consider the position of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). As Minister for the Disabled in September 1977 he said:

> "The interpretation of the law"—

the 1970 Act—

> "is, of course, a matter for the courts. But I am advised that local authorities have a clear statutory duty under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act to meet identified and accepted needs in respect of all the services in Section 2.
>
> I am further unequivocally advised that services given under this Section may not be withdrawn in the absence of a reduction of need. This means that any authority which sought, for example, to withdraw a telephone provided under the Act, solely on the grounds of financial expediency, would be breaking the law."

Mr. Alfred Morris: My hon. Friend has raised a very important point. He has accurately reported the legal advice given to me as a Minister. Is he aware that, from all my inquiries, the advice given to my successors is in no way different? Voluntary organisations, often for disabled people, are increasingly concerned about the impossible position in which local authorities have been placed.

Mr. Wareing: That is my point. Even in the present circumstances of stringency imposed by the Government

—withdrawal of rate support grant, penalties, the targets and the expenditure levels that have been set by central Government — the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act is not being enforced by councillors. They are being made to break the law by the Government. Such councillors will break the law on a larger scale as more and more people are forced to go to social services departments as a result of the Government's reversion from single payments to the social fund. There is no doubt about that.

This is the Government who stand aside and let councillors in Liverpool be disqualified and surcharged for trying to enforce the law with regard to social services and housing policy. This is the Government who supposedly believe in the rule of law, but will sit back and allow local authorities simply to defy the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

The social fund is to be forced upon us with social fund officers asking intrusive questions of old and disabled people. Confidentiality is likely to be breached as local authorities and voluntary organisations are asked to provide information to social fund officers. All that will happen if this legislation is allowed to go through.

One thing is quite clear: the words of the former Secretary of State for Social Services will not be carried through if this measure reaches the statute book. On 3 June 1985 the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) said:

> "We shall ensure that the structural changes"——

in social security—

> "will not result in cash losses by those who are now in receipt of supplementary benefit."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 49.]

When we look at the Government's proposals for the cash-limited social fund, who can any longer believe what was said then?

During the general election campaign many of us will remember a famous party political broadcast by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. It certainly stole the day as regards election broadcasts. However, there was another election broadcast that I remember very clearly. It began with the tune "I Vow to Thee, My Country". We then saw the former Secretary of State for Social Services and the Battle of Britain fliers going off in their Spitfires and Hurricanes and the hazards that the people in those years—45 years ago—suffered during the second world war. The patriots on the Conservative Benches—who no doubt will be wearing their poppies and attending cenotaphs on Sunday—might bear in mind that many of those who, 45 years ago, were desperately fighting for the liberty of the British people, are precisely the sort of people who will now suffer as a result of the institution of the social fund and the attacks upon poor people through this Bill.

The measure before us represents a continuation of this reactionary Government's punitive expedition against the poor, the old, the unemployed and the disabled. The Government speak with a large majority, but we, on the Labour Benches, represent the large majority of people who are poor and disadvantaged. We represent the conscience of all that is decent in our society. We will fight this unworthy Bill clause by clause in Committee. Our opposition must not stop there. We must make common cause with all those organisations and individuals outside this House. No Minister should appear in public or on a platform outside the House without being constantly reminded of the people's wrath. That should be a deserved consequence of this further attack on the standard of living of those in our society least able to defend themselves.

7.54 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. I support the basic principles underlying the Bill, and the Social Security Act 1986.

Although I listened with care to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), I could not find anything which contradicted the basic thrust of what the Government are trying to achieve. The hon. Gentleman raised all sorts of detailed criticisms and worries about what might happen, but he made no logical case against the Government's basic aims. I shall remind hon. Members what those are and make a few remarks about one or two aspects of the Bill.

The Government aim to encourage greater independence by, for example, reducing the disincentive to work which results from the poverty and unemployment traps; to simplify the system, and help it to provide, on the basis of easily identifiable and understandable criteria; to concentrate help directly on those whose needs are greatest, such as low-income families with children, and to improve the service to the public by making the system easier for the claimant to understand, and for the staff to administer.

I spelt that out because I find it difficult to differ from any of those basic aims. I have heard nothing from Opposition Members suggesting that they would differ from those basic aims. After all, how could one disagree with the concept of giving more help to those in greatest need? That must be the right way in which to proceed, and if that is the aim of the Bill—and no hon. Member who has spoken has convinced me that it is not—it is worth supporting. That does not mean that the Bill is perfect in every respect and that Conservative Members should not criticise its detail. Indeed, Conservative Members have criticised points of detail during the debate. That is right as it is important that the Bill should finish up in the best possible state to help the people we all serve.

One of the aims of the Bill is to simplify the system. That is a subject dear to my heart as many of us dine out by quoting the social security regulations. I sympathise with my right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench. I do not know how anyone can understand the present system. I will use the opportunity of this debate briefly to pursue my own hobby horse, which is that we must somehow get away from the appalling English which is used in the social security regulations. We must also get away from the sort of drafting which is used in parliamentary Bills. I was trained as a scientist, and I have spent a great deal of time trying to understand the language of parliamentary drafting, never mind the language of social security regulations.

Even if I am alone in this campaign, I shall continue to speak out and say that we shall never improve the system and help people until we address this problem and make the regulations comprehensible to ordinary people, and, for the benefit of hon. Members, improve our system of drafting. This is not the time for me to suggest how we should go about that, but perhaps another opportunity will present itself.

Anyone who has read the regulations must admit that they are hopelessly complex and cause endless difficulty to

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constituents and to hon. Members trying to help their constituents. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will take my remarks seriously and not consider them as a diversion from the main discussion about the Bill.

Two Conservative Members have spoken about the ideal way forward being to combine the tax and social security system. In the 1970s it used to be called the tax credit scheme. My hon. Friends the Members for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) and for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) had in mind different end products. I would ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, when they look further ahead, not to forget that, in the long run, if we are to achieve the objectives set out in the Bill, we should eventually draw together the tax and benefit systems. It may seem out of date to refer to the old tax credit system, but I make no apology for reminding hon. Members about that concept and suggesting that we move back in that direction when the opportunity arises.

We should move away from the sterile debate that so often takes place in the Chamber that is based on the claim, "We can do better than you for the poorer people of Britain." There has been a great deal of that from Opposition Members during this debate. Anyone can claim — this happened during the general election campaign — "We can do better. We can spend more." However, we all want to help the poorer people in our society. We all want to help families, and we all want to help the disabled. I am sure that there is no disagreement about that. Every constituency Member holds surgeries and we are all aware of the problems. We are all trying to address the problems in the best way possible.

It should be the Government's aim to target benefits and resources on those in real need, and in that context I wish strongly to support the change that is proposed in clause 4 for those under 18 years of age. It is surely a step in the right direction. I am being told repeatedly by employers in Norwich that they cannot find skilled people for certain jobs. It is becoming an increasing cry. I could provide chapter and verse, as set out in correspondence, to support this contention. There is no question but that there are opportunities for young people. No one can say that the unemployment problem has disappeared, especially for older people, but there are opportunities for those who are skilled, particularly if they are young.

We must move away from the idea that it is all right for a young person to draw unemployment benefit or income support, whatever we care to call it. If there are opportunities — and I am satisfied that there are — we must get people out of the habit of thinking that that is a normal option.

Mrs. Beckett: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with what patience I can muster, but I can take no more. Does he not recognise that it is the cuts in decent training, which was provided before the Government came to power, that have caused the difficulty in identifying sources of skilled labour? Decent training cannot be replaced by the youth training scheme.

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Lady has anticipated my next argument. When I was a parliamentary candidate for the constituency of Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria, I became aware of the youth opportunities programme of the then Labour Government. That was in 1977-78. I merely say that the youth training scheme eclipses anything that the Opposition did when they were in government. I do not understand how they have the brass neck to suggest that their record of youth training measures up to what we have now.

Of course we are all in favour of better apprenticeship schemes and more training opportunities. I am not suggesting that YTS is the only way in which young people can be helped or trained, but at least the Government have provided a two-year scheme that guarantees every young person between the age of 16 and 18 years the chance of training if that opportunity is not found in some other way. The Government's record is so superior to that of the Labour party when it was in power that I am astonished that Labour Members are intervening on this issue.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I have listened to the debate, and especially the references to the YTS, with great interest. I have an open mind on these matters, so it would be of considerable help to me if the hon. Gentleman could name any of his right hon. and hon. Friends whose sons and daughters are participating in the youth training scheme.

Mr. Thompson: I have no children of my own, so I cannot refer to my own family. I have no list of the children of Opposition Members that sets out what they are doing. I have no idea what the sons and daughters of Members are doing. I reject the implication that lies behind the hon. Gentleman's intervention, which is that Conservative Members do not have children participating in the youth training scheme. That is a nonsensical suggestion and it is unworthy of the hon. Gentleman to advance it.

It is important that we develop and improve the YTS. There has been criticism of it today and I would say that, on the whole, the scheme is excellent in Norwich, but there are other areas where it could be improved. I am sure that my Front Bench colleagues will agree with me when I say that we must look to improve it still further. It cannot be perfect and so there must be room for improvement. I agree with hon. Members on both sides of the House who say that we must make the scheme better still. That is fair comment.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, talked about the money implications in the Bill and claimed that everything in the Bill was directed to reducing expenditure. The YTS is a perfect counter to his remarks. If we are placing more and more people in the YTS — it is on record that the Government are spending vast sums on the scheme — there are spending implications in the Bill that will be good for young people and amount to a commitment to further training.

I shall refer briefly to payments from the social fund, which are dealt with in clause 10 and schedule 3. I do not understand the provisions that relate to heating costs. If they mean that we are working towards a better system for dealing with cold weather problems and emergencies such as those which faced us a year or so ago, they are to be welcomed. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I hope that he will spell out more clearly the effect of these provisions.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will also clarify the loans provisions. Many of my constituents want to know how loans will be dealt with within the terms of the social fund. Much nonsense has been talked about loans this evening, and it is important that we all understand fully when the loans will be provided, and in what circumstances.

It is extraordinary that Opposition Members should try to outbid us. It is all very well for them to talk about their record and claim that the Labour party cares more than other parties, but what is the Labour party's record? I can remember the last Labour Government. I remember also the cuts in the hospital programme that were due to the economic crisis. In addition, I can remember the winter of discontent and the effect that that had on the disabled and poorer people. Let us consider their failure to keep benefits and pensions in line with inflation, even though they promised to do just that. That leads me to conclude that action is better than words.

I support the Bill, even though there are details of it that can be improved. I know that the Government's intentions are right and that it is correct to direct help to where the need is greatest.

8.9 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): First, I shall comment briefly on the tone and thrust of the Bill. The explanatory and financial memorandum starts with a positive tone. It refers to

> "fresh provision for schemes for the distribution of welfare foods."

It refers also to providing

> "for the payment of travelling expenses".

It sets out a range of amendments to social security law that will be effected by the Bill and suggests that there will be increased provision for those who are in need of social security in our society. However, the language of provision and enabling is notably absent from the accompanying press release of the Department of Health and Social Security which was published on 23 October, which opens with an aggressive negative. It reads:

> "This Bill implements the Government's manifesto commitment to withdraw entitlement to income support from people under 18 who deliberately choose to remain unemployed. It does this by removing the general entitlement to income support of 16-17-year olds."

Far from increasing or introducing fresh provisions, the Bill reduces entitlement and withdraws provisions. It is emerging from the debate that hon. Members of all parties need a lot of convincing that it will not short-change those who are in real need.

Those of us who remember the great review by the previous Secretary of State may recall that that Bill was amended in detail in the other place. However, when the Bill returned here, in defiance of the amendments that had been tabled, it was passed on the royal wedding day, with the result that the Government have had to come back to amend the Bill because they did not take any notice of the amendments that were tabled then. That review failed, which is why we are discussing a second attempt to change the provisions.

However, this Bill sets out to change the basic conditions for entitlement to income support for those under 18 years, despite the assurances that were given to the contrary during the Fowler review. It also continues the Government's policy shift from primary legislation to legislation by regulation. That increases the discretion factor in social security provision and in turn, will result in unjust treatment between individual claimants and will seize up the system with appeals being made against the proposed legislation. Its impact will be to reduce access to benefits and to reinforce means testing.

It would be interesting to know whether the emergency provisions contained in clause 7, relating to local authorities, are not the start of a shifting of the responsibilities of the DHSS on to local government. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government envisage that, at some date in the future, the social fund will be administered by local authorities, and whether limits will be placed on clause 7. I hope that we shall not see a shift so that local authorities will bear the burden of social security and will once again be the administers of the poor law. That would be a means of taking the poor in our society out of the national budget so that they would no longer be the concern of the Treasury.

I should like to focus on the impact of clause 4 which will remove entitlement to benefit from unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in work, in full-time education or on YTS. The clause is based on the assumption that young people "deliberately choose unemployment." The Government's own commissioned research found that 91·1 per cent. of unemployed school leavers preferred to work rather than to remain on benefit. That statistic is given in the Department of Employment's research paper No. 61, which is entitled "Youth Unemployment: Social and Psychological Perspectives". Of those interviewed a year after leaving school who had failed to find work, the study found that only 0·2 per cent. said that they "prefer the dole". The report concluded:

> "It would not be correct to say that the young unemployed find unemployment attractive. It would seem that there are very few indeed who would rather not have a job."

To tackle that tiny minority, the Government are prepared to introduce a blanket of removal of benefit from virtually all 16 and 17-year-olds. However, there are already rules in legislation to prevent abuse of the benefit system. Claimants must be available for work and be willing to take up any reasonable offer of work or approved training, including youth training schemes, or be penalised under section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975.

Perhaps there are hidden assumptions behind the manifesto commitment that is spelt out in the Bill, such as the remarks made by the former Secretary of State for Employment, now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who talked of

> "young people lying in bed in the morning as an alternative to YTS",

despite the fact that the evidence shows the opposite. It is not a case of subsidising idleness, which is what some Tory Members, such as the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) have asserted. Indeed, the opposite is true. At the end of each year since 1984 the so-called Christmas undertaking of a guaranteed place on a youth training scheme has been consistently unfulfilled, with up to 4,500 youngsters still waiting for a place at the year end. There is a real shortage of places, not least in my constituency in Leeds. Indeed, there is a shortage throughout the country and, as other hon. Members have said, there is a need for a further 100,000 places to provide those guaranteed places.

The assumption that young people are moving straight from school into a benefit culture was made surprisingly plain in the Minister's statement. The concept of an alternative "benefit culture" is presumably to be set

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against and contrasted with the "enterprise culture" which is at the heart of the Government's attitude. As one Conservative Member has suggested, the language of social security is important. However, it seems that in some cases benefits are regarded as perks that the poor deserve, but, there is no mention of the hidden welfare state and the real tax benefits that are given to the rich. I should like a Bill to be introduced to tackle tax evasion. That would be a sign that that receives equal treatment with social security issues. The real dependent culture is that of those who have a short-term addiction to personal tax cuts at the expense of the poor. I am reminded again of the language of social security: some are creditworthy and can get credit—they are the better off in our society —but the poor are regarded as having debts. What is "credit" for some is treated as "debt" for others.

Accusing young people of being addicted to a benefit culture is to treat our young people as if they were the problem. The House should give the clear message that young people are not the problem. They should be recognised as the future of this country and encouraged to develop a sense of contributing to our positive future development. They should be given practical opportunities and support to do so.

Last week the Prime Minister proclaimed:

> "There is no such thing as 'society'. There are individual men and women and there are families."

Even such radical individualism acknowledges the family. After the great Fowler review the Government acknowledged:

> "Financial support should still be given to those who assume the extra responsibilities of bringing up children."

If clause 4 is retained it will put intolerable strains on families. Young people will be totally dependent on their parents, and the amount of resources that will be available to families for their upkeep will be reduced from the £19·40 per week which is proposed from April 1988, to £7·25 which is the frozen level of child benefit that was introduced last week. Surely we cannot put extra responsibilities on to the family without an obligation to provide adequate financial support. We cannot have it both ways. Cutting benefit from young people and saying at the same time that they have a take-up of child benefit will not work if child benefit is put into the permafrost and is unable to support families.

As was pointed out last week in the *Daily Telegraph* this Bill, like its predecessor is the price for the Government's "failure to make good its promises to reform the tax system". During the Fowler review the Government refused to allow consideration of the tax and benefit systems to be taken together. Conservative Members have already referred to that. Last week the *Daily Telegraph* went on to suggest:

> "A review of the social security system should be extended to the array of hidden subsidies from the Government to less deserving causes."

That call for a full review of benefits and taxation suggests that the Secretary of State's predecessor radically failed in his job of overhauling social security so as to deliver social justice. That is why we are picking up the pieces in this short Bill.

Tonight we have proposals to squeeze the contributions to the poor, but tomorrow the Autumn Statement on the economy will demonstrate the country's ability to tackle and root out poverty. If, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced last week,

> "our robust economic health and sound public finance put us in the strongest possible position,"

surely we have a responsibility to ensure that all can participate in that economic health rather than force the poor to pay for the Chancellor's tax-cutting experiments. The Bill will further remove the poor from an entitlement to a stake, as of right, in our national economic development. Perhaps the time has come to take tonight's debate and tomorow's statement together. Perhaps the time has come to begin seeking justice for the poor.

8.20 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) was more moderate in tone than the speeches from some Opposition Members, but it was on the same wavelength — that the Government had not done what they would have done and that the Government's actions have an impact on the poor. Indeed, the Government's actions do have an impact on the poor. The hon. Gentleman mentioned tomorrow's Autumn Statement. A great many benefits of the past four years have resulted from the Government's successes and economic achievements, and from the way in which the Government have allowed the developments to continue.

Clause 4 has given rise to criticism of the YTS from Opposition Members. They claim that the training is not what it used to be under the industrial training boards. Indeed, the people who have made some youngsters doubtful of the YTS sit on the Opposition Benches. They said, "Don't go on the YTS. It's cheap labour and not good enough. We should go back to the type of training we had in the old days." Since the introduction of the YTS, which had and still has its faults, we have seen remarkable developments both in the improvement of training within companies and in liaison with the educational system, technical colleges and so on, and a change in attitude among those advising young people and of young people towards the YTS. Opposition Members should go and talk to some young people on the schemes and see how they appreciate the training and recognise its worth.

It has been said that there is a shortage of places, so the proposals cannot be introduced with confidence. Indeed, they can. Although there may be shortages, the converse is also true: there is a shortage of young people to take up some of the opportunities that exist and employers cannot get some young people for their schemes. Good YTS schemes exist. In 1986, the then Secretary of State said that some schemes would not be introduced until there were sufficient places. By and large, there are sufficient YTS places for the proposals in the Bill. That is consistent with what the Government have said in the past, and they are taking us forward.

Given that young people have the options of further education, training and jobs, surely it is right that they should not be allowed to reject those opportunities out of hand and then expect taxpayers and the state to look after them. That is asking too much when provision has been made. We have the best training provision that the country has ever known. We have a long way to go and we shall certainly talk about that tomorrow when we discuss the Employment Bill. Nevertheless, the training available below the higher education levels is the best that we have seen. Much of the training under previous systems, including some training boards, was out of date and inadequate for the future. Because it was inadequate the Government scrapped it, and employers welcomed that move.

The first clause is important. It marks a change of attitude in offering young people opportunities and ensuring that those opportunities exist.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the hon. Gentleman present some factual analysis to show that young people in the north-west, part of which I represent, are shying away from youth training schemes, any other MSC schemes, or further education and accepting the principle of the dole? Last year in some parts of Makerfield nine out of 10 young people did not have the opportunity of a real job. It is an insult for the hon. Gentleman to stand here and parrot-phrase and lecture those young people who want a job opportunity. If he supports the clause, will he provide a factual analysis to show that so many young people are lying in their beds or sitting at home refusing opportunities? That does not exist in my constituency.

Mr. Stevens: I hope that that does not exist, but I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman's constituency does not have some people in that position. We are talking not about many, but some people. The percentage of young people of 16 and 17 years of age registered unemployed is not increasing. Some 10 per cent. of 16-year-olds and 15 per cent. of 17-year-olds——

Mr. McCartney: Will you answer the question?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must speak through the Chair.

Mr. Stevens: Some 10 per cent. of 16-year-olds are registered as unemployed. I do not suggest that large numbers are in that position.

Opposition Members have attacked the clause dealing with attendance allowance. As I understand it, that clause seeks to return the position on attendance allowance to what people thought it was. The case that came before the courts changed most people's thinking on what the law stood for. I understand that about 300,000 people could have claimed under the law as the courts interpreted it. The clause is merely a tidying-up operation to restore the law to what people believed it was.

We accept that attendance allowance is a sensitive issue, and it will always be. It has been and still is of tremendous help, but there are anomalies. I have a sad case in my constituency of a mother with young twins who are mentally and physically handicapped. For children before the age of two, no attendance allowance is payable. One twin has serious health problems and oxygen must be available almost all the time. That is a special case. But eligibility for attendance allowance at other ages undoubtedly needs to be considered in detail.

I appreciate that if we removed the restriction on attendance allowance for children under two years of age, it would open doors to all sorts of questions. Anybody who has children under the age of two has a big commitment, and babies, especially twins and triplets, place an enormous burden on the parents.

Mr. Nellist: As the grandparents of Vicki and Alexandra Storer live in my constituency, and I, too, have been approached by the family, how would the hon. Gentleman respond to my intention—on which I hope to elaborate, if not during the money resolution debate, in Committee or, failing that, on Report — to table appropriate amendments so that chronically sick and disabled children, such as Vicki and Alex, are eligible for attendance allowance? That would allow their mother assistance and the orange badge which is crucial for their parents, so that they need not park the car hundreds of yards from the hospital, leaving them not only with a double buggy with two disabled kids, but an oxygen cylinder to carry.

Mr. Stevens: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I have some sympathy with his comments. I would not have mentioned that case had I not seen it as an anomaly in our present circumstances. It is not easy simply to change things, and there are other cases where disabled and other people are affected. Those cases relate not simply to attendance allowances, but to other parts of the social security regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) referred to the drafting and language used in social security and DHSS matters. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North has said about the difficulty of understanding the regulations and that creating problems for local offices and people in receipt of the allowances, but I want to pay tribute to some of the work that has been done by the Department in improving leaflets, documents and forms over the past four years. Those documents may not be perfect, but an enormous amount of work has been done and I congratulate the Department on what it has achieved. There is a long way to go, but we have seen definite improvements. I am sure that, like some of the "plain English" campaigns, we can find passages within the regulations and documents that are far from perfect. Nevertheless, the Department has done much to improve the position.

I also want to comment quickly on the social fund. The social fund has been criticised ever since the day it was introduced in the Social Security Bill that became the Social Security Act 1986. The social fund is a sensible way in which to make money available to people. It can be used for grants and loans. Within the social security system, it is not unreasonable that some people who suffer a one-off financial burden should be helped by being able to borrow money and pay it back. It has always been a source of frustration and annoyance to some people in receipt of social security and supplementary benefit that such benefit appears to be given unfairly in one-off payments. I am not suggesting that it is given unfairly. However, some recipients often have the impression that others are receiving an unfair advantage. The opportunity to borrow in some cases or to receive grants in others can and will work very successfully.

The Opposition have often criticised the Government over their treatment of the disabled. I wonder how much Opposition Members know about what is really happening. In his statement last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services said that instead of the 4,500 people currently receiving in excess of £6 in the form of benefits for the disabled, he anticipated that more than 7,000 will receive the new supplement of £24·75. Our intentions in the Social Security Act 1986 and our intentions in this Bill, which will further consolidate the 1986 Act, are targeted where the resources are most needed and should give help where it can best be used. That pattern was set by the previous Secretary of State for

[Mr. Stevens]

Social Services and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State will carry matters to a satisfactory conclusion.

8.34 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Social Security Bill in 1986. It has already been said that one million words were spoken during the Committee stage of that Bill. For every word that was spoken, at least eight people either are already worse off or very soon will be worse off as a result of that particularly pernicious piece of legislation.

We have yet another Social Security Bill which seeks to build on all the principles of the earlier, nasty legislation. In other words, it removes the safety net protecting against poverty in this country; it increases the power of discretion of local DHSS offices and gives the Minister enormous powers of direction and regulation to deal with what he terms are the problems of the age.

In reality, throughout the country at the moment there is a frisson of fear running through young people as they see before the the spectre of industrial conscription. The same fear is running through people who at the moment rely on benefit which they receive as of right, but which in future will be means tested. They will have to go cap in hand to the DHSS for loans. Before them they see a Government hell-bent on punishing the poor for being poor. Beveridge did not seek to punish them for being poor: he sought to construct a social security system to eliminate poverty.

Beveridge recognised that the elimination of poverty also arose from an economic policy that eliminated unemployment. This Government glory in mass unemployment and in punishing the poor for the poverty that they suffer as a result of the Government's policies—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members find this funny, they should tell that to the unemployed and poor in their constituencies. That is where the Government's policies are working. That is where the misery created by the Government is being lived out.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Try to be serious.

Mr. Corbyn: I treat this subject very seriously. I wish that Conservative Members would do the same. If they did that, they would not support this nasty piece of legislation tonight.

The cuts that have taken place since 1985 amount to many millions of pounds in social security benefit either in the loss of payments or changes in regulations. I will list five areas where cuts have taken place since 1985. First, maternity allowance has been cut by £36 million. Secondly, halving the mortgage interest rate for unemployed people has resulted in cuts of £38 million. Thirdly, reducing the rent taper on housing benefit has resulted in cuts of £28 million. Fourthly, abolishing the death grant has led to £18 million cut and, finally, abolishing maternity grant has led to another £18·5 million cut. That means £138·5 million just from those few items.

I speak on this subject with some feeling. Since 1983 my constituency has seen a 20 per cent. increase in the number of people claiming supplementary benefit to the extent that the two DHSS offices at Finsbury park and Highgate, which cover most of my constituency, now have a total of 38,500 people claiming supplementary benefit. That is the price that my constituency has had to pay for another four years of this Conservative Government. The Government say that they are concerned about inner-city areas. If they were, they would not be seeking to increase the poverty, dependence and cap-in-hand mentality that they have sought to introduce with this Bill.

There are many aspects of the Bill that I could cover. However, we must consider the problems that already exist in the DHSS. I have seven surgeries a month in my constituency. I see a very large number of people in my surgeries. Most of the cases are housing, immigration or social security problems. Many of the social security problems are caused by non-payment of benefit which should be paid as of right to the claimants.

It is easy and cheap for people to blame the staff in the DHSS. I do not necessarily do that. In fact, I do not blame them at all. They have suffered cuts in the past seven years. They have suffered from under-training, compulsory transfer and the threat of privatisation. It is hardly surprising in such an atmosphere, that queues build up and delays and wrong payments accumulate. In the offices in my constituency, there are regularly fights as security guards have been brought in to look after the staff and the building. The atmosphere is one of the absolute bedlam.

That atmosphere occurs every week because people cannot get emergency payments. God knows what it will be like when the social fund comes into operation. People will be queuing up to get a loan and will be told, "The till is empty and the cupboard is bare. Wait until next April and come back." That is what life is like for people on supplementary benefit in my constituency. If any Conservative Member does not believe me, let him take a bus to the Archway tower, queue up and see what it is like. It is not far away from this place.

There are many parts of the Bill about which I have strong feelings. There are seven that I wish to mention. The discrimination that will lead to loss of benefit for many people suffering from disabilities is a standing disgrace. The treatment of disabled people is disgraceful in any event. There is a lack of effective legislation and lack of support by the Government for the legislation that was effectively introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). That is also an absolute disgrace.

Equally, the delay in implementing the family credit proposals is unsatisfactory. We cannot begin a new piece of legislation such as this when the last piece of legislation has not been cleared up.

As for young people, I detect the usual Tory trick of hunting the scapegoat. They seem to think that somewhere in this country a 16-year-old is lying in bed in the morning instead of going out and getting a job. Their solution is to have an army of officials to hunt down this idle, feckless, useless 16-year-old, as if that will solve all the problems. However, in reality the Government know perfectly well that that is not the issue. Very much the issue is the fact that we have abolished the industrial training boards and taken away the possibility of decent training opportunities for young people. Instead we are forcing them to go from one YTS scheme to another, back on to the dole, back on to another scheme and back on to the dole.

That means that we have the most untrained, disillusioned young people of any industrialised country.

The Government know that to be the case. They know very well that all their proposals lead only in the direction of appeasing the basest of instincts among Tory Members of Parliament and Tory party conference-goers — and there is no baser person than a Tory party conference-goer —as well as the worst elements of the gutter press. They are seeking to punish young people for being young and unemployed and wanting something to do. That is what the Bill does.

From the contribution conditions implicit in the Bill it is clear that young people and married women will be excluded from some benefit. It is another hidden cut in social security, similar to the one that I mentioned earlier.

With regard to emergency payments, I find part of the Bill suspicious. It talks about "any other body" that might make emergency payments. What other body might do it, apart from the DHSS and the local authority? Will the Government privatise emergency payments and hive them off to loan clubs, pawnbrokers, banks, charities and so on? There is something insidious and suspicious about this. The Minister should clear up this misunderstanding now or remove that provision in Committee.

The most disgraceful aspect of the Bill is the way in which the social fund is envisaged and how it will operate. In Committee on the last Bill, we drew attention to the wrong-headed thinking in having a social fund at all, with the idea that it should be a fund from which people should borrow and that it should be cash-limited. Bit by bit, the information has crept out via the odd letter here, the odd quip at the Tory conference there, the odd leak to a newspaper and the odd announcement in the House. It is clear that the total fund will be extremely inadequate— only £200 million, when the Social Security Advisory Committee recommended £350 million. Only £60 million will be in the form of grant, and outstanding loans will count against the total value of the social fund in any particular DHSS office.

The situation will be chaotic, even if the DHSS decides to administer the fund in the most scientific way possible on 1 April each year, based on the number of claims in the previous year. What will happen if there are major redundancies, if people move in and out of the area and if people suddenly need supplementary benefit because of changed economic circumstances? There will be the most horrendous mess, and the Government know that perfectly well.

In addition, the drafting of the schedule dealing with the social fund is so vague that it will be perfectly possible at a later stage for the Minister or a hard-pressed local office or authority to decide to charge claimants the administrative costs of running the social fund. There is a big hidden agenda within the social fund, and the Minister should clear up the matter now. If he does not, he will be harassed and hounded from now until 1 April to clarify what the social fund means and how it will actually operate. If the Bill goes through, many people will be carefully watching how the social fund operates after 1 April. Some of us believe that money will run out in constituencies such as mine long before it runs out in some of the wealthier places that are represented by Conservative Members.

There is also the question of cold weather payments, their administration and the system that will operate. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to the sheer lunacy of having cold weather payments that relied on cold spells running from Monday to Sunday. He is absolutely correct. The chaos of last winter was also wrong. Very few people received the cold weather payments that the Government promised them. There was also the Government's rejection of the idea of a flat-rate payment that was proposed by the Labour party during the election. That at least would have removed the fear of winter heating charges from elderly people.

It is a disgrace that more than 200 elderly people die each January from hypothermia because of their inability to pay for the adequate heating of their homes. That is a disgrace in any society that calls itself civilised. Hypothermia is not known in many other European countries. It is known as the disease affecting the old and the poor that occurs in this country. I strongly support a standing payment for elderly people to remove the fear of cut-offs, cold meals and cold homes during the winter.

I would also make the gas boards pay back some of the money they are making from privatisation by abolishing standing charges for the elderly, and I would do the same in respect of electricity.

The discretion open to the Minister in the operation of the social fund is ominous. He will have the discretion to change things as time goes on and administrative conveniences arise. From the speeches of Conservative Members one would not believe that we are living in a country in which 6 million people live below the poverty line and where 11,000 people will be sleeping on the streets of our major cities tonight because they have no homes to go to. Instead of dealing with the problems of hungry and poor children, old people suffering from cold and the homeless, the Bill systematically attacks those people for being poor, cold and old simply because they are an administrative inconvenience or possibly because they are an obscene sight to Ministers driving home from the House and passing Charing Cross station.

When we conclude the debate on this awful period in our history, I believe that the Government will go down as one who ruined the welfare state that was designed to eliminate poverty and who sought to fiddle the unemployment figures rather than deal with the problem. They sought to make young people scapegoats, even though all those young people wanted was a decent life and job. Above all, the Government have lit the candle of opposition to their proposals. Thousands of people now realise the common interest between young unemployed people, claimants, mothers who want decent maternity pay and poor pensioners. The Government are building up a coalition of opposition that will eventually defeat them —*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may smirk, but eventually that opposition will remove them. The people of this country will not tolerate the obscenity of deliberating creating poverty amidst plenty or shelling out millions to satisfy the City and stockbrokers last week while this week they are impoverishing the poor.

8.50 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I should like to speak in support of the Bill, and, in particular, clause 4, which gets rid of the provision for paying unemployment benefit to those under the age of 18. In my view, those payments have done much to sap the moral fibre of far too many of our young people. A provision that gives something for nothing creates a moral basis that is extremely dangerous for too many young people. However, the withdrawal of those payments must go hand in glove, as the Government intend, with improving the

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

quality of our YTS schemes. We have many excellent schemes, the overwhelming majority of which provide us with a basis for our young people to gain skills for life.

Like many other hon. Members, I spent the summer recess visiting the YTS schemes in my constituency. I saw, for instance, the computer technology scheme, from which 90 per cent. of young people have gone on to good, well-paid jobs in my constituency and beyond. Those very people were deemed failures at school, but thanks to YTS, they have gained skills that have given them a future, and a future with self-respect.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman explain what will happen to the young unemployed in my constituency, where unemployment is running at about 40 per cent? What will they do when there is no help for them —no YTS scheme, or no job opportunity after any such scheme if it existed? I do not think that the youngsters in my constituency lack moral fibre. As I said last week in the debate on defence, throughout my constituency can be seen memorials to people who were prepared to fight and die for their country. That is more than I can say for many of those who support the Conservative party. What about the way in which they fraternised with Hitler?

Mr. Arnold: I shall ignore that last point. I trust that the hon. Gentleman has gone round his constituency constructively looking at the new YTS schemes and giving full encouragement to the youngsters in those schemes, as I have done.

As well as the computer technology scheme that I mentioned, I have seen a highly successful scheme for developing skills in the building trades, as well as excellent schemes to develop secretarial skills. Again 90 per cent. of those so-called no-hopers have gone on to good, well-paid jobs which have developed their self-respect and capabilities. I have also seen a scheme in the cable industry the heavy industry for which the Labour party claims to speak. Those courses are very successful.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will not give way.

Mr. Allan Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Arnold: I have already given way to the hon. Member. I shall make my speech, and I shall be interested to hear his later.

As well as all those youngsters in my constituency who are on YTS schemes, there are those who are not on such schemes. I found a good example of why we need this proposal during the last general election campaign, when I was canvassing on my own. A poor, misled youngster had left school without even looking at YTS—and why? Because he had swallowed the claptrap from the local Labour party that it was some kind of slave labour, and was living on the very benefits to which the Labour party would condemn him. That lad had no future. He was wallowing self-righteously in self-pity — and for what? For the delight of the Labour party?

I told that young man that his future, for which the Labour party seemed to care nowt, lay in obtaining the right skills for success in the future.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollock): What skills?

Mr. Arnold: The hon. Gentleman asks what skills. If he had listened quietly to what I had to say, he would have heard a number of them. Those skills are giving some 90 per cent. of the people on those schemes — *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie) has something to say, will he please rise in his seat and ask the hon. Member who has the Floor to give way?

Mr. Arnold: The skills to which I have referred are precisely the skills which are of use to the young people in my constituency.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Let us suppose that two years after leaving school, two youngsters apply for a job. One has been on the dole for two years — thanks to the encouragement given by the Labour party — and the other has been on a YTS scheme. Which one will get the job?

Mr. Arnold: It is absolutely clear that the one who will get the job is the one who has the skills, thanks to the Government's YTS schemes. The key to getting a job rests with our young people obtaining skills, and not imagining that jobs are due to them as of right.

Let me return to the moral point. Opposition Members would condemn young people to fester in self-righteousness and unemployment. That is bad for young people, and it is also bad for those in work, because they know—and feel resentful—that the tax that they pay is going to the mates with whom they were at school, and who are not bothering to get off their backsides and find a job or training. That is the moral point.

I have heard talk of cost cutting. Getting rid of unemployment benefit for those under 18 will clearly save money for the Department of Employment. That saving is deemed to be about £84 million, but far more relevant is the additional money that the Government will spend through extending and developing the YTS schemes for the youngsters whom we are discussing. The Government are likely to allow a net increase between the two Departments of some £60 million to provide the skills for our young people's future.

Mr. Nellist: This is the first time that the hon. Gentleman and I have crossed swords since he came to my constituency in 1983 to campaign on behalf of the Tory party, and left some three weeks later. Does he realise that since he tried to obtain the seat the number of registered unemployed—apart from the fiddled statistics—is now just over 22,000? The number of vacancies is 481. That means that, for every vacancy in Coventry, there are 46 unemployed people. How does the hon. Gentleman, with all his hypocrisy and concern about idleness and people not trying hard, equate that with 46 unemployed for each vacancy? Even if they all looked for a job 24 hours a day, and even if tomorrow morning all of those 481 vacancies were magically filled, there would still be 45 unemployed for every one who obtained a job. Can the hon. Gentleman explain that?

Mr. Arnold: These are exactly the arguments of despair that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) peddled at the election when I contested the seat with him. That is why it should be noted that the swing against the hon. Gentleman was the largest swing against Labour throughout the urbanised west midlands. So much, therefore, for the hon. Gentleman's arguments.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Far be it from me to get up on a soap box, but, of the 57 seats in the west midlands, the third highest swing to Labour was——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Arnold: I was referring, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the election at which I fought against the hon. Gentleman—the general election of 1983.

This measure should be introduced to cut out unemployment benefit for those under 18, but it should be introduced in a sensitive manner. The measure provides for a new YTS bridging allowance between the drawing of child benefit and before the take-up of a YTS place. We are saying to young people, "If you can't get a job, get trained. The option, at the expense of the taxpayer, is not to sit on your backside and earn benefit, because that money will be better spent on our schools and hospitals." —*[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) wish to raise a point of order?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) to give the Hitler salute?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is certainly not in order. I did not see the hon. Gentleman do that, but if he is behaving in that way I hope that he will cease immediately.

Mr. Arnold: The message that has to go out to our young people must be absolutely clear: that they must find a job, or stay at school, or retrain. We have to tell them that if they want to sit on their backsides, they will not do so at the expense of the taxpayer, because we have far better things on which to spend taxpayers' money—on our schools, hospitals and pensioners. There is no soft option in this life, and our young people must be educated to realise that there is no soft option.

9.1 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): What I shall remember most about this debate is the tone of the speeches of Conservative Members, not least the speech of the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). With one honourable exception, their speeches were marked by arrogance, divisiveness, the perpetuation of myth, an attack on people in poor circumstances and straight populism. It is a far cry from the days of Iain Macleod. On the Conservative Benches there seems to be very little left of the humanitarian approach to members of society who are less fortunate than they are. I remind the hon. Gentleman that if he wants to talk about election statistics, at the last general election his party lost the equivalent of a whole football team north of the border. Not the least reason for their failure was that the people of Scotland rejected the kind of philosophy that has been so ably demonstrated by the hon. Member for Gravesham. He is part of the reason for the continuing and developing north-south and Scotland-England crisis.

Reference has been made to the Beveridge report. The Government have not answered the question that I asked them only last week: what they define as the poverty line. There is an argument about the definition of poverty. If the Government are unwilling to accept the existing level of poverty, will they kindly tell us what they believe is the poverty level and how many people they intend to remove from the poverty trap by this legislation?

It is said that the Bill is part of the process of rationalising a system that we all accept is very complex. We would accept that argument if rationalisation were taking place in our social security system, but rationalisation is being used by the Government as a cloak to cover the dagger of the cuts that they are imposing. No reference is made by them to the additional strains that are being placed on DHSS staff who have to cope with new legislation, and also with amendments to legislation. Their work is becoming extremely difficult, because of so many new Acts and the rapidity of change.

Clause 1 deals with the attendance allowance. I welcome the apparent concession that was made earlier in the debate, and I look forward to hearing the exact details and clarification of this concession in the closing speech from the Treasury Bench. If, as was claimed by the Secretary of State, the Government are returning to the original intention of the law, why was the House of Lords ruling not pursued and recognised as the law that should have been implemented in this legislation? I should like to know whether any estimates were made on the level of take-up that would have been likely on a measure such as was envisaged in the Moran ruling in the House of Lords. It seems strange that no precise figures or costs were ever published. It seems that the Government did not undertake any estimates.

I should like to reiterate the reference by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) to Department of Employment research paper No. 61, which, in table 4.1, points out that 91·1 per cent. of unemployed school leavers prefer to work rather than remain on the dole. That belies the sort of argument we have heard from Conservative Members. Only 0·2 per cent. of the people interviewed said that they would prefer to remain on the dole; that shows the willingness of our young people to take up employment opportunities.

I speak as a Member representing a rural constituency that has become known as one of the unemployment black spots in the Highlands of Scotland. In the past eight years the constituency has changed from being relatively well-off in terms of employment prospects to being one of the most dismal by the time we managed to defeat the Conservative in that seat. Part of the problem faced by many of the young people in my constituency is that even where there are YTS opportunities they tend to be centred in Aberdeen or Inverness where the bulk of our manufacturing and industry is centred. That means that there are few opportunities for a young person wishing to undertake YTS training in industry in my constituency. There are some very good projects operating but there is a difficulty for many who have to travel far to find employment opportunities. They experience great expense in travelling and in some cases have to find lodgings in the cities. We need the creation of employment, not the continuation of schemes or social security legislation which adversely affects those people.

Clause 10 and schedule 3 of the Bill deal with the social fund. I have a personal interest in the severe weather

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

payments because, as some hon. Members will recall, during the 1970s, I regularly asked various questions about hypothermia. At the time it was thought of as a ridiculous stance to take. The then Labour Government did not accept the arguments we were putting forward. I am glad that the work started by my party in the 1970s and subsequently followed through by my party chairman, Gordon Wilson, with the introduction of several pieces of private Member's legislation in the last Parliament, has stimulated so much interest among so many hon. Members. I hope that we shall move towards something better than that mentioned in the Bill.

I will not rehearse all the arguments that relate to severe weather payments. They have been dealt with by other hon. Members. However, I remind the House that it is generally colder in the north. We have longer winters, chill factors and winds that contain a great deal of dampness. The points of measurement used by the Government in their current legislation often do not relate well to all surrounding areas. In my constituency the measurement for severe weather payments is taken on the east coast when it would be much more sensible to have the point of measurement somewhere such as Aviemore. That would be closer to the temperatures that we experience in Tomintoul and Dufftown. I am sure that the Secretary of State knows that the Tomintoul-Cockbridge road gives one of the first indications of winter because it is always the first to fill in when there is snow. I do not approve of the idea of a week being only from Monday to Sunday for the purpose of severe weather payments. Surely there must be something more appropriate.

Finally, I should like to deal with the handicapped. I have a letter from MENCAP, a particularly well known organisation working with the handicapped. It has cited one or two examples of what would happen as a result of this legislation. A single parent with one child who is aged under 11 years and another who is over 11 years, one of whom is mentally handicapped, receives the attendance allowance, and the mother is in receipt of invalid care allowance. The present weekly entitlement for that family, if it took all of its entitlement, would be £117.45. An analysis of the same family after 1 April 1988 shows that it would receive £81.15 only, which is almost a 30 per cent. reduction. The Government must look carefully at how they are treating the disabled in this legislation.

The 1986 Act has already affected many disabled people. I have received a letter from Grampian regional council, which says that as a result of the 1986 Act it is now unable to give the concession of cheaper school meals to children attending special schools. They will now have to pay the same rate as everyone else and free milk will no longer be supplied to children in primary 1 and 2. Surely that is one of the unkindest cuts of all.

I am conscious of the time, but I wished to make a few points about the Bill to outline the reasons why Plaid Cymru and Scottish Nationalist party members will vote against this legislation. We do not consider it to be a step towards the eradication of poverty but a step that will make life even more difficult for those who are most vulnerable.

9.11pm

Mrs Alice Mahon (Halifax): It has been pointed out that huge amounts of money are given to the social security system, but for millions of people it is their sole source of income; it is the only way in which they can support themselves and their families.

The present level of benefits is disgracefully low. However, what I have heard in the debate leads me to believe that that level will be further reduced. Despite messing about with figures, the Government cannot hide the fact that the level of benefits is very low and that they will be reduced still further.

I have heard comments in the debate that have shocked me, particularly from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). The hon. Lady tried to make out that people living on benefit were quite well off—if she were in the Chamber I would be able to point this out —yet anybody who is under 18 years of age, if they are lucky enough to receive benefit when the Government have finished with this Bill, will have only £19·40 to live on. Do Tory Members consider that amount to be adequate for anybody to feed themselves?

The Bill will do nothing to help those people in Halifax who rely on benefits. Even worse is the decision to move away from one universal benefit of which women have been particularly glad since it was introduced — child benefit. The Government are acting in a most irresponsible manner. It is a complete reversal of their manifesto promises. They stated that

"child benefit will continue to be paid as now."

The Government are cheats and confidence tricksters. They are without honour because the spirit of that manifesto commitment has been completely reneged upon by the Minister's refusal to uprate benefits in line with inflation. I believe that it is the beginning of the end of child benefit as a universal benefit.

With regard to some of the arguments about selectivity and targeting, the Government cannot argue against the popularity of child benefit, for which there is almost 100 per cent. take-up. The reason why it is so popular is clear. It is not means-tested; it does not stigmatise the claimant; and it is socially acceptable. It gives mothers the only income that many of them receive in their own right, because under the system they are deemed dependent. Indeed, the Prime Minister has spoken of its benefits, if only in rather peculiar terms.

The Bill hits another vulnerable group — young people, who are refused the right to choose whether to go on YTS. The word "choice" is important. It is ridiculous to argue that enforcing acceptance of a YTS place gives a choice. Reference has been made to the thousands who will not be offered a place and who will be given a bridging loan, but that is not satisfactory. The Opposition are not happy about what will happen to young people trying to escape from domestic violence or sexual abuse. There will be only a bridging arrangement for them. I listened to the Secretary of State renege on the child benefit commitment. I do not feel that those children will be protected by the Government.

I have heard unbelievable rubbish talked about YTS, as though it were a panacea for all training ills. I have taught those who have come for off-the-job training and listened to their horror stories. Many of the schemes are good, but many are not; they are merley substitutes for jobs that involve no training. Kids have spoken to me about being on a two-year interview and being blackmailed into taking unpaid overtime. I have listened to many complain of sexual harassment and n[illegible] dare to say anything when they feel conscripted.

The Government should not say that YTS is the answer to training. Some schemes are good and are topped up, but many are repressive and contain no training elements. Young people do not refuse to go on these training schemes because they want to skive. Conservative Members do not seem to know anything about the real world. Young people are taught by the education system that they will later earn their living and participate in society, but that is denied to thousands of them.

The Secretary of State has admitted that thousands of pensioners and many disabled people will be worse off. I should like to know specifially whether income support will compensate patients on supplementary benefit who receive an extra £18 for life-saving dialysis treatment and are given assistance to pay for their heating and diet. One of the meanest aspects of the Government's scheme has been the treatment of people who need carers and their attendance allowance. Conservative Members have no idea of the sacrifice that carers make. Have they no concept of the stress imposed not only on carers but on the people for whom they care? The human element must be considered. Will we have to beg to care for people in the community? Many people are in the community because of the Government's community care policies which have pushed people out into society without adequate community care provision.

I believe that there is an overwhelming case for a redistribution of income and wealth. That is why I believe in the welfare state. The Opposition think that that is the only way to achieve a fairer and more equal society. That is what makes me a Socialist. The Government will go to any lengths to get rid of the welfare state. The Bill is another nail in its coffin. This measure is also damaging to democracy.

The Bill provides for a further expansion of ministerial powers. This detailed legislation gives one person the right to decide who can eat, who can be looked after, whether a person will be paid if he refuses to go on a scheme and, ultimately, who lives or dies — *[Interruption.]* We are talking about those issues. There is no getting out of it. Conservative Members should remember, if they are going to vote for the legislation, that that is exactly the issue about which we are talking.

Completely to ignore advice from inside and outside the House about the dire consequences for millions of people if benefits are cut yet again is the hallmark of an authoritarian state; it is to freeboot over the people who need us most. There is no mistake about that. Governments who, like this Government, restrict the democratic process to Ministers alone are prone to resort ever further to authoritarianism. I argue that that is alien to our way of life.

9.20 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This has been an interesting and, in some ways, revealing debate. Those hon. Members who were present early in the debate will certainly know more about Chelmsford than they did, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on the assured manner of his maiden speech, if not on his controversial observations.

The debate revealed, too, that I have done the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) an injustice in recent years by believing that she was for some reason unable to see the conflict between the Government's declared aim — which she celebrates so often — of helping those in the greatest need and proposals such as those in the Bill. Today the hon. Lady finally made it crystal clear that her definition of need is fully as rigorous and restrictive as even this Government could wish. She made it quite clear that Mrs. Moran, the constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), does not pass her test of need—and nor do many others suffering from illnesses from epilepsy to cystic fibrosis.

The debate also revealed that Ministers were not wholly seized of the effects that we believe clause 1, as drafted, would have. We welcome the readiness of the Secretary of State to consider amendments, and we hope that he will not restrict it to this clause. The Secretary of State said that clause 1 simply restored the law to what the Government believed it to have been. I hope that he will be aware that the Disability Alliance has suggested that the Government advertently or otherwise, are substantially tightening up the law as they understood it before the Moran case. We shall press them on that in Committee, and we hope that they will consider an amendment if it turns out that there is substance in our arguments.

The Bill cuts still further the entitlement to industrial injuries benefits. It was noticeable throughout that Conservative Members were torn between the desire to deny that there were cuts and the desire to applaud the Government's justification for them. The Government suggest that now that they have renamed and redefined severe hardship allowance as reduced earnings allowance it should cease to be paid on retirement and be replaced by a retirement allowance. That sounds innocuous enough. However, for many, and perhaps most, of those who now receive the allowance the change will mean a drop in income of some £19·35 a week on retirement. For people whose incomes are not exactly high even now that is a substantial sum to lose. We believe that the Government will find it hard to defend the change, and we shall press them further on it.

Will the Minister touch briefly on clause 3? the provision has not been dealt with in the debate, largely because it is opaque to say the least. Will the Minister assure us that the Government do not intend to use this apparently technical clause to separate the date of claim for family credit from the date of payment for reasons of administrative convenience?

Much has been said about clause 4. Almost all the Tory Members who have spoken have claimed that the clause implements the Government's manifesto pledge to deny benefit to those who refuse the offer of a YTS place. Let me repeat what has been said over and over again by Opposition Members, although apparently not understood by Conservative Members. The clause does not deny benefit to those who wilfully refuse to work. The Government can do that under existing legislation, although that has proved necessary only on a comparatively few occasions.

The Bill denies benefit as of right to all 16 and 17-year-olds, including those who have never been offered a YTS place. The benefit will be denied as of right to those who find themselves in that position through no fault of their own. The Secretary of State blustered bravely about the YTS guarantee when it was pointed out to him that there were inadequate places on YTS to accommodate those whom he now intends to go on the scheme. An estimated 100,000 extra places are needed to implement that guarantee. I do not see where they will come from between

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

now and next April. This means a reduction in family income of £11·50 a week for families entitled only to child benefit rather than to income support at £18·75.

We have been reminded that some people might be entitled, in some circumstances, to a bridging allowance. But if this does not carry an entitlement to other passported benefits it means a lower income for the family as well as for the young person. The only exception to the denial of benefit will be where severe hardship is recognised by the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) referred to that.

I was going to ask the Secretary of State how he defined severe hardship, but I listened with horror to what he said when opening the debate. He referred to young people who left home because they were the victims of physical or sexual abuse. He appeared to suggest that even they would be entitled to draw benefit only for a restricted period. If being the victim of sexual abuse is regarded as only a temporary hardship, I wonder who will benefit from the Secretary of State's definition and discretion in this cause. Under the board and lodging regulations young people who have so suffered cease to be entitled to help when they reach the age of 19. Is that what is intended in the Bill? Because of the way in which the Bill is phrased, we know that there will be no appeal against the Secretary of State's decisions. We intend to raise that in Committee.

I shall disregard comments about the lack of moral fibre among our young people. Moral fibre is probably all they can afford because they certainly will not be able to afford a high fibre diet. What strikes me forcefully about the debate is the total lack of understanding by Government Members. It is bad enough, humiliating and embittering enough, to be forced to take part in a make-work scheme because some overpaid and pompous Minister thinks that young people are lying in bed and rejecting the wonderful opportunities that he is offering. It is even worse to be forced into doing a job which is needed and is of value but without proper conditions of work or proper wages. Those are the only alternatives offered to young people in the Bill.

The Bill represents just the latest in a series of attacks on young people. It will raise between £300 million and £355 million. The Government have saved that at the expense of young people in recent years. It never seems to occur to the Government that in their ceaseless attacks on the young they are sowing the wind and that sooner or later we shall reap the whirlwind.

No justification has been offered for tightening contribution conditions for unemployment and sickness benefit. When that is added to the recent abolition by the Government of partial benefits paid as some return for partial contributions—one of the many areas in which the link between contributions, paid or credited, and benefit entitlement is being steadily reduced—it paints an alarming picture.

There is an honourable case for extending benefits to those who have had no opportunity to make contributions, through no fault of theirs. There can be no case—none has been made—for withdrawing benefits when substantial contributions, perhaps over a working lifetime, have been paid.

The Secretary of State claimed that many, especially women and young people, will lose their right to unemployment benefit and be forced, at best, on to means-tested income support, but that the long-term sick need not be deterred by the Bill from seeking work. That does not appear to be so. It seems to us that someone who is long-term sick and seeks work but cannot sustain it may lose entitlement to invalidity benefit. We shall seek to explore that in Committee, and if we are right I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider. It is ironic if this is what the Secretary of State calls reducing dependence on the benefit structure.

There has been a further cut for those drawing their occupational pensions at 55 years of age. Most people in that position have been pushed, if not forced, into early retirement. They are already losing by that decision.

The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) spoke of those who exercised a voluntary choice to retire early, and I am sure that that is very nice for them. However, most of those who retire at 60 lose on the pension that they would have gained had they been able to continue work until 65. That must be even more true for those who retire at 55; they will be even heavier losers on their occupational pensions. The Government now propose to withdraw the entitlement to unemployment benefit — for which, in many cases, people will have contributed all their working lives. The fact that they will lose everything over £35—which, when introduced, was at least more than the basic state pension, but now is substantially less—only adds insult to injury.

The hon. Member for Edgbaston, in referring to the clause on welfare foods, said that it was quite wrong of the Maternity Alliance to claim that 220,000 women and children would lose entitlement to free milk. I hope that the hon. Lady is, for once, correct and that the Minister will reassure us on that point. The hon. Lady demonstrated the ignorance of those on the Conservative Benches about what the Government are doing with the social fund. I remind her of what the Government's Social Security Advisory Committee said a year ago——

Dame Jill Knight: I hope that the hon. Lady gets it right this time.

Mrs. Beckett: I got it right last time; the hon. Lady obviously did not read the report. It said:

> "some expenses cannot realistically be budgeted for from within present benefit rates."

It also referred to the setting of adequate rates for personal allowances. Since the SSAC made those remarks, the Government have published figures for income support that are demonstrably lower than the present benefit rates that the committee said did not allow people to save to meet expenses that would otherwise be claimed for as single payments.

Also, the SSAC set a framework for the budget for the social fund and said that the minimum, even with benefits maintained at past levels, would be £350 million if the scheme were to be workable. What has been offered by the Government? I remind hon. Members who may or may not have been here for the uprating statement that the figure has been set at £200 million with reduced basic benefits—especially for the unemployed, who are those most dependent on single payments.

For the benefit of those who may not have ploughed through every word of the social fund manual, and to give the flavour of what is intended, I shall pick out four issues that it highlights. First, even loans are not available to meet fuel costs in most circumstances, even though, as anyone who knows anything about the subject will know, it is most often fuel costs that create the greatest burden of debt. There is a reference — I would not wish to mislead the House—to some help for fuel costs, and it casts an interesting light on the Government's view of the circumstances in which the future long-term unemployed are likely to live. It is possible to make a claim against the social fund for non-mains fuel costs—for example, oil or bottled gas. It is not possible in any circumstances to claim, even for a loan, for the cost of paying mains fuel connection charges. That casts an interesting light on the twilight world in which the Government expect such people to dwell in future.

The second point that I want to highlight is a fact which comes out clearly in the manual but which did not come out clearly when we debated the matter about two years ago. It is that those who are proven to have the highest possible priority need, those who are proven to have the right to make at least a claim against the social fund because they are in the highest priority group, those who are demonstrably proven to have the greatest need of all because, on examination, it is proven that their income is too inadequate to repay a loan even were it to be offered, will not receive one single penny in assistance. They are demonstrably the most desperate of all, but they will go utterly without help.

Mr. Key: I represent a large number of low-paid agricultural workers. They know that there are alternative arrangements for the payment of energy costs. They do not involve loan payments, but are sensitively agreed between the electricity authority in particular but also, where appropriate, the gas authority, and the person concerned. Those authorities could scarcely have made more favourable arrangements for bad debts and for circumstances where people are unable to pay. Furthermore, the Gas Consumers Council has made exceptionally good arrangements following privatisation.

Mrs. Beckett: I am glad that the people in the constituency of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) are so fortunate. I cannot say the same for my constituents. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what I have said. First, I was talking about what help might be available in the circumstances of fuel debts. Secondly, I cited the case of people—no matter what the identified need—who can prove that they are in desperate circumstances, that they are so poor that they cannot repay a loan if offered, but who will not receive a penny in assistance. That more than anything shows what the social fund is about.

The third issue that I would like to highlight is one that has become clear only after the publication of the Bill. We are aware from the draft manual and from the publication of the full manual that social fund officers have been told not to keep a waiting list. Therefore, if they have to turn down an application which has every validity, which is from a family in proven need, simply because there is no money left in their budget, they are not allowed to put that claim on one side until money becomes available, perhaps in a succeeding period.

We are now told in the Bill that the Government have deliberately taken powers to ensure that if, in any circumstances — including those where there is no question about need, no question about a priority group, no question about the difficulties—a claimant is turned down for no other reason but that there is no money in the budget, that claim cannot be reconsidered for six months. That is an outrage and a disgrace.

The fourth issue that I should like to highlight in the social fund concerns guidelines given by the Government to social fund officers on exercising their generosity. The Government state:

> "Social fund officers should under no circumstances make an award which cannot be paid from the local office budget."

If they are forced not to make an award because of the budget, social fund officers may not review the case in less than six months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) regretted that the Bill does not alter the structure of the welfare state and does not alter the structure of the benefit system. For once, I think that, uncharacteristically, my hon. Friend is wrong. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) said that the Government were going back to the principles of national insurance. In fact, the Government are going back on the principle of national insurance. The principle of that scheme was that people should pay into the system of national insurance when they were in the position to contribute so that they were able to draw, as of right, when they had need. It is that principle that is being undermined at every stage in the Bill.

The Government say that their proposals for social security are about people standing on their own feet. In fact, they are cutting people's feet from under them. Many Conservative Members spoke movingly in this debate—it has been a good debate—about their wish to help those in real need. This Bill is a depressing check list of those who do not qualify in the eyes of those compassionate souls who spoke so movingly. Those who do not qualify include the epileptic or those with cystic fibrosis; the young unemployed denied the opportunity to work; the occupational pensioner pushed out of work before time; and the poorest of all whose very poverty deprives them of being considered for loans from the social fund.

This is a bullying Government and, in common with all bullies, they pander to the strong and trample on the weak. We shall fight to prevent that.

9.49 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I shall start with what may turn out to be the only non-controversial feature of the debate to which I shall refer during the few minutes that separate us from a Division. I wish to echo the tribute that has been paid by many hon. Members in all quarters of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on his maiden speech. My hon. Friend spoke of the distinguished record of his predecessor in this place, and we all echo that. He spoke too with wit, knowledge of his constituency and of the subject that we are debating. I hope that he will contribute frequently to our debates on social security and related matters.

Any legislation of the sort that we are discussing, which involves the unemployed, the sick and the disabled, and their entitlements, should have the closest possible scrutiny within the House. I am delighted to take note from the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that we can expect in Committee to have just that scrutiny. I hope that the hon. Lady will recognise, having herself had to endure a rather breathless canter through her speech because we

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

both agreed to let other hon. Members participate and take some of our time, that it would be impossible for me to take up all the points that she and others have made. However, I welcome the long list of subjects of which she has given notice that she wishes to discuss in Committee.

I welcome that sort of discussion, but listening to the hon. Lady, and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) earlier, and one or two other contributions from other Opposition Members, it would be possible to gain the impression that the Bill, rather than being a brief, sensible and responsible measure to improve the administration of the considerable sum that we spend on social security, is an all-out assault upon the welfare state as we know it.

In the coming financial year, the Government will spend about £46 billion on social security. The Bill will save about £80 million in the coming financial year. That will be more than offset by extra expenditure on the youth training scheme. To put these matters into perspective for the benefit of Opposition Members who regard the Bill as an assault upon those in need, and especially the young, it costs twice as much in public expenditure terms to have a young person on the YTS rather than on supplementary benefit or income support. We are investing considerable sums to ensure that young people receive the training that they need to fit them for employment.

There will be some savings as a result of the enactment of the Bill, albeit it modest ones. I believe that these savings are sensible, and in essence this modest measure is designed to achieve three objectives. First, it is designed to achieve some tidying of the extremely complex pattern of social security legislation that has grown up over the years. Next April we shall be embarking upon a system of income support which, overall, will be simpler, easier to administer and easier to understand. It will make it easier to get help to those who most need it. It will be the most fundamental change in social security that we have had since the end of the second world war. It is only right that in this Bill we should take the opportunity to correct any mistakes or inaccuracies that we can find in existing legislation before the changes come into place.

The second objective of the Bill is to ensure that we target the resources that are available on those who most need help. I am conscious that even on the Government Benches there are those who regard the concept of targeting as somehow ill judged. There are even some Opposition Members who regard it as a dirty word. It means in practice that the Government are determined to seek to use what must be finite resources, vast though they are in the social security area to meet almost insatiable demands, in a sensible and compassionate manner in providing for those who need most help.

The third main buttress of the Bill is designed to encourage as many young people as possible to take advantage of the training schemes that are available to them. This was dealt with in some detail by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The hon. Member for Livingston has asked whether the Bill and the reforms of next year have been set to withstand the strains of the next 40 years of the social security system. I would make no such claim. There will be fundamental changes that will set a pattern that will be of help overwhelmingly to those who most need help in our society but I am sure that we shall need to make subsequent changes as the years pass.

I turn now to some of the detailed points that have been made during the debate—first, to the contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). Many of his points were properly related to the legislation that we are discussing, but some raised questions, not only for Ministers at the Department of Health and Social Security, but for Ministers in other Departments, not least the Treasury. His comments presented us with the basis for a debate that may, in future, command increasing attention.

However, he was rather less generous to us in recognising the steps that the Government have already taken in seeking to alleviate the unemployment and poverty traps, not least by using net rather than gross income to assess family credit and housing benefit, by bringing more generous help to double the number of people in receipt of such benefit by moving them from family income supplement to family credit, and by aligning the assessment rules for income-related benefits so that people on the same income level are treated in the same way whether they are in or out of work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who has sent me a note to explain why she cannot be present in the House, discussed child benefit. I know that she is especially concerned about the universality of that benefit. However, I must make the point—I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done so previously—that in deciding not to uprate child benefit in tune with inflation this year, we saved 30p on child benefit for each claimant. In public expenditure terms, that saved £120 million on child benefit from next April.

However, from next April if one combines the rates of income support and the introduction of family credit, those beneficiaries with children will be supported by no less than an extra £320 million. At the same time, child benefit will remain a most important benefit, which will, of course, be paid to the mother. I remind the House that family credit will also be paid to the mother.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Scott: No, I shall not give way. With respect, the hon. Member for Derby, South did not give way, and I have cut down my time to answer these points.

I wish to deal especially with the important issue of the attendance allowance, which was raised by the Opposition's Front Bench spokesmen and by other Opposition Members. I should remind the House that the attendance allowance is a tax-free, non-contributory weekly benefit that is paid in recognition of the extra costs associated with long-term severe disablement. The medical conditions for entitlement to the allowance are based on the disabled person's need for care from another person in the form of attention in connection with bodily functions or continual supervision to avoid substantial danger.

It has not been mentioned during the debate that the attendance allowance is paid at two distinct levels. There is a lower level for someone who needs attendance during the day or during the night, and a higher level if a person needs attendance at night as well as during the day. Those conditions must be satisfied over six months before the allowance is payable. Decisions on whether or not the allowance is payable are made by an independent Attendance Allowance Board and by doctors who are specially designated to make decisions on behalf of the board.

If Opposition Members believe that the Government are being mean about the attendance allowance, I should remind them of what has happened to the attendance allowance under this Government. Over a period of six years since the Tory Government came into office, the numbers in receipt of attendance allowance have increased from 314,000 to 585,000—that is an increase of about 86 per cent. In real terms, expenditure on the allowance has increased by 104 per cent., from £350 million in 1979-80 to £846 million in 1987-88 at constant prices. That is the level and measure of our commitment to attendance allowance and the House should be congratulating rather than criticising the Government for it.

Mr. Nellist: Given the Minister's obvious pride in his description of the Government's record on attendance allowance, will he comment on the case that I mentioned in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens)—we both have members of the family concerned in our constituencies? Will he extend attendance allowance to chronically sick and disabled children under the age of two? The Storer family have twins, Vicki and Alex, who are 18 months old and so physically and mentally disabled that their mother needs to have oxygen cylinders permanently on hand, as well as all the ancillary requirements for children of that age. She is unable to get an orange badge for her car *[Interruption.]* The Minister may be exasperated, but this is a serious matter for the family whom we represent. If he is so proud about the scheme, will he extend it to children under the age of two?

Mr. Scott: It is typical of the hon. Gentleman wholly to abuse my giving way to him when I am so short of time. The conditions are for the Attendance Allowance Board. Attendance allowance is not generally paid to children under two because naturally they need constant attendance by their parents. This point was also raised by some of my hon. Friends and I shall certainly look into it, but that is the logical reason why attendance allowance is not paid for children under the age of two.

The case of Mrs. Moran is of particular concern to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). The court decided that the Attendance Allowance Board had erred in denying that Mrs. Dorothy Moran, who had been receiving the lower rate allowance since 1983 on account of her daytime attendance needs, required the allowance for continual supervision at night. The court of appeal gave a wider interpretation of continual supervision than had hitherto been accepted by Parliament as a whole and those who had taken a particular interest in this matter.

Until the court's decision the Attendance Allowance Board had operated the provision as requiring a need for active supervision by someone who was awake. The court held that the provision could include passive, standby supervision, even by someone asleep. Intervention to prevent substantial danger need only be rare. Clause 1 is merely intended to return us to the position that existed before the Court of Appeal judgment. It does that by making it clear that at night a disabled person qualifies for the allowance if he needs the wakeful and watchful presence of another person for a prolonged period or at frequent intervals in order to avoid substantial danger to himself or others.

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Scott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to complete the point. It may be that I shall cover his question and I have already had to deal with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

Disabled people who require frequent attention at night in connection with their bodily functions or who need a prolonged period or frequent intervals of supervision in other circumstances will continue to receive the higher allowance. Against that background it is not unreasonable to provide for this change in the law.

Mr. Cook: The Minister stated that the intention of the clause was to restore the position of the law as it was before the court ruling. The clause, as drafted, goes well beyond that and will deny the claim of the 6,000 people, including Mrs. Moran who submitted a further application following the court ruling. Whatever view that the Government may take as to what the law should be, surely they will permit the claims of the 6,000 people who have submitted claims following that court ruling.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman has made an assertion. However, that assertion is not supported by the Attendance Allowance Board, which supports the change that we are introducing and believes that it restores the position to what it was before we made the change.

The Attendance Allowance Board will review Mrs. Moran's case in due course, following the Court of Appeal judgment. It will decide whether she satisfies both the day-time and night-time conditions of entitlement. It has decided that on first sight that is not so. She has been asked to make further representations and to submit any further evidence in support of her case. Her legal advisers have provided that extra information and the board is considering it. It is hoped that Mrs. Moran will receive a final decision in the very near future. If the decision is in her favour, she will receive an enhancement of her current lower rate allowance replaced by a higher rate allowance with arrears back to the date on which the board certified that she first satisfied the medical conditions.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Member for Livingston raised this issue earlier and said that he was concerned about cases in the pipeline at the moment. It is right that we should deal with such matters before the debate draws to a close.

I recognise the full force of the argument that the hon. Member for Livingston put forward about cases in the pipeline. He asked me whether any cases entered before Second Reading could be dealt with and whether I would introduce an amendment to the Bill to that effect. I will do better than that. I will ensure that any cases in the pipeline up until the time that the Bill receives the Royal Assent will be so dealt with and an appropriate amendment will be introduced by the Government in Committee for that purpose.

I detected that the hon. Member for Livingston was having a little fun with the Government in his opening remarks. I can confirm that there will be an appeals procedure for exceptional cold weather payments. Once again, the Government will introduce an amendment to that effect. The hon. Member for Livingston had great fun

[Mr. Scott]

with us about a series of mistakes that he alleged existed in current legislation. I might just mention that Okehampton is in Devon, not Cornwall.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to the Minister for his clear statement about Mrs. Moran's rights. I also thank him for his very clear statement tonight on behalf of the 6,000 other people with claims pending.

Mr. Scott: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his typically reasonable approach to what I hope was a constructive announcement.

In particular, I want to mention the disabled. The House is very worried about the severely disabled. By moving next year to a system of income support, with personal allowances topped up by premiums that will be targeted on groups, we shall have a more simple and easily understood system which will be for the long-term benefit of people who need help and especially the disabled. It means that those who presently have many additional requirements will of course receive transitional protection after next April. People who would otherwise have received many additional requirements will receive less benefit than their predecessors receive at the moment. I am conscious of that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his uprating statement last week said that he was also conscious of that. However, we are referring to very few people. We are talking about hundreds, not thousands. However, I am seeking ways in which it may be possible to address the particular circumstances of that small group of people.

I ask the House to recognise that with regard to the provision for the disabled, under income support we are providing an extra £50 million to meet their needs. We are also providing a new allowance—the severe disability premium—which will come into existence next April at a cost of about £8 million at a rate of £25 a week. That will contribute substantially to meeting the extra needs of disabled people.

This is a sensible and necessary Bill. It is important because it will encourage—and I say encourage, not conscript, coerce or force—young people towards the training that is so important for their futures and for the social and economic future of our country. It not only encourages them towards training and enables them to better fit themselves for the employment market, it moves them away from a damaging downward spiral from dependence on benefits.

It is also sensible and necessary because it ensures that resources are directed at those who most need them. It will also help to ensure the smooth running of the social security system when that is reformed next April. Of course, nothing is for ever. We shall want to see that as needs change, we too change and that we reform the system to make sure that it is continually updated to be in tune with the needs of those who most need help in our society.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:-

The House divided: Ayes 328, Noes 238.

Division No. 38] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger

Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert

Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin

Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McCusker, Harold
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Social Security Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) The payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums falling to be paid by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act by way of travelling expenses;

(b) any other expenses of a Minister of the Crown attributable to the Act;

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act.

(2) The making of payments into the Consolidated Fund.

The money resolution is in a form that will be familiar to the House for a social security Bill. It covers only payments from the Consolidated Fund and not from the national insurance fund or the social fund. The resolution is set out as follows: paragraph (1)*(a)* refers to clause 12(1) and clause 12(2), which relates to expenses incurred in travelling to hospital for treatment. Clause 12(1) covers England and Wales and clause 12(2) covers Scotland. Paragraph (1)*(b)* gives a general power to incur administrative expenses resulting from any clauses of the Bill. In particular, clause 7 may involve administrative expenses where local authorities and other bodies are authorised to make emergency payments on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Paragraph (1)*(c)* refers to any increases in payments made from the Consolidated Fund due to the Bill and relates to clause 4 which provides for child benefit to be extended to the families of 16 and 17-year-olds as part of the two-year youth training scheme. Paragraph (2) relates to payments into the Consolidated Fund as a result of recoveries from any overpayments to suppliers of welfare foods under clause 11.

10.17 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): We are now debating the power that the Government seek to take in order to provide the expenditure necessary for them to carry out the provisions in the Bill, Second Reading of which the House has just approved. As the House is aware, the money resolution specifically requests authorisation of the Secretary of State to pay, by virtue of the Act, travelling expenses and expenses for a Minister of the Crown. That constricts, to a certain extent, the remarks that can be made by an hon. Member who is attempting to speak in the debate. I hope that I can remain sufficiently within order.

Seven months ago the Chancellor of the Exchequer appeared in the Chamber when he introduced the Budget and proudly boasted that we were in the seventh successive year of successful economic growth. No doubt tomorrow we will hear similar claims. Some of us have challenged those remarks, not least in speeches during that month and in June during the debate on the Queen's Speech. We pointed to the over-stretching of the economic elastic, particularly in the case of the American budget and trade deficits. We also pointed to the recession, which is clearly now on its way.

The Bill, which Parliament has just authorised, gives the lie to the promise by the Chancellor that the economy is in line with his assessment. What is the definition of a successful economy if it introduces a Bill that specifically introduces new cuts for those least able to afford them? What is the definition of a healthy economy if it needs to abolish 55p a week of industrial death benefit to widows and to axe the widowers' pensions? The reality is that the Bill, together with tomorrow's so-called Employment Bill, is in preparation for the increasing economic storms of the months and years ahead. It attempts to make the working class of this country, especially the poorest sections of the working class, pay for the crisis in the capitalist economy which is not of their making. Simultaneously, it attempts to constrict the ability of their trade union organisations to resist those attacks.

There are a number of odious clauses in the Bill, but the constrictions of the money resolution debate will not allow me to deal with them in the depth that they deserve.

We heard earlier about the decreased numbers of people who will be able to claim unemployment benefit because of the clause that extends contribution conditions from one year to two years. It has been estimated that 350,000 people will lose their right to claim benefit because of that change, although Ministers were at pains to point out that 300,000 of those claimants will be able to fall back on means-tested benefits. However, at least 50,000 will lose benefit altogether, mainly women—particularly married women who are ineligible for those means-tested benefits —and young people.

The change will affect the jobless count, as only benefit claimants are counted in the total. Therefore, 50,000 will disappear from the official dole figures. Yet again, the Government are interested not in creating genuine work for the millions of unemployed people, but in gerrymandering the procedures for claiming benefit so as to reduce not unemployment but the statistics.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if Tory Members do not appear to be interested in this fact— *[Interruption.]* What my hon. Friends may lack in quantity they make up for in quality. At least they are paying attention to what I am saying, unlike Tory Members who are attempting to drown my remarks.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at an official count there were 22,000 unemployed people in Coventry and 481 registered vacancies at the jobcentre. That figure of 22,000 is at least 8,000 less than the true number of unemployed people. However, that gives us an unemployed-vacancy ration of 46:1. Even if all the unemployed were to follow the advice of the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold)—who tonight accused the unemployed of being idle and not getting off their backsides — and succeed in getting one of the 481 vacancies, there would still be 45 unemployed people for every one who had succeeded in obtaining a job. What we needed from the Bill tonight, whether it be from the primary legislation or the money resolution, was not statistical sleight of hand, but new jobs for the genuine unemployed.

We have heard about the social fund, which will make the poor pay yet again. A clause in the Bill made it clear that the budget that will be allocated to local offices to administer the social fund will include the amount that claimants must pay back on the loans that they may be granted. Therefore, the social fund will become a local poor box for people on low incomes. Future unemployed people will have no right to extra help with major expenses such as children's clothing, cookers or repairs which are not covered by their weekly benefit. The system of single payments will be replaced by a system of loans rationed through the fund. I strongly advise all those who might read the debate, or extracts of it, to seek assistance from their local law centre or citizens advice bureaux so that they can claim their rights before they disappear in April 1988.

We heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee recommended that £350 million should be made available for the social fund, yet it is to receive only £200 million. The Tories have set weekly benefit rates at a miserly level. Inevitably, the social fund will be overrun by people who cannot make ends meet.

The Bill and the money resolution give the administrators greater discretion to decide who deserves, or does not deserve, help. We are told that two social funds will operate at local offices—one for loans and one for grants. Local offices will be expected to keep within their budgets and not to operate waiting lists or review those cases turned down, because of the lack of money, for a minimum period of six months. The draft manual, extracts of which some of us have had a chance to see, states:

> "Single applicants or a couple without children would generally have lower priority".

The manual states:

> "Loans should not be made to those unable to pay."

Once again, the poorest group of those on benefits will face the severest cuts.

We have heard that unemployment benefit will be cut for those between 55 and 60 if they already receive an occupational pension of £35 a week or more. I do not know how many Conservative Members understand working class people who make payments into occupational pension schemes. Those benefits are deferred wages, paid for while one is in work to enhance the miserable pensions that the Government give those who rely on state pension benefits. Those workers make national insurance contributions to cushion them when they are out of work through enforced redundancy or, as is likely today in former manufacturing areas such as Coventry, enforced early retirement and to gain them 12-months' unemployment benefit. Hundreds of thousands of men over 60 have already lost up to £700 in the first 12 month period. As the former Minister for Social Security and the Disabled— the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major)— admitted to me in a question in February this year, over a six-year period the Government have refused to index-link the abatement level introduced in 1981 and increase it from £35 to £48.40 per week, the level it should be. The legislation reduces from 60 to 55 the age at which workers become trapped by the limit. We have heard that a further 27,000 workers who have already paid their national insurance contributions and paid into their occupational pension schemes will lose up to £700 in a 12-month period. The irony, which seems lost on most Tory Members, is that if those workers succeeded in getting a job again after enforced redundancy or early retirement, they would again have to pay into the national insurance fund, which would not give them unemployment benefit if they again became unemployed.

Earlier this year, we saw some of the Right-wing think tanks, which now seem to be represented by such hon. Members as the new hon. Member for Gravesham. Incidentally, for the benefit of those who did not hear this

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

earlier, the hon. Gentleman tried his luck some four years ago in Coventry, South-East and got a right sending-off from working people there. The head of one think tank —Sir John Hoskyns—is now the director-general of the Institute of Directors. The people involved in those think tanks said that employment should be counted only from age 25 to age 55.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nellist: I shall give way in a second. If we pass the full legislation, we shall make that prediction reality.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nellist: In a minute—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."]—when I finish my point. If we pass the full legislation, the combination of YTS and JTS for those up to 25 and the abatement on occupational pensions, which reduces the level of unemployment benefit pound per pound for those aged 55 or more, will bring to fruition the promise from outside the Tory party that the only workers who count as really employed or unemployed will be between 25 and 55. Those under the age of 25 are fodder for schemes, while those over the age of 55——

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nellist: In a minute. Those aged 55 or over are to be put on a permanent scrap heap with the rest of a generation that the Government say is too old to work.

Mr. Arnold: The hon. Gentleman referred to a right setting-down at the Coventry, South-East general election contest in 1983. If a right setting-down means reducing the Labour majority by two-thirds I hope that there will be many more.

Mr. Nellist: As that has nothing to do with the money resolution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would no doubt rule me out of order if I replied—other than to say that I got here in 1983 and the international banker across the way did not.

The House is being asked to authorise the Secretary of State to spend money on travel and other administrative expenses necessary for the implementation of the Bill. The core of the Bill consists of the total removal from all 16 and 17-year-olds of the right to any form of supplementary benefit. I regard that as equivalent to the introduction into this country of the work fare schemes now in operation in some states of America. Why do we need economic conscription to force young people on to a scheme which, if one is to believe the summer's £2 million television advertising campaign, is so attractive that every youngster of 16 or 17 should be jumping at the chance to get a place on it?

If that were really so, the Government would not be having to introduce measures to try to force school leavers on to the scheme. The Government already have the power to reduce by 40 per cent. for 13 weeks the benefit of those who refuse to join a scheme or who leave it early. One figure suggests that some 2,500 youngsters have refused to take a place while about 23,000 have left early. The present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he was Secretary of State for Employment, suggested that youngsters left the scheme or refused to join them because they preferred to go to discos. Lord UB40 — Lord Young — who replaced him said that the youngsters preferred to stay in bed.

I have discovered from most of the youths to whom I have spoken—as the civil servants in the Box will no doubt confirm, this is backed up by surveys conducted by the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission—that the three objections of those who leave the schemes or refuse to join boil down to the low allowance, exploitation by employers and no guarantee of a job at the end.

YTS was never a bridge from school to work. Sir John Hoskyns, who was the head of the Prime Minister's think tank in 1981, drafted the original paper which led the Government from their 1979 position of cutting £29 million off the training budget to their decision in 1983 to spend £1,000 million on YTS—the intervening events included, of course, the riots in the inner-city areas of Toxteth, Moss Side, Brixton and St. Pauls.

Sir John Hoskyns said that the main need for a scheme was to increase the differential between adult rates and youth rates, although it had the useful additional effect of reducing the official dole figures.

As I have already explained, the problem in Coventry is not that there is a lack of willing hands but that there is a lack of jobs. We have 6,800 unemployed 16 to 18-year-olds in Coventry. A third of them—2,700—are on YTS schemes but 4,000 of them are unemployed. What we need in Coventry is not for those 4,000 youngsters to be coerced by having their benefits removed but for at least 4,000 jobs to be made available so that the youngsters can put their hands to them.

If the Tories had taken the Labour Government's YOP scheme and uprated the allowance from £19·50p to the £49 it should be today, there might be fewer grumbles from young people about the allowance. Youngsters have been robbed of £20 a week. They know that it is part of a package involving the abolition of the wages councils for under 21-year-olds which was designed to reduce the level of youth wages.

Some schemes are run by redundant shop stewards from manufacturing industry. They attempt to provide real training. Unfortunately, the majority, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, West (Mr. Prescott) has said, are "nowt more than skivvy" schemes and a substitute for older workers.

The Department of Employment says that 32 per cent. of large firms and 62 per cent. of small firms have used YTS in the last year or two to substitute young workers on YTS for older workers. There is no guarantee of a job later. What can be worse than leading youngsters up the garden path with advertisements featuring Spikey Dodds playing for England because he went on a YTS course or someone else getting a job in manufacturing or packing when the reality is that half the youngsters go back to unemployment or on to another JTS scheme or to a job club?

There are genuine and well-founded fears amongst tens of thousands of young school leavers about YTS courses. Opposition to YTS will become a major issue in the weeks and months ahead among students, parents, teachers and trade unionists.

Two-year YTS is different from YOP and the old YTS courses. Youths on the two-year scheme are beginning to think, not so much like trainees but like young workers. They go into work at the same time as older workers, they take their breaks at the same time and often do the same job. The difference is that at the end of the week they are paid a fraction of what the older workers are paid. That fuels resentment against YTS.

The Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, of which I am the honorary president, will lobby the House of Commons on 19 November to protest at the measures outlined in the Bill. With the unions, particularly the Transport and General Workers Union, we shall try to unionise the youngsters on the schemes. We shall try to improve their allowance and to end the disgrace which has involved 40 youngsters being killed in the last eight years. We shall concentrate on improving the training content of the schemes and try to ensure that every scheme is vetted by the health and safety inspectorate or by shop stewards responsible for safety.

I believe that the action by the 250,000 young students two and a half years ago against the then Secretary of State for Employment who tried to bring conscription into the YTS, will be exceeded in the months ahead and that the young will take action against the YTS provision in the Bill.

Tonight we discussed the case of Vicky and Alex Storer, 18-month-old twins who are so physically and mentally handicapped that in their short lives they have already had heart surgery, suffered brain drainage and resucitation—*[Interruption.]* Brain drainage might seem funny to Conservative Members, but those twins did suffer brain drainage and their mother had to carry an oxygen cylinder every single day of their short lives. I challenge them to go to Coventry to meet the grandparents, or to Bedworth to meet the parents and the kids, and then to say to me and the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) that it is right to have the present restriction on attendance allowance that denies the under-twos the chance of their parents having an orange badge for disabled transport and the financial assistance that they can get in March next year when they reach their second birthdays. Let hon. Members laugh when they see those kids and meet their parents. I can promise that those smiles on Tory Members' faces—which have dropped somewhat now—will not be there the next time that the hon. Member for Nuneaton and I raise this issue.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Gentleman has set rather a dilemma for the House, especially his party. He may not remember, because he is a better shouter than he is a listener, that over the years the Opposition have consistently criticised the lack of take-up of schemes and benefits. The main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's speech on the money resolution has criticised the Government for their splendid advertising of the various schemes open to youngsters. The next time the Labour party criticises the Government for low take-up of benefits and schemes, I ask him to reflect on the speech that he has made with such force tonight. It flies in the face of what we have had to suffer from the Opposition for many years. We are trying to tell people what is available. We are trying to help with "Action for Jobs". We are trying to do what the Opposition failed to do for many, many years.

Mr. Nellist: If the £42·5 million that was spent on television advertising for the privatisation of British Gas had been spent on advertising to raise the take-up of attendance allowance — notwithstanding ministerial promises of amendments to a Bill that is itself an amendment to the Social Security Act 1986—and other benefits of real use to families, I might have more sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's point.

My opposition is fundamental to the Bill itself and to the granting of authorisation to the Secretary of State to expend money either on travel allowances or unnecessary administration to bring in the several clauses that the right hon. Gentleman outlined in his moving speech. If we had been talking about extending the attendance allowance to the Mrs. Morans or the Vicki and Alex Storers of this world, there would have been unanimity on the need for advertising. If we had been talking about giving to the 500,000 youngsters on YTS something that the Government will be unable to grant—especially as we move towards recession — the right that post-war generations have always expected, namely, that following 11 years of compulsory state education the opportunity to use that qualification to get a job and contribute to society, there would have been unanimity. If, instead of banding the employed between the ages of 25 and 55, and saying that those under 25 are scheme fodder and those over 55 are past it—which clauses in the Bill clearly suggest—we had spoken of full employment, there would have been unanimity. The truth, as ever with Tory legislation, is the opposite. We have spoken tonight, in a country that is supposed to be in its seventh successive year of successful economic growth, of making the poorer sections of society pay for the top 5 per cent. to enjoy that growth.

The Labour opposition, both inside and outside Parliament, is about challenging the right of a Government who, in their manifesto, said that they intended to ensure that child benefit was to be paid as now, but who, within days of the new Session beginning, froze child benefit. Tonight we are expected to believe that there really is a promise of a training place and a job — a chance to use their skills — for every unemployed youngster aged 16 and 17. Frankly, I do not believe the Secretary of State or the Minister when they make such assertions. The Labour Opposition do not believe those assertions and, when the people of the country read this debate, they will not believe the Government either.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I should like to ask my hon. Friend whether, under the terms of the money resolution, it would be in order for Back-Bench Members to propose an amendment to the Bill at later stages that would have the effect of providing that, in future years, child benefit would be uprated automatically in accordance with the Lawson-Rooker-Wise formula.

10.45 pm

Mr. Portillo: With the leave of the House, I will not detain hon. Members long as I sense that the House wishes to come to a decision on this matter.

I am not an expert on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). I believe that my hon. Friend will have to take up that matter with the Chairman of the Committee or, if we were on Report, with the occupant of your Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For what it is worth, my reading of the Bill is that an amendment on child benefit probably would fall within the terms of the Bill, but I am not the expert on that.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who probably prepared his speech for the main

[Mr. Portillo]

debate, was disappointed that he had been unable to participate in it and did not want to waste a good speech or even the speech that he had. We shall certainly return in Committee to the many points that he made and we look forward to him being a member of the Committee.

As far as I could detect, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East raised no questions for me on the money resolution as such. However, I would like to make it clear to him that, if it were not for the economic success of the Government, we would not be talking about £46,000 million worth of public spending for social security. That has been made possible by the Government's economic policies.

Because I was unable to detect any specific questions on the money resolution, I feel that there is nothing standing in the way of my commending the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Social Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) The payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums falling to be paid by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act by way of travelling expenses;

(b) any other expenses of a Minister of the Crown attributable to the Act;

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act;

(2) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund.

Latin

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

10.47 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the important subject of the teaching of Latin in our schools.

At once I must report to hon. Members the extremely sad fact that Latin is under threat. It is not under threat from any lack of interest. My hon. Friends may be surprised to know that the numbers studying Latin are keeping up well since the days when they studied it. However, it is perfectly true that the numbers are not quite what they were.

Latin is no longer compulsory for entry to Oxford or Cambridge. There are the competing pressures of the technical and vocational education initiative and the continuing encouragement of the Department of Education and Science for subjects that it deems to be relevant and useful. However, some 20,000 pupils take Latin at O-level every year. The numbers studying classical subjects at A-level has increased by some 20 per cent. over the past seven years and at any one time some 6,500 undergraduates are studying classics at our universities — over half of those go on with their degree into commerce.

Perhaps more surprising still, Latin survives well within our state education system. There are still more than 1,000 state schools offering Latin despite the onslaught against Latin in some Labour-controlled education authorities, in particular, the Inner London education authority. Latin continues to be taught. The threat comes not from any lack of interest——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): What does the hon. Gentleman mean by an onslaught by Labour authorities on Latin? I know of no such onslaught.

Mr. Fallon: I shall be turning to the evidence, if the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

The threat comes not from any lack of interest on the part of the schools. I am sad to say that it comes from my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Education and Science in their proposals for a national curriculum. This curriculum lists 10 foundation subjects, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has assured us would occupy some 80 to 90 per cent. of the school's time. That means that the remaining subjects must compete for the remaining 20 per cent. — for example, a third science, a second foreign language, business studies, home economics and classics. If 90 per cent. of the school week is to be occupied by the foundation subjects of the national curriculum, that will demand 36 of the available 40 periods. If we take one for religious education, we are left with three periods for all the remaining core subjects. If 80 per cent. is the figure that my right hon. Friend wishes to prescribe, we are left with eight periods. If we take one for religious education, there are a mere seven periods for all the non-core subjects.

I contend that it is impossible for a pupil to achieve an O-level in Latin in the short time that will be available to him, even if all of it is allocated to Latin. However, the prospects for Latin are somewhat worse than that. There is no upper limit on the time that may be devoted by schools to the national curriculum as it is proposed by my right hon. and hon. Friends. Schools could concentrate almost entirely on the foundation subjects, and with the requirement to test at the ages of seven, 11 and 14, there may be every incentive to do so in the schools that wish to continue attracting pupils under the more competitive open enrolment system.

There will not be any extra resources forthcoming when the national curriculum is put into place. Classics teachers, those who have been teaching Latin on demand within the state system, may find themselves transferred by their heads to teach other languages, English, history or whatever. I contend that Latin will not merely decline; it will disappear, and do so almost overnight as the new curriculum is introduced

My evidence is threefold. The Schools Curriculum Development Committee in its evidence on the national curriculum has said:

> "The demands of the subjects of the national curriculum on time will inevitably reduce the number of pupils who can study Latin or a second modern language below the sixth form."

The National Association of Schoolmasters said:

> "Important elements, minority subjects such as classics, now enjoying something of a resurgence, will be squeezed out of the curriculum."

Most interesting of all, those who teach classics in our schools — I quote Mr. Adrian Spooner, the head of classics at Parkfield comprehensive at Chester-le-Street, County Durham, who has collected the evidence—have shown overwhelmingly that many Labour-controlled authorities are planning already to discard Latin. Labour and Conservative-controlled authorities are planning to do so once the national curriculum is introduced. The authorities include the Inner London education authority, Northampton, Tyne and Wear and Durham.

That is the evidence, expert and accredited, of those who teach Latin. Where is the evidence of my right hon. and hon. Friends that that will not be the outcome? I understand that the Department has not carried out a survey, and it is of no comfort to those who are concerned about the survival of Latin for the Secretary of State to come to the conference at Blackpool and say "Nil desperandum." I shall complete the line for him, which is

> "Nil despérandum Teucro duce, et auspice Teucro."

There is no need to despair under Trojan leadership, my right hon. Friend tells us. In the absence of such safeguards and surveys, it is of no comfort for me to tell the House that the only comfort that we have received from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and from my hon. Friend the Minister are the words that classics will still have an important role to play. Latinists will respond to my right hon. Friend's promise of Trojan leadership: "Equo ne credite, Teucri."

Latin needs no defence or apologia from me. It stands in its own right as a vigorous, intellectual discipline that encourages clarity of thought and expression, develops powers of logic, judgment and imagination, and demands and rewards attention, application and memory. Indeed, it may do slightly more than that. Those who would argue for Latin argue also that it broadens horizons and develops early on an understanding of the more humanistic elements in civilisation. It also presents the opportunity to learn skills that are transferable — not only to the study of other languages, but to the study of other subjects also. Latin also affords us a corpus of

[Mr. Fallon]

literature, influenced by common artistic principles developed by common stylistic canons and a culture that is complete in itself—with a history, a legal system and a philosophy. All those things are bound up in the study of a language.

If it is worth studying literature at all, it must be worth studying classical literature. How can one understand and appreciate fully the literature of Shakespeare, Dante, Racine and Shelley without some understanding of classical literature? If it is worth studying history, it must be worth understanding ancient history. How can one understand the forces that led to the birth of democracy, or understand the rule of law and the legal system that still underpins our own, unless one studies ancient history? If it is worth studying philosophy, it must be worth studying Plato and Aristotle, the fons et origo of moral philosophy, logic and metaphysics.

Above all, any study of Latin is, in the end, a study of one's own language. Half of all the vocabulary that we use is Latin-based. That does not matter simply for those who want to perfect their English, but for those who want to get on in life, and for job-seekers because one of the most hidden forms of discrimination in our society is not only that of sex or colour, but that of language — the so-called lexical bar through which those who lack competence, fluency and self-confidence in their own language cannot break. The study of Latin is, therefore, a means by which people can enrich their confidence and break through that form of hidden discrimination.

It may surprise my hon. Friends to know that in some of the inner-city areas of the United States, such as in Philadelphia, Washington and Indianapolis, Latin is now being taught to deprived black children. Results show that those children with Latin have educational achievements that are a year ahead of those without it.

My hon. Friends have an alternative. They can reconsider and save Latin — but not by making it a foundation subject; I know nobody who teaches classics who wants it to be made compulsory. Perhaps that was one of the causes of its decline. Latin can be saved by making it a viable option outside the core curriculum, but within the school week. That could be done by reducing the time that is allotted to the full curriculum, from the 80 per cent. or 90 per cent. about which my right hon. Friend talks, to 70 per cent., so that at least two non-core subjects can become viable and realistic options. Obviously, the remaining 30 per cent. must be devoted to subjects of proven academic worth that are likely to attract pupils of ability, but I believe that if Latin is thus available, many more will take it on through O-level to A-level and use it as a bridge to study further languages at university.

If my hon. Friends do not reconsider, Latin will not simply wither away; it will disappear entirely from the state system within two years. It may survive a few more years in the private, independent sector, but is that what we want? Do we want classical languages taught only in the private sector and classical literature available only in private libraries? What would be more elitist than to confine the classics to a fee-paying minority? That would be an act of cultural vandalism for three reasons. First, it is a peculiar form of linguistic censorship which seeks to censor the knowledge of one's language. It is a system which would prefer people not to know what lies at the root of our language. Secondly, it is a further application of a somewhat mean-minded educational philosophy. We are beginning to understand now that, while our comprehensive system claimed to extend the curricular range of education, it is now seen to narrow that range. The attack we have seen in some education authorities is a peculiar form of anti-intellectualism, posing as egalitarianism.

The curious assumption, which my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) correctly identified in his stirring speech to classicists earlier this year, was that a subject can be made more interesting simply by being made easier. Obviously, that is a false assumption. Obviously, it is wrong of us to deny pupils who find these non-foundation subjects outside the core interesting and attractive the freedom and room to develop their skills and abilities in pursuing those subjects. If we do that, we shall match the architectural barbarism of some of our new modern schools with a development of breeze-block minds, whereby pupils may well have been tested to standards and to various specifications, but whose minds are incapable of absorbing precisely that which might enrich.

Thirdly, if we proceed with this act of cultural vandalism, we shall be betraying a trust. Each successive generation has a general duty to hand on its wisdom and knowledge to the next generation, and to preserve, enrich and transmit it. To deny future generations of schoolchildren access to that inheritance is an attempt to deny that we are what the past has made us and to pretend that it is not necessary to study what we were in order to understand why we are what we are.

Latin is one of the keys to the stored wisdom of nearly 3,000 years of Western intellectual progress. Its very survival at the margins of our education system now depends on Parliament. I urge the House to reflect carefully before destroying such a tradition.

11.2 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on his initiative in raising this subject for debate. I shall exercise a little classical restraint and speak for only three minutes.

I do not think that I want to mount a defence of the classics because if we have reached the point where that is necessary, we are done for indeed. We are not only discussing the classics, but we are talking about a wider fear of a certain coarsening in our educational values. It is often said that the Government have only one challenge in education and that is to raise vocational awareness; the reality is much more complex. We must raise economic awareness, but also the quality of humanistic studies. The philosophy of utilitarianism is dismal and I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State subscribes to it. Education should and must be a social adhesive. It would be wrong to move towards a position where an important aspect of education was available only in return for cash.

I want to make a rather obscure international point. It would be miserably ironic if we were to do away with this aspect of our culture at a time when even the Communist countries are rediscovering their past. Confucius is being republished in China, the Russians are rediscovering the importance of their history, and even East Germany is looking more closely at Luther. It would be horribly ironic if we were to look the other way now.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science faces some practical problems in finding space for the classics. I draw his attention to one factor that is frequently overlooked. The length of the English school day does not overstrain the children's capacities. I suspect that there may be a little under-straining of their efforts. I realise that this is a very complicated question. However, we should recognise that our children are, if anything, underworked, and that is certainly true with regard to homework. I underline the comments my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington and I subscribe to most of the points that he made.

11.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a contribution to this debate. I accept that brevity is essential.

For 14 years before I was elected to the House it was my great privilege and, at times, extremely onerous duty to teach Latin. I therefore wished to take part in the debate and identify myself with the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). I support their arguments.

Our civilisation and society have evolved from an amalgam of Christian religion and a classical tradition. If we sever ourselves from that cultural mooring, we will do ourselves great damage. In particular, one can argue that the national curriculum is weak in that it lacks flexibility and seeks to take up too much of the daily and weekly time of the school curriculum. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond positively to our observations.

11.6 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am advised by my colleagues who are wiser than I that I should start my response to the debate with a little Latin. I thought I would start by saying:

> "In principio, Mulier est hominis confusio—Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is, 'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'"

I am sure that that will not be lost on my hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). I have enjoyed the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington together with my hon. Friends the Members for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) emphasised their case with great authority. I am certain that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington would attribute much of the clarity and logic of his argument to his classical training. Possibly his alma mater of St. Andrews would be proud of him. Indeed, I am certain that my hon. Friend's colleagues who also went to St. Andrews will be proud of him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington will be aware that he is not alone in his concern. In October alone, we received 119 letters from hon. Members enclosing constituents' letters about the place of classics in the national curriculum. As we have all noted, there has also been a lively debate in the newspaper correspondence columns. Indeed, the leader writers are every bit as exercised on this subject as are the educators.

As I was pondering how to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington on the subject of teaching Latin and the classics in schools and the future of the classics in the national curriculum, I decided, as he did, to set my remarks firmly in the context of what is happening now. If I may, I will follow my hon. Friend's lead and talk about what is being done.

I have discovered that in the maintained schools some form of classics is taught in about 30 per cent. of comprehensive schools and about 50 per cent. of our grammar schools. In the independent sector, classics are taught in about 90 per cent. of the schools in membership of the Headmasters' Conference, Girls' School Association, and the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools, the registered and recognised bodies.

In 1985, there were nearly 33,000 entries for CSE or O-level in classical subjects—0·5 per cent. of entries in all subjects. At A-level, there were more than 6,000 entries in classical subjects — about 1 per cent. of the total. Although I warm to the notion that nothing should be done further to reduce the teaching of classics, I think that those figures show that classics are not on offer to all pupils and may reflect some schools' judgment on whether it is appropriate to offer the subjects at all. The figures also demonstrate the extraordinary variation between the curriculum of one school and the next.

If we consider what is on offer in schools, we find that maths and English are common features, but, beyond that, there is tremendous variety which leads, all to often, to an unbalanced curricular offering. I quite accept that in many schools there will have been thoughtful and innovative curricular development without the basic elements of the curriculum having been disturbed, but unfortunately odd subjects have been allowed to proliferate in others.

In a publication of some two or three years ago, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington and I shared authorship, we wrote of the choice for parents, especially for the majority of parents in state education. We wrote:

> "This means that state education need not treat parents as customers to be satisfied. It can concentrate on providing what the producers, the teachers and officials, want to put forward, and know that the parents have no choice but take it. This is one reason why standards of tough and rigorous subjects decline, and more nebulous and fashionable notions replace them. This is why children are now 'taught' such things as social awareness where they were once taught to read and write.
>
> It is a reason why such bogus subjects as 'peace studies' and 'anti-racism' take time away from the teaching of history, geography, languages and mathematics."

That is strong language, and not entirely without foundation. It is good reason for the Government to focus more sharply on subject matter and demand rigour.

Where does that leave us with the classics? I believe that there is sufficient flexibility in our proposals for Latin to continue to be taught in schools that want to offer it. I have heard many examples recently of classics teachers' commitment to their subject, and I know that they will press hard for its continuation. In secondary schools, there will be scope for non-foundation subjects such as Latin and Greek. They will be available to all pupils in the first three years, and especially at the options stage of years four and five. This will not represent too great a change from what pertains even now in maintained schools. I also believe that schools will have regard to the claims of the classics when planning their non-foundation provision.

Perhaps I may offer my hon. Friends some reassurance about the amount of time that is to be allocated to the foundation subjects. It will not be laid down in statute. The amount of time suggested in the consultation document for the foundation subjects was simply the amount of time

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

that our professional advisers found was spent in schools where there was good practice. That amount of time, if adopted, would be 80 per cent. of the week, which would leave the equivalent of a whole school day per week for non-foundation subjects. That calculation applies to the average school and the average pupil. More able pupils will be able to cover the foundation subjects programme of study and attainment targets more quickly and therefore have more time for non-foundation subjects. I think that my hon. Friend will find that that is a means by which Latin and Greek can be taught to many pupils.

It has been suggested in the newspapers that Latin or Greek should, if the school so wishes, replace a modern foreign language in the list of foundation subjects. I want to take issue with that suggestion. The study of a modern foreign language serves both individual needs and the needs of the country. Worthwhile skills in such a language are an asset which can be developed and put to use by people at work or in their personal lives, at home and abroad. Compared with many major trading nations, ours has a damagingly small proportion of people who understand and speak a modern foreign language. Knowledge of a potential customer's language can be a deciding factor in securing and maintaining exports.

At present too many pupils, especially boys, give up their foreign language studies at the end of the third year of secondary school. Therefore, one of the main messages of the Government's draft policy statement "Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum", issued for consultation last year, was that the majority of pupils should continue with the study of a modern foreign language throughout the period of compulsory secondary schooling. That draft policy statement was, in general, warmly received.

I am also aware that a number of people—my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington mentioned this—believe strongly that the basic grammatical rules acquired through a study of Latin can be of great assistance to some people in mastering the complexities of the English language, and to others through its intellectual rigour and background of an ancient civilisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham talked about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has appointed a committee chaired by Sir John Kingman to advise him on what pupils should know about language. I believe that the evidence on the beneficial effect of studying Latin has been put to that committee, which will report early next year. The English working group will then build on the report of the Kingman committee in its work on attainment targets and programmes of study. Obviously, I do not know what view the committee will take of the evidence put to it. I believe, however, that any subject, properly taught, can develop in pupils the habits of intellectual rigour, and that all knowledge combines to produce what might be termed a civilised person. Of course, Latin plays its part; but it has no monopoly here.

My hon. Friend talked of hidden discrimination, due to the lack of knowledge of Latin. I leave him with the thought of one, Winston Churchill, who wrote in his recollections of his early years:

> "By being so long in the lowest form I gained immense advantage over the cleverer boys—I got into my head the essential matter of the normal British sentence which is a noble thing. Naturally I am biased in favour of boys learning English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour and Greek as a treat."

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Seventeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NATIONAL PROVIDENT INSTITUTION BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

AUTUMN STATEMENT 1987

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a copy of Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement 1987.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

1. **Mr. Bill Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the funding of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): My right hon. Friend announced on 14 October a 9 per cent. increase in funding for the polytechnics and colleges in 1988-89. Our expenditure plans for the universities will be announced later today.

Mr. Michie: Is the Minister aware that in unit of resource terms there has been a 20 per cent. decrease for polytechnics since the Conservative Government came to power? If the Minister values the work of the polytechnics and the increase in the number of students, why have there not been additional resources perhaps along the same lines as the increased resources for universities?

Mr. Jackson: The polytechnics and colleges sector now accounts for more than half the students in higher education—more than 300,000. That is a remarkable achievement. The proposed increase of 9 per cent. this year is sufficient to allow for the expansion of access to the level of known demand and to finance the continuing programme of selective initiatives.

Mr. Rhodes James: When will the review of student financing be completed and published?

Mr. Jackson: We hope to complete the work of the review committee early next year. It remains to be decided whether and in what form that will be published.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Is the Minister aware that the formula for responsible bodies' educational provision means that access courses being run in higher education find it difficult to run on a proper basis involving tutorial and seminar provision? Are there any plans to increase the funding available for access courses?

Mr. Jackson: There is a continuing growth of access courses, which we welcome. The Government are committed to increase the number of students in higher education by 50,000 by 1990, and we believe that access courses have an important role to play in that.

Dr Twinn: What representations has my hon. Friend received about the disparity of per capita funding for students in polytechnics and universities? Will he consider reviewing the funding of universities and making the sum that is now available for research in universities open for competition by all bodies of higher education on the basis of the quality of their research?

Mr. Jackson: There is continuing concern about differences between the two sectors of higher education. We have to recognise that, going back to 1966 and the days of the late right hon. Member for Grimsby, Mr. Anthony Crosland, there has been a difference in mission between the two sectors. The institutions in the university sector have a research vocation and that accounts very largely for the differences in the unit of resource between the two sectors. We believe that the polytechnics and colleges have a contribution to make to research and we have recognised that fact through the programme of selective initiatives.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that, even with the 9 per cent. extra, the unit of resouce for polytechnics will be further reduced next year and that, even on the most generous information from leaks about the money available, it will not be restored to anywhere near the total before the cuts in 1981, so that universities such as Salford and Bradford will have at least 20 per cent. fewer resources than they had in 1981?

Mr. Jackson: The recurrent grant for universities for 1987-88 is up by 10 per cent. over the previous year and we have further proposals to make later today. There is continuing support for universities and polytechnics and there has been rapid expansion throughout the past seven or eight years.

City Technology Colleges

2. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is able to announce any further progress towards the establishment of a pilot network of city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in relation to the proposed city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Sponsorship for four city technology colleges has already been announced. The Kingshurst CTC will open next year and the Nottingham CTC in 1989. I am making good progress in discussions with a number of other prospective sponsors.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his initiative in this matter. May I ask him to contact senior industrialists and get them to understand that we will not be able to provide the extremely worthwhile activities that the CTCs will be able to provide unless they come up with the money? That is the meaning of self-help. That is the way to help enterprise and to help people to be properly educated for the business world.

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. The encouraging thing about the CTC initiative is the way in which many companies and industrialists have come forward willing to provide money and support such as lending executives. It is a partnership between schools, industry and parents.

Mr. Rogers: Is it not true that the lack of real progress in this sector is due to the fact that industry and commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and chambers of commerce do not want to be associated with the half-baked idea? Is it not true that they have less faith in the idea than in the Secretary of State himself?

Mr. Baker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is far from the truth. Many companies, large and small, have said that they wish to sponsor colleges. There are several committed sponsors. I shall be announcing some additional colleges shortly, but I am keen to secure sites. The difficulty is that some local authorities are not prepared to make empty schools available. That is a dog in the manger.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite the change of control in Langbaurgh from a Labour-controlled authority to a Liberal-Labour-controlled authority, the site earmarked for the CTC on Teesside will proceed and that there will be no delay in putting that college on the map?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend for the support that he has given over the past months to establishing a CTC on Teesside. I very much favour the establishment of a CTC on Teesside, as I do on Tyneside. We are pursuing the establishment of both colleges vigorously.

Mr. Flannery: Although the Secretary of State is clearly having great difficulty in organising the CTCs, is not the fundamental aim further to centralise education and strike a blow at the local education authorities? When that is linked to the opting-out process, is it not an all-out attempt, which could possibly fail and produce chaos, to strike a blow at local authorities, to smash them and to centralise education?

Mr. Baker: It is not a centralising measure. The interesting thing about the groups of people in the cities interested in establishing CTCs is their local links. One has seen that fact in Solihull in the west midlands, in Nottingham, in London and in several of the other areas that I am pursuing. It is not centralisation. It is the use of the vitality and energy of people at a local level.

Mr. Morley: Is the Secretary of State aware that in some areas in which the local authority is reorganising schools because of falling rolls, a CTC will completely unbalance the organisation and lead to good schools closing down because of this half-baked idea?

Mr. Baker: There is no reason for any good school in Britain to close. The cumulative effect of the changes that we will be bringing about will be to improve quality in all our schools and to encourage all schools to be better.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating and offering good wishes to the Conservative-controlled Nottingham city council, elected this year, which has just granted planning consent for such a college? Will he note the fact that that consent has been given in the teeth of the opposition of the minority Labour group on the city council, and the majority group on the county council, who seek to deny that choice and benefit to the children of Nottingham?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend, who has been very involved in local politics in Nottingham, for the support that he has given. I am sure that future generations of children in Nottingham will benefit enormously from the CTC that will open there in 1989.

Mr. Fatchett: First, may I congratulate the Secretary of State on putting a brave face on his failure to attract industrial support? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall his words at last year's Conservative party conference, when he said that CTCs would be non-selective? How does he reconcile those comments with the reported practice in the proposed Solihull CTC, where not only are children applying for admission being tested on a number of occasions, but their parents are being tested? Is that not conclusive evidence that CTCs will not simply be elitist but will distort intake for other schools in the same catchment area?

Mr. Baker: In the selection of children, primary teachers and head teachers will be asked to provide reports on candidates. A series of tests and interviews with parents will follow. The final selection will be carried out to ensure that the intake reflects the ability range of children of eligible age in the catchment area.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is it not possible that some companies have not yet realised the full potential of CTCs as a means of closing the gap between industry and education? Might it not be useful if, on the basis of a clearer blueprint, which might now be available as a result of my right hon. Friend's progress with four colleges, he sought an early meeting with the CBI?

Mr. Baker: Yes, I discuss these matters not only with the CBI but with other commercial interests. I assure the House that several sponsors have come forward. One approached us last month offering £1 million for a college in the north-west and there are several others. I shall be announcing the details when we have secured specific sites.

Education Reform

3. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of those representations he has received in relation to his consultative proposals to devolve financial management to schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed in the Library copies of all letters received from organisations in response to this consultation paper. Without their express consent I would not wish to do the same with responses from individuals.

Mr. O'Brien: What responses has the Secretary of State received to his consultation document on devolved financial management in education? How many replies has he received from head teachers, who will carry the responsibility of the new arrangements that the Secretary of State is introducing? Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to place in the Library an analysis of responses from head teachers?

Mr. Baker: I have placed in the Library copies of the responses of all institutions such as local education authorities, governing bodies and unions. It is appropriate that we should make all those available. However, I am not prepared to make available an individual response from a head teacher unless that head teacher gives me the power to do so and approves the move. The great majority of respondents supported the principle of greater financial delegation.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that head teachers and school governing bodies are in the best position to decide how best to spend their budgets? Does he further agree that his proposals will do a great deal to ensure greater freedom and responsibility for schools and head teachers, which must be to the advantage of the nation's children?

Mr. Baker: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Some 21 local education authorities have considerable experience in delegating responsibilities and budgets to head teachers. Such arrangements have worked successfully. They have been welcomed by local education authorities and head teachers, and the overall management of the schools involved has been improved. In nearly all cases savings have been made and the money saved has been spent as the head teacher wishes.

Mr. Fearn: When will the Secretary of State publish proposals for financing the training of governors for their new responsibilities?

Mr. Baker: As I have already said, we shall be bringing forward proposals for the training of head teachers and governors. I recognise that extra training will be needed for governors, who are taking on new responsibilities, and for head teachers, in financial management skills.

Professional Standards

4. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will bring forward proposals to improve professional standards in education; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): All our policies are directed towards improving professional standards in education.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware of the damage done to education by the theories of Fred Jarvis and his NUT brothers, which equate teaching with manual, unskilled industrial occupations? Is my hon. Friend surprised at the number of good teachers who are leaving unions? Will she do everything in her power to encourage good leadership for the vast majority of responsible and good teachers that we have?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right to say that some of the union leaders have not been tremendously helpful in promoting our proposals, but he will be glad to know that many individual teachers have responded to our proposals in writing. When the legislation is introduced, they will be greatly encouraged to see that their worries have been answered.

Mr. Barry Jones: To have high standards, is there not a need for high morale in the profession? Are the Government not guilty of creating low morale—indeed, smouldering resentment—among teachers? If they want better standards, what will they do to improve the morale of teachers?

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are anxious to know exactly what teachers say about our proposals. Many of the responses have been helpful, especially on the curriculum proposals, which are directly related to their professional responsibilities. In addition, during the past year the Government have made substantial inroads into the pay and conditions of service for teachers and many of them now believe that their morale is on the way back.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great concern in the teaching profession, among parents and in all sections of the community about the statistic published yesterday that only 38 per cent. of children over the age of 13 have religious education in their schools? Does this not lead to serious indiscipline among many children, who do not have a proper understanding of morals? Will my hon. Friend support moves to put religious education into the core curriculum?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that in our proposals we shall secure the position of religious education and instruction in schools.

School Buildings

5. **Mr. Doran** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will set up an inquiry into the state of school buildings; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will set up an inquiry into the state of school buildings; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): My Department has already undertaken a sample survey of county and voluntary controlled schools in England. The report is being published today and copies are available in the Vote Office. Schools in Scotland are, of course, the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Doran: Is the Minister aware that that survey estimates that it will cost about £2 billion to £3 billion to repair and refurbish school buildings to a decent standard? Is he further aware that the report on the survey was completed in April 1986? Is his failure to publish until today the result of incompetence, or embarrassment?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman's estimate of the cost is right. The figures available to me show a capital cost of about £2 billion. The report was published today—the hon. Gentleman should have thanked me for it — because we decided to give extra time to local authorities which had some difficulty in making their returns, and accordingly we set a later deadline.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise the problems that are created for the education of our children because of the many substandard school premises? When capital allocations for next year's programme are made later this year, will he ensure that sufficient money is made available to Lancashire county council and other authorities which have serious problems that must be tackled urgently?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman is a regular supplicant on behalf of his authority. He should stay around and listen to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement later this afternoon.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that the condition of school buildings in my constituency, and the shortage of science equipment in some of the science laboratories in those schools, owes more to the policies being pursued by the Lib-Lab-controlled Humberside county council, which is the education authority, than to the policies being pursued by the Government?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend pitches his question correctly. Much of the responsibility for the state of our school stock rests with the last Labour Government.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there are spare school buildings in Wolverhampton and that they might be used for a CTC, as is much desired by the newly Conservative-controlled Wolverhampton council?

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have noted that question. Responsibility for school stock, empty places, proposals for change and the availability of stock rests with the local education authority, which must make proposals to be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware that the Government's record on school buildings is one of appalling neglect, which was confirmed by Her Majesty's inspectors' report earlier this year, showing that 1·5 million children—one fifth of all school children—were being taught in classrooms so bad as to have an adverse effect upon their education? As his own report estimates that up to £3,150 million will be required to bring schools up to standard, at the present rate of plans how many years will schools and children have to wait?

Mr. Dunn: Since the report was commissioned we have spent a considerable amount of money on capital projects. Again, I urge the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to wait for the Chancellor's statement this afternoon. However, I should point out that any claim that the responsibility for the state of school stock rests entirely with the Government is wrong. The hon. Gentleman must also take some responsibility for when his party was in government.

Polytechnics

7. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has had from directors of polytechnics to his proposed reform of polytechnic control and organisation.

Mr. Jackson: Most directors have warmly welcomed the proposed changes. The Committee of Directors of Polytechnics is planning positively for the new arrangements.

Mr. Baldry: The overwhelming support for those changes is welcome news to us, as it must be to polytechnic directors. The funding of polytechnics will increase next year by about £64·5 million, which is an increase of about 9 per cent. It will enable greater access to higher education, which will continue a trend, because last year the increase was about 6·5 per cent. better than target. Does that not show that polytechnics are continuing to fulfil a real role in ensuring that people have access to higher education?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is quite right. Congratulations to the polytechnics are in order. As I said earlier, polytechnics and colleges are now the largest sector of higher education in this country, with about 300,000 students. From my visits around the country, I am learning just how dynamic and energetic the polytechnics are.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister tell us why the Polytechnic of Wales was excluded from the proposals that were made for polytechnics in England, and what exactly is meant by the offer of corporate status for the polytechnic and other institutes of higher education in Wales?

Mr. Jackson: That question is still being considered by the Government. Obviously, it is a matter that the hon. Gentleman should take up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a warm welcome for the proposals from the Slough college of further education, which will be free from local education authority control? Is he further aware that there is some concern about the present funding arrangements in respect of part-time students? Will he undertake to consider that matter in his further development of the proposals?

Mr. Jackson: We are anxious to encourage part-time students. Their numbers are growing and they form an increasing proportion of the numbers in universities and polytechnics. The issue is kept under annual review in the public expenditure round and I agree with my hon. Friend that it deserves serious attention.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How can the Minister justify a separate funding body for universities and polytechnics in the Government's new proposals for the funding of higher education? Is it not high time that there was one body to fund the whole of higher education?

Mr. Jackson: As I recall, the concept of the binary system originated under a Labour Government. It reflected a just appreciation of the existence of different possible missions for institutions in higher education. There is a difference of mission and one of historical background, and those are reflected in the Government's proposals.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (Report)

8. **Mr. Martyn Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on Her Majesty's inspectors' 1987 annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have received one letter, from the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), which raised various issues in the context of Her Majesty's inspector's report, but have received no other specific representations.

Mr. Jones: Does the Secretary of State accept the report of his inspectorate and, if so, what does he intend to do about the shortcomings in teacher and library provision, but most of all in accommodation in schools? All those shortcomings are prevalent in Clwyd, which is a Tory-Independent council.

Mr. Baker: May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to some of the phrases that were used in the report about provision, because he asked me about provision in schools. The report states:

"unsatisfactory standards of provision are often more related to ineffective deployment of people and resources than to shortages of the resources themselves."

The report continued by stating specifically:

"in many visits books were found to be ignored even though adequate stocks existed."

Mr. Madel: Is it not a fact that the HMI report also referred to improved standards of teaching, better standards in the classroom and parental appreciation for the wider curriculum and opportunities that this Government have brought about?

Mr. Baker: I am naturally pleased that in eight out of 10 of the classes observed the pupil response to the education provided was satisfactory or better, but that leaves no room for complacency. Throughout the country, in all our schools, for all our pupils—whatever their ability—the object of all our reforms is to improve the basic quality of education.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Secretary of State recall that right from the foundations of our system of public education Her Majesty's inspectors have been wholly independent? In view of the stories that have been told and the speeches that have been made on this topic in the past two years, will the Secretary of State now tell the House that he has no plans to change the status of Her Majesty's Inspectorate to something other than what it has historically and properly received?

Mr. Baker: I absolutely confirm that one of the great strengths of the education system is the independence of the inspectorate. Although I am responsible for "pay and rations" the inspectorate publishes its reports independently of submitting them to me. It offers independent advice and I believe that that is one of the strengths of the system.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the biggest single difficulty found by the inspectors in those classes judged to be unsatisfactory was that children were not being stretched, and that, of course, leads, among other things, to disciplinary problems. Would it be fair to say that one of the difficulties of the present moment is that education authorities find it hard to let teachers go away for long periods for training? In those circumstances, will my right hon. Friend make it easier for teachers to teach themselves at home with the aid of distance learning and other techniques that have proved successful in other professions?

Mr. Baker: That is an interesting idea. I believe that my hon. Friend will be aware that we are now spending more than ever before in our history on in-service training—more than £200 million in special, specific grant this year. I echo something that my hon. Friend said, and that is that the constant comment that I find in the inspectors' reports is that far too many people in the system, teachers and parents, have far too low expectations of what can be achieved by children. I agree with my hon. Friend that if children can be stretched to their fullest ability they usually give much more.

Mrs. Clwyd: While the Minister may not yet have received many letters on this subject, does he not agree that there is widespread concern that Her Majesty's Inspectorate's report said that sub-standard accommodation was affecting the quality of pupils' work in a fifth of the classes seen? Will he confirm that there are known examples of school buildings—highlighted by the report—where local authorities have acknowledged potential dangers to children, but have not had the money to do anything about them? Would it not be better if the right hon. Gentleman addressed himself to those problems rather than introduce so-called reforms that only he and the Prime Minister seem to want?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Lady must await the statement by the Chancellor this afternoon on other matters—public expenditure and education. I publish the reports, whereas the Labour party produced expenditure reports every year from 1974 and never published one. I can understand why the Labour party will not talk about the management of resources in our schools when it made such a mess of managing the economy.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind that the inspectors' report highlighted the quality and efficiency of any given school and bearing in mind that nothing is more important for the quality of a school than the quality and efficiency of the head teacher, will my right hon. Friend give serious thought to further ways of improving the ability of head teachers to manage and direct their schools? Will he give thought to the possibility of a staff college for head teachers?

Mr. Baker: The latter idea has many attractions. My hon. Friend will be aware from the pay settlement for this year that we have increased the differentials for deputy and head teachers and have asked the Interim Advisory Committee to look again at the question of differentials.

Education Reform

9. **Mr. Allen** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of those representations he has received in relation to his consultative paper, "Admission of Pupils to Maintained Schools"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Copies of all letters received from organisations in response to this consultation paper have been placed in the Library. Without their express consent we would not feel entitled to do the same with responses from individuals.

Mr. Allen: Will the team on the Government Front Bench demonstrate the quality for which they are most renowned in the nation—their humility—and apologise, not only to the House, but to parents, teachers and the nation for the amount of time that was allowed for consultation on the proposals? Will they do a courtesy to the House by allowing a genuine and full analysis of the responses to all those consultations rather than trying to fob us off again? Will the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one question, please.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time is getting on. The hon. Gentleman has already asked two questions.

Mr. Allen: Finally—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mrs. Rumbold: I think that I can remember the question. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we received in excess of 14,000 responses to our consultation documents. The responses from those organisations which it is possible to publish are in the Library, but we have maintained the view that without the permission of the people who have written individual letters it is not possible for us to publish them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is my hon. Friend aware that far from any further delay from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) or anyone else, we want urgent action to improve choice for parents? There is no justification for artificially restricting admission to good schools to protect inadequate ones.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. People are waiting urgently for action to obtain better and greater parental choice for their children.

Mr. Straw: Since an analysis of the responses has already been prepared by Department of Education and Science officials for Ministers, why are Ministers now keeping it from the House? Is it that they are scared to reveal that, overwhelmingly, the responses not only from Labour authorities but from Conservative authorities and parents' organisations indicate opposition to these damaging and dangerous proposals?

Mrs. Rumbold: The view of the majority of respondents on the principle of open enrolment was that parental choice should be met. Within the responses that we had comments were not expressed in such a way as to make it possible for me to say precisely how many respondents were for or against the proposals, or any particular aspect of those proposals.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: While I welcome my hon. Friend's comments about open enrolment, may I ask whether she is aware that many Conservative Members believe that we ought to have an experiment with education vouchers?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not advocating an experiment with education vouchers at present. We are advocating many proposals which we believe will all lead directly to great improvements in the educational system for children in the maintained sector.

University Grants Committee

10. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend saw the chairman of the University Grants Committee last week, when they discussed university funding.

Mr. Canavan: Did the Secretary of State discuss with the UGC the contents of his recent speech at London university, when he said that universities would have to look for alternative sources of funding rather than relying on the Government, who apparently seem to be abandoning their responsibility for funding higher education? Would the Minister care to elaborate on his statement, particularly in view of the speech by his right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) at Aberdeen university recently, when he said that the Government and the UGC were directly responsible for the crisis facing universities?

Mr. Jackson: I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that Government expenditure on universities last year increased by 10 per cent. and that there has been a substantial real terms increase since 1979. On external funding, it is notable that non-UGC earnings of universities have risen from one eighth of their current grant in 1979 to one fifth today. That is a substantial improvement. In regard to Scottish universities, already in the four months that I have been in office I have visited three of the eight Scottish universities and seen the splendid work that they are doing. The UGC pursues a national policy and does not discriminate on the basis of different regions.

Mr. Hind: Did my right hon. Friend, during the discussions with the University Grants Committee, have the opportunity to point out that the committee could give good advice to the polytechnics and institutes of higher education — namely, that the Government's policy to free them from local education authority control would allow them to develop more towards the university model, and thus benefit education in this country?

Mr. Jackson: We believe that autonomy is of benefit to all institutions of higher education, and we see the changes being made in relation to polytechnics and colleges as a major step towards that development.

Mrs. Ewing: How can the Secretary of State reconcile his claim that the universities are benefiting when Aberdeen university, which is based in the oil capital of Europe, is now faced with the prospect of closing no fewer than six departments? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the sense of outrage in the north and north-east of Scotland over that proposal? When the matter comes before the UGC on the 16th of this month, will he pay particular attention to the matter of Aberdeen university and try to reverse the position?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Lady should recognise that it would do no service to the Scottish universities to judge them by different criteria from those applied elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The same criteria are being applied to all such institutions, and they have been applied to Aberdeen university with the results that the hon. Lady has described.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: When my right hon. Friend next meets the UGC, will he raise the subject of the appalling incidents that took place at Liverpool university on 16 October last, when the visiting speaker, Mr. Ray Honeyford, was abused, spat upon and not allowed to speak, by so-called anti-racists? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it was precisely that sort of Stalinist abuse of free speech that the Education Act 1986 was intended to prevent? What assurances will he seek from Liverpool university that such incidents will not occur again?

Mr. Jackson: Some of us believe that the only serious threat to academic freedom in this country comes from within some of the universities and other educational institutions. That is why the Government legislated to ensure freedom of speech in such institutions. I ask my hon. Friend to write to me with details of the episode that he mentioned, so that I can investigate it further.

School Discipline

13. **Mr. Anthony Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures the Government are taking to improve standards of pupil behaviour and discipline in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 strengthens the authority of head teachers and governing bodies—which in future will include more parents—by giving them direct responsibility for maintaining discipline. Her Majesty's Inspectorate's recently published report on good behaviour and discipline has given schools guidance on best practice.

Mr. Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware of the tremendous support from parents for the strengthening of moral and religious education in schools, and its potential for improving pupil behaviour? Does she agree that not only should religious education be included in the core curriculum, as was suggested earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), but that, as with academic subjects before the hidden curriculum, specific benchmarks should be included in the national curriculum proposals?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. There is indeed considerable support among parents for moral and religious education in schools, and we hope that our proposals will clearly set the curriculum as a whole within that context.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister confirm the views of many teachers that the main problem with 15 and 16-year-olds in regard to school discipline is that, however hard they work, they face a future with no prospect of finding employment when they leave? Is not one of the many dreadful legacies of the present Government their creatiom in many parts of the country of a generation with no hope?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the Government have provided full YTS schemes for two years for pupils leaving school. Such schemes provide them with the opportunity of adequate training, which I hope will take them into good jobs.

Surplus School Places

14. **Mr. David Porter** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he gave the delegates from Suffolk county council in July on removing surplus places in schools in non-metropolitan areas: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I received the delegates on behalf of my right hon. Friend. I advised them that in the light of the fall in school rolls my right hon. Friend expects local education authorities to consider the scope for rationalisation of school provision in all areas; and that in formulating proposals he expects local education authorities to bear in mind the advice in the Department's circular 3/87.

Mr. Porter: Is my hon. Friend aware that to follow those procedures in Suffolk alone would mean taking out 3,500 primary places and 7,600 secondary places? That could only mean massive school closures. In the light of that, and in the light of the Government's open enrolment policy, how will he further advise Suffolk county council?

Mr. Dunn: At the moment Suffolk county council is responsible for the maintenance and provision of schools in its local education authority area. Proposals to close schools are never arrived at easily, but are always dealt with by the Department of Education and Science in a quasi-judicial sense. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has proposals with him at the moment and it would not be right for me to comment upon them.

Nursery Education

15. **Mr. Steinberg** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to extend the provision of pre-five education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's plans for expenditure on education allow for provision attributable to under-fives to continue broadly at today's levels. It is for local education authorities to determine the scale and nature of such provision in the areas that they serve.

Mr. Steinberg: The Minister must realise that three out of every five children are denied nursery education. The record of Tory education authorities is abysmal. Nine out of 10 worst providers are Tory-controlled councils, and the best top 10 are Labour-controlled councils. Will the Minister provide extra resources for nursery education so that the Prime Minister's promise in 1972 that the vast majority of children would get nursery education can be realised?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman may like to know that most local education authorities are now increasing provision. Currently, 43 per cent. of all three and four-year-olds are in nursery or primary classes, compared with only 37 per cent. in 1979. This is the highest proportion ever.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Meale** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Meale: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House why in the last Parliament members of her Cabinet voted against a measure to introduce free TV licences for pensioners? Can she also tell the House why her Government can always find time to help the City but never money to help British pensioners?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that it is not Government policy to give free television licences to pensioners. Such free licences would have to be paid for by increasing the cost of licences for the rest of the population and that would not be fair in any way. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the City raises about £7 billion a year for our balance of payments.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I appeal to the House to give the Prime Minister and hon. Members who ask questions a fair hearing?

Mr. Rathbone: As life returns to normal in the south-east will my right hon. Friend spare a moment today to show her appreciation to the local authorities, the voluntary services, the emergency services and all those involved in helping the south-east return to normal? In particular, will she say a word of praise to the many people who have helped each other in their considerable difficulties?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's invitation and offer a word of thanks — I believe on behalf of the whole House — to all those authorities and workers about whom my hon. Friend spoke.

Mr. Kinnock: I associate myself with the Prime Minister's last answer and should like to include, of course, the electricity workers.

The electricity industry's own plan for development until the end of the century clearly shows that it can efficiently meet its investment obligations as well as obligations for production and supply without any substantial price increases. Does the Prime Minister agree that there is absolutely no justification for inflicting any significant increases in electricity bills on either the households or the industries of Britain?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there will have to be a very considerable programme for new power stations between now and the year 2000. There is a need for new stations because of increased demand and to replace old ones. That, in any event, will require a great deal of finance and a certain amount of money will have to be spent on the distribution system. The right hon. Gentleman is also aware of the amount that needs to be spent for environmental reasons on some of the coal-fired power stations. All that will constitute a massive amount of capital expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will fix a rate of return for the electricity industry, and it is up to

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister not realise that those obligations for power stations and other services as well as the clearing of debts have already been accounted for in the estimates made by the electricity industry? Is it not obvious that the only reason that the Prime Minister could advance for changing the financial targets of the industry is to ensure that privatisation is an even bigger giveaway and that those who buy that new private monopoly will make even greater gains? That may be very sweet for those who buy electricity shares, but it will be very sour for those who have to buy their electricity.

The Prime Minister: This year the electricity industry plans to achieve a current cost rate of return of something just under 2·5 per cent. That is not adequate to fund the investment programmes and the rate will have to be increased. That would be true whether the industry remained in the public sector or was privatised. In fact, one power station has been ordered since the Government have been in office. Sizewell B is the first of approximately 10 stations that will be needed. The money will have to be found, and that is something like £40 billion.

Mr. Kinnock: The United States privatised electricity system has not ordered a new power station for more than two decades. Is that the future that we have to look forward to? Will the Prime Minister also acquaint herself with the plan for electricity development right to the end of the century and acknowledge that it states that the only reason for changing the estimates would be if the Government changed the financial targets? That is exactly the kind of treachery that we will see this afternoon.

The Prime Minister: All the estimates show that by the mid-1990s we shall need considerably more power stations. Indeed, we will need up to 10 by the end of the century. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that those stations have to be built and the money has to be found.

Mr. Marlow: With the possible exception of London, would it not be the height of political and bureaucratic masochism to run two systems of local authority finance simultaneously? Could we please have our community charge in one chunk?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is considering the many representations that he has received and how best to meet them, if that is possible.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November 1987.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Hon. Members: Where is the hon. Gentlemans tee shirt?

Mr. Banks: It is underneath my shirt.

There has been a great deal of talk in the House in recent weeks about sharks in the City. I want to ask the Prime Minister a question about another form of shark. These are rather lovely, pleasant and harmless sharks. I want to ask about basking sharks, and that is not a description of the Cabinet on holiday. Is the Prime Minister aware that the basking sharks in British territorial waters are being fished dangerously close to extinction by the Norwegians, and the Nature Conservancy Council has asked—*[Interruption.]* This is a serious point. The Nature Conservancy Council has asked that basking sharks be brought within the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Knowing the Prime Minister's great concern for sharks of all descriptions, will she ensure that speedy action is taken to comply with the Nature Conservancy Council's request?

The Prime Minister: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman knows far more about sharks than I do.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend send a message of appreciation to the French agencies of government today reflecting the seizure of the vessel containing arms over the weekend, showing, as it does, the increase in international co-operation in the unremitting fight against terrorism, from wherever it may occur?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that the House will wish to join in congratulating the French authorities on the successful seizure of this large shipment of arms. Their action has undoubtedly saved many lives in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, and I am sure that we would all wish to send a message of appreciation.

Q3. **Mr. Geriant Howells** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howells: I am sure that the Prime Minister is aware that many children in Wales are taught through the medium of Welsh. Will she give an assurance that our inherited language will have equal status with English in a core curriculum in Wales?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I could give an assurance that it will have equal status with English in a core curriculum. There will, of course, be plenty of facilities for teaching and learning Welsh for those who wish to do so.

Mr. Allason: Is my right hon. Friend aware that her decision to appoint a counsellor or ombudsman for the security service will be widely welcomed within the organisations, but will she consider widening his responsibilities, thus enabling him to attend the regular directorate meetings of the security service with the status of a non-executive director?

The Prime Minister: No. The appointment was of a staff counsellor in accordance with a promise that I made to the House, and it has now been made. It is a counselling management appointment and it should not be widened.

Mr. Rees: Is it not a matter of regret that the Prime Minister chose to make her announcement about a staff counsellor by a written answer, thus preventing clarificatory questions and the widening of the issue, because there are other issues that should be discussed? Does her phrase

"anxieties relating to the work of the service."

mean that the new counsellor could deal with the anxieties of the security service if a Government were to order it to carry out duties that had not been notified to Parliament?

The Prime Minister: The reply means exactly what it says. It was partly in response to people such as the right hon. Gentleman that we decided to appoint the staff counsellor. He will deal with complaints from those employed by the security service. In the first place, those will be dealt with by ordinary line management, but if anyone working for the security services feels that that is not sufficient he can go to the staff counsellor, who will be available to hear all complaints. A report would then be made to the heads of the services and the appropriate Secretary of State.

Mr. John Marshall: In view of the recent admission of failure on the part of the first-class post and the threatened disruption of the Christmas post, will my right hon. Friend reconsider the Post Office monopoly?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the Post Office and the threat that there may not be a sufficient service for the Christmas post, but I hope that that will not come about. As my hon. Friend says, it is true that we have powers to suspend the monopoly for letters. We would be prepared to use those powers should the need arise, but we do not believe that it has arisen yet.

Q4. **Mr. Andrew Welsh** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Welsh: Is the Prime Minister aware of the CBI's overwhelming rejection of her business and poll tax proposals, which it does not believe will lead to greater accountability or to a clearer relationship between local spending and decision-making? If her political friends and all major professional bodies reject that tax system, and if those who are asked to impose it do so with reluctance, why is she inflicting it on a population that incresingly rejects it?

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that the CBI does not want rates, either. It wants rates to be cut considerably because it does not want to have to pay such a large proportion to local authorities. It wants to diminish its rates bill because it wants to cut its costs. The Government have tried to do everything possible to cut the costs that fall on companies from either central or local government. The community charge will help to cut costs for many businesses.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend please add books to the list of items on which she has said her Government do not intend to impose value added tax?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, I really cannot trespass on my right hon. Friend's the Chancellor's statement. I am sure that he will make a most excellent Autumn Statement and rise to the occasion, as he always does. It will be good for both the short-term and long-term interests of Britain.

Q5. **Mr. Michael J. Martin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Is the Prime Minister aware that I, no doubt like many other hon. Members, have constituents with fuel bills to the tune of £300 outstanding? Some of those families have an income of as little as £80 per week. Will the right hon. Lady consider the serious problem of fuel poverty that the high tariffs for electricity and gas are causing those families?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the heating additions to supplementary benefit under this Government have risen enormously and now amount to more than £400 million. He is further aware that the big increases in electricity prices took place under Labour Governments. In cash terms they were of the order of 27 per cent., then 48 per cent., followed by 18 per cent. in domestic electricity. Prices have fallen by 16 per cent. in real terms under the last five years of this Government.

Autumn Statement

3.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

I am laying before the House today an autumn statement which, as usual, contains first, the Government's outline public expenditure plans for the next three years and the expected out-turn for this year; secondly, proposals for national insurance contributions next year; and, thirdly, the forecast of economic prospects for 1988 required by the Industry Act 1975. The forecast, of course, takes into account the likely effect of the recent worldwide falls in equity markets.

I turn first to the expected out-turn for the current financial year, 1987-88. The public expenditure planning total now looks likely to amount to £147½ billion, or around £1 billion less than was allowed for in the last public expenditure White Paper. The main reason for this shortfall is higher capital receipts by local authorities and new towns. Total spending on programmes, apart from this, is expected to be broadly in line with plans. Taking account of miscellaneous items not included in the planning total, the net shortfall on the expenditure side is likely to be slightly in excess of £½ billion.

On the receipts side, total tax revenues are likely to exceed the Budget forecast by almost £2½ billion. This buoyancy reflects higher than forecast economic growth, greater than expected profitability, and an oil price above the $15 a barrel assumed at the time of the Budget. At that time, I set a public sector borrowing requirement for 1987-88 of some £4 billion, or 1 per cent. of GDP. As a result of the higher tax revenues and lower spending, I now expect the PSBR for the current financial year to be only £1 billion, or ¼ per cent. of GDP: the third successive year of significant undershoot. Privatisation proceeds have, of course, made an important contribution to this year's low PSBR. But even if there had been no privatisation proceeds at all, it would still be the lowest PSBR for 17 years.

I turn now to the public expenditure plans for the next three years. Since 1982-83, public spending, both including and excluding privatisation proceeds, has been declining as a proportion of national income. There is likely to be a further substantial reduction this year, which will make this the longest sustained fall in public expenditure as a proportion of national income since the early 1950s.

In July, Cabinet reaffirmed the objective of ensuring that public spending as a share of national income continued to fall and, in particular, did not exceed the ratios published in the last White Paper. The plans that I am about to announce secure that objective.

New planning totals have been set at £156¾ billion for 1988-89 and £167 billion for 1989-90—increases of £2½ billion and £5½ billion respectively over the totals previously published.

For 1990-91 the planning total has been set at £176 billion. For the later years, I have judged it prudent to set aside larger reserves within the planning totals than I have done previously.

The reserves will, therefore, rise from £3½ billion in 1988-89 to £7 billion in 1989-90 and £10½ billion in 1990-91. The planning totals also incorporate an estimate for privatisation proceeds of £5 billion a year, which is unchanged from the last White Paper.

As I have indicated, these plans mean that public spending, excluding privatisation proceeds, will continue to fall as a share of national income. From nearly 47 per cent. in 1982-83, that share has come down to around 42½ per cent. this year, and by 1990-91 it will go down to 41¼ per cent., the lowest since 1972-73. The new proportions are lower, for each year, than those published in the last White Paper. This progress has been founded on our success in reining back the rate of growth of public spending.

In the 1960s and 1970s public spending grew by around 3 per cent. a year in real terms. In our first Parliament the real rate of growth averaged 2¼ per cent. a year; in our second Parliament it was just under 1¾ per cent. a year; and in the succeeding four years—the current year plus the three survey years — the real growth of public spending is planned to be around 1¼ per cent. a year, which is well within the prospective growth of the economy as a whole.

But while public spending as a whole is growing more slowly, the substantial reduction in public borrowing, which this Government have brought about, has, by reducing the burden of debt interest payments, made more room for programme spending. Coupled with steady economic growth, this has enabled the Government to provide additional resources for a number of priority services. In each case, the figures that I am about to give represent increases over the plans published in the last public expenditure White Paper.

First, health. An extra £700 million is being provided for the National Health Service in England in 1988-89, and an extra £800 million in 1989-90. On top of this, the Health Service will benefit from additional resources from the cost improvement programmes and from land sales. All this will enable the National Health Service to continue to improve services.

Secondly, law and order. Provision has been made for the substantial increase and acceleration in the prison building programe which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced to the House in July. This will provide 4,200 extra places by 1993. Provision for local authority spending on the police has also been increased significantly.

Third, education. Provision for local authority current spending has again been increased substantially. In addition, an extra £60 million a year has been provided for the improvement of school buildings. Spending on the universities will be increased by £115 million in 1988-89 and by £130 million in 1989-90. There will also be an additional £45 million in 1988-89 and £65 million in 1989-90 for science.

Gross provision for housing investment is being increased by nearly £400 million next year. This will not only sustain the rising trend of spending on local authority renovation, but will provide additional resources for housing associations, much of it to be used in conjunction with private finance.

Provision for urban development corporations is being increased by £65 million next year to help tackle the problems of the inner cities.

There are also substantial increases in provision for social security spending, which has been increased by £1 billion for 1988-89 and £1·9 billion for 1989-90. This is partly because the take-up of benefits is likely to be higher than was previously envisaged. It also takes account of the uprating of benefits announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services last week, including the cost of compensating income support claimants for their average contribution to rates.

Spending on defence is to be increased by £230 million in 1988-89 and £490 million in 1989-90.

The additions to planned capital expenditure, for the public sector as a whole, amount to some £1 billion in each of the next two years. About half of this is for the nationalised industries, principally for the large-scale investment programmes of the electricity and water industries.

Further information about these and other changes is contained in the printed "autumn statement" which will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down. Full details, together with information on running costs and manpower, will be given in the public expenditure White Paper early in the new year.

I turn now to national insurance contributions. The Government have conducted the usual autumn review of contributions in the light of advice from the Government Actuary on the prospective income and expenditure of the national insurance fund, and taking account of the statement on benefits which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services made on 27 October.

The lower earnings limit will be increased next April to £41 a week, in line with the single person's pension, and the upper earnings limit will be raised to £305 a week. The limits for the reduced rate bands will also be increased. The upper limit for the 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. bands will be raised to £70 a week and £105 a week respectively. The upper limit for the 9 per cent. rate for employers will be raised to £155 a week.

The taxpayer's contribution to the national insurance fund — the so-called Treasury supplement — will be reduced from 7 per cent. to 5 per cent., but this will not require any change in contribution rates. Thus, the main class I contribution rates will once again remain unchanged at 9 per cent. for employees and 10·45 per cent. for employers.

Finally, I turn to the Industry Act forecast. Growth this year looks to be turning out at 4 per cent., compared with the 3 per cent. growth I forecast at the time of the Budget. This is well above the trend of the steady upswing which began in 1981, and faster than any other major economy. Strong growth in domestic demand has been more than matched by the rapid rise in exports. Manufacturing industry is doing particularly well, with output rising by 5 per cent. This strong performance has led to a substantial fall in unemployment, which is now more than 400,000 lower than a year ago — the largest annual fall on record. Indeed, unemployment has been falling faster in the United Kingdom than in any other major country.

As I forecast at the time of the Budget, inflation in the fourth quarter of this year is likely to be 4 per cent. I also see no need to amend my budget forecast of a modest current account deficit of some £2½ billion, or about ½per cent. of GDP. Looking ahead to 1988, the prospect is for a continuation of the steady growth with low inflation that we have now enjoyed for over five years. As I have already indicated, the full forecast I am publishing today takes into account the likely implications of the recent falls in world stock markets in so far as it is possible to do so at this early stage.

This is clearly a time when economic forecasting is a more than usually hazardous business. But what is clear is that the strength of the British economy, and of our public finances, puts us in the best possible position to weather any storm. And that strength will also enable us to play a full part in the international co-operation which is more than ever needed today.

Subject to the uncertainties to which I have just referred, the economy is forecast to grow next year by around 2½ per cent. With North sea oil output now declining, this implies 3 per cent. growth for the non-North sea economy as a whole. Domestic demand should continue to expand, though at a slightly lower rate than this year, with consumer spending and investment growing at a similar pace. Business investment is likely to be particularly strong, rising by 5½ per cent.

With the United Kingdom continuing to grow faster than other major countries, and the oil surplus declining, there is likely to be a further small increase in the current account deficit, to about £3½ billion, or ¾ per cent. of GDP. Inflation may rise a little next year, reaching 4½ per cent. in the fourth quarter, by which time it should be on a downward trend again. The defeat of inflation remains at the heart of the Government's economic strategy. With continuing healthy growth in 1988, unemployment should continue to fall.

The progress and prospects I have described demonstrate once again the soundness of the policies we have followed over the past two parliaments. We will continue to pursue these policies in our third. Despite the recent deterioration in the world economic climate, the prospect I am able to offer the House is one of further sustained growth and steadily rising living standards, with inflation low and unemployment continuing to fall. We have brought this about by promoting enterprise, sound money and strong public finances. And that is what we will stick to.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): This is the usual sort of confidence trick that we expect from the Chancellor. In the first half of the public expenditure part of his statement he boasted about how he was reducing public expenditure, while in the second half he boasted about how he was increasing it. I ask the Chancellor to answer precisely whether this comes about because he has had to adjust his spending plans by the 1·5 per cent. increase in inflation, with the result that, although there are apparent increases in the programmes, there is no new money above the money that was originally planned to be spent. The difference in the apparent increases is accounted for entirely by the inflation factor. As we look through the plans for individual programme spending, does not that become clear?

There is a 5·7 per cent. increase in health and social services. Allowing for 4·5 per cent. inflation, that is a 1 per cent. increase in cash resources. The National Health Service needs much more money than that to cope with more old people and technical improvements, so the increase proposed is wholly insufficient even to maintain present services. Is the Chancellor aware of the anger that will be caused among those who work in our National Health Service, and who believe in it, even if the Chancellor and his Government do not?

Is the Chancellor aware that, with a 4·6 per cent. increase in the budget for education spending proposals, they are effectively frozen in real terms? There is a

[Mr. John Smith]

proposal for some extra expenditure on school buildings and universities, but does that not mean that the main educational budget will effectively be cut? So much for all the rhetoric about education during the election and since.

On the matter of social security, why did the Chancellor not remind us that this is the Government who only recently, although they claim to have created a successful economy, felt obliged to recommend a freezing of child benefit? Is it not the case that in his proposals there will be a £300 million cut in income support so that the poorest in our community are not being specially benefited but are being specially targeted?

On the matter of housing, is it not clear that, despite some proposals for expenditure increases, the Government have failed to take the one single step that would encourage house building or house improvement all over our country—lifting the arbitrary 20 per cent. ceiling on spending on capital receipts by local authorities? Why have they not done that?

Where is there a reference in the statement to the Government's drive to regenerate our inner cities? There is not a word in it about the inner cities. There is merely a figure of £65 million for housing as part of the urban development corporation programme. The small amounts being injected for inner city provision are dwarfed by the loss of money in rate support grant and the increasing and continuing decline in regional industrial assistance. Therefore, we find that the Government's plans for inner cities consist of the rhetoric of regeneration and not its reality.

Similarly, public sector capital investment is planned to fall by £100 million a year in cash terms. That is a 3 or 4 per cent. reduction per annum for the next three years. So much for investing in Britain's future at a time of economic uncertainty.

On the matter of the nationalised industries, there is an elliptical reference in the statement to the electricity and water industries. However, we know that in just a few moments there will be a statement promising larger increases for electricity consumers. We know from the papers produced with this statement that the electricity industry produces a profit of over £1 billion. None the less, consumers will be asked to fund future capital expenditure to fatten up the industry so that the benefits can be reaped by those to whom it is sold after privatisation.

Is it not the case that the most important point about the national insurance proposals is that the Treasury contribution is to be cut further from 7 per cent. to 5 per cent.? That follows a cut in the previous year from 9 per cent. to 7 per cent. and compares unfavourably with the Labour Government's contribution in 1979 of 18 per cent. Therefore, we see the Government steadily transferring the responsibility for national insurance from the Government to employers and employees who have to carry heavier burdens as a result.

The Chancellor said very little about the real economy. In an exercise of complacency and self-congratulation, he told us so that all was basically sound with the British economy and that we could expect unemployment to fall. If growth is to fall from 4 per cent. to 2·5 per cent., where are the extra jobs to come from?

Does not the Chancellor concede that his published statement forecasts a £9 billion deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods by the end of 1988—the largest deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods by the end of 1988—the largest deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods in our history? Does he recollect that that same balance of trade was in surplus to the sum of £5 billion when the Government took office in 1979? How can the Chancellor be complacent about our economy when investment in manufacturing industry is still 7 per cent., less than it was in 1979 and when output has just reached its 1979 level?

What of future growth? How is future growth to be achieved with poor investment in manufacturing industry, a total neglect of research and development and no plans substantially to increase expenditure on education and training to improve the skills of our work force?

On the international front, all that we had was some talk about international co-operation. Has it not been the failure of the G7 countries—and of this Government as a leading member of that group—to take action over the past year or so that has led to the present international economic difficulties? Does not the complacency of the Venice summit look shocking in the light of subsequent events? Why did not the Chancellor take the opportunity to announce a cut in interest rates as a British contribution, not only to stimulate our economy but to help international co-operation? Why do not the Government take the lead in convening an early meeting of the G7 countries to plan an international strategy so that when the American situation is adjusted there is reflation in western Europe to take up the slack, strengthen our economy and provide international equilibrium?

Is it not scandalous, above all, that at a time when public expenditure ought to have increased significantly, not only because of the pressing social needs of our country but because such an increase is now economically imperative, this complacent Chancellor has one again missed an opportunity?

Mr. Lawson: I shall try not to detain the House for too long, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman has raised a number of points and I shall answer them. I know that he is new to his present job, but he seemed to find it difficult to grasp how—as he said—public expenditure could be reducing and increasing at the same time. The point is that it is reducing as a proportion of gross domestic product but that it is still increasing in real terms.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman tried to make out that the increase in real terms was, in fact, no greater than it had been before and that all that had happened was that the inflation forecast had changed. In fact, the increase in real terms over the period is now planned to be 1¼ per cent. a year, as compared with 1 per cent. a year last year, so that there is an increase in the real terms growth of public expenditure. The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to say that there was no real growth——

Mr. John Smith: One and a quarter per cent.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman got it wrong, and there is no point in admitting it from a sedentary position. He should not have got it wrong in the first place. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that there was no real increase in Health Service spending. In fact, Health Service spending is planned to go up by more than 2 per cent. in real terms in 1988-89, and that is on top of the better value for money that we shall get through the cost improvement programme.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that there were no extra resources for the poor. In fact, there are substantial extra resources for the poor, through the family credit scheme and income support. He said that there was nothing for the inner cities, despite the fact that I said in my statement that there was an extra £65 million for urban development corporations to help with the inner cities. That is by no means all, because the vast amount of money—far more than the Labour Government spent—that we are spending on employment schemes goes were unemployment is greatest, and that is in the inner cities.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that there was nothing extra for regional assistance. I have to tell him that expenditure on regional assistance will be increased by £160 million in 1988-89, £104 million in 1989-90 and £50 million in 1990-91.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the electricity industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will be making a statement after me, so I shall be brief. The plain fact is that it is childish to quote the figure for the profits made by the electricity industry without relating them to the vast capital employed and to the very low percentage of capital that they represent. As for electricity prices, not only did prices increase far faster when the Labour government were in office, but we have today the lowest domestic electricity prices in Europe. But my right hon. Friend will deal with that later.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman does not understand how the national insurance fund works. It is worth pointing out that, between 1979 and 1985—the latest period for which figures are available—pensioners' income increased by 18 per cent. in real terms, whereas when the Labour Government were in office pensioners' income increased by only 3 per cent. in real terms.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that I did not say much about the economy, but I said quite a bit about the economy, including the fact, which he did not understand — this figure is the most important in relation to employment trends, which will continue to rise —that the rate of growth in the non-North sea economy for 1988 is forecast at 3 per cent. But there will be a debate on Thursday and I greatly look forward to discussing the economy in greater detail then.

As for our trade position, confidence in Britain was fully underlined today when we published figures showing the biggest-ever monthly increase in our foreign exchange reserves.

As for manufacturing, the plain fact is that under this Government manufacturing output has increased. Under the Labour Government, manufacturing output declined. But it is not just a matter of quantity; we must also consider the quality. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must have seen the transformation that has occurred under the Conservative Government in manufacturing productivity, profitability and efficiency. If he does not believe me, he need only listen to the CBI, which knows much more about manufacturing industry than he does.

To my surprise, the right hon. and learned Gentleman contested some of my forecasts. At this early stage in his long career as shadow spokesman on the economy, I advise him not to get into the prediction game. That was one of the many mistakes made by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). As a warning to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I shall read a prediction made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in January this year, in what he obviously thought was a major speech to the International Equity Dealers Associaton. He said:

> "A tax cut made this March would inevitably lead to conpensating action immediately the election is over. That necessity would face whatever Government was in post. Even were the Tories to win, they would reimpose higher taxes and make public expenditure cuts so deep that even the Conservative Party would be reluctant to support them."

The House can judge whether that is what I have done today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I fully understand the interest in this important statement. I remind the House that there will be another statement after this and that it will be impossible to call hon. Members to speak on that statement who are called to speak on this. Furthermore, there will be a debate later this week.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his consistency in pursuing a realistic and practical approach to the management of our economy, which has brought it into a position whereby he has withstood not only an oil crisis but a coal strike lasting a year and the recent fall in equities. It ill becomes Opposition Members to talk down our economy when everyone knows that it is one of the strongest in the Western world.

I urge my right hon. Friend to be sparing in increasing public expenditure. We welcome the drop in the proportion of GDP from 47 per cent. to 42·5 per cent., and next year to 41·25 per cent. Would it not be a good idea to have a public expenditure target of about 40 per cent. of GDP, because the objective of our economic policy should be to have a nil, if not a negative, public sector borrowing requirement? I urge my right hon. Friend to ignore the anger and envy of the Labour party.

Mr. Lawson: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. I have little doubt that, in time, we shall reach the target of 40 per cent. of GDP. We are gradually reducing the proportion of GDP which is accounted for by public expenditure, and that will continue. I should point out that, with the PSBR down to £1 billion in my latest forecast, we are very close to a zero PSBR. Many people in the United States today wish that they had pursued similar policies.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask those hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called to ask questions, not make speeches.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the Chancellor aware that these proposals will not go far enough to counteract the effect of the stock exchange falls, still less to deal with the funding crisis in the National Health Service, schools and universities? If growth is only 2·5 per cent., what does that mean for the Chancellor's forecast about reductions in unemployment? The great missing feature from this statement is an indication of what will happen if the United States, Germany and Japan do not make the adjustments which the Chancellor

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

believes they should make. Is he not rosily optimistic about all that? Is not the lucky Chancellor really pushing his luck?

Mr. Lawson: I forecast a 2½ per cent. growth in the economy for the year, but jobs are more closely linked to what is happening in the non-North sea economy than to what is happening with the North sea, which is highly capital-intensive and does not employ so many people. I forecast a 3 per cent. growth in the non-North sea economy, which will mean a continuing fall in unemployment as well as a continuing rise in the number of people in work.

We shall debate the international scene more fully on Thursday, and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you would not wish me to discuss it at length now. I shall do everything that I can to impress upon my opposite numbers overseas the measures that I believe are necessary. It is because Britain's economy is so strong that Britain's voice now counts in the world whereas it did not under the Labour Government.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on moving us towards a balanced budget. Does he agree that it is still vital that we continue the pressure on public expenditure because if we have to face a world recession revenues will fall off at a time when expenditure will increase? May I suggest that he sends a copy of his statement to President Reagan to show him that if he followed good Thatcherite economic policies he could reduce the budget deficit at the same time as reducing taxation?

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is necessary to keep up the pressure on public expenditure and to keep it falling as a proportion of total economic output or gross domestic product. That is what the plans in the autumn statement will secure. As for President Reagan, I am sure that he is an assiduous reader of *Hansard.*

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his statement does not seem to have taken full account of what has happened in the world economy during the past two weeks? Does he accept that his most important responsibility is to avoid the recession that may be coming to this country? If he accepts that, does he not agree that the greatest boost to confidence that he could give would be to announce a drop in interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: As I see it, I have a double responsibility: to avoid both a recession and a resurgence of inflation. As for economic prospects, I said in my statement that at this juncture economic forecasting is an unusually hazardous business. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, with his knowledge, would be the first to agree. Fortunately, this is not the forecast on which the Budget judgment will be based. As he well knows, that will be based on the forecast that is made in February. By that time it will be possible to have a far clearer picture of the likely implications of what has happened in the stock market, of various developing events on the world scene, and the reactions of various Governments to what has happened. However, at this point I have given the House the best forecast that I am able to give.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I welcome especially the Chancellor's success in reducing public borrowing, which will at least facilitate a further reduction in interest rates. However, does he recall that the House was persuaded to agree to an increase in Community own resources only on the understanding that there would be strict budgetary discipline in the EEC? As there have been recent suggestions that we should again increase resources to achieve the same objective and pay twice for the same thing, will he tell the House what assumption was made about the limit on own resources when framing his Budget statement?

Mr. Lawson: The assumption in the autumn statement is that the own resources limit remains at 1·4 per cent.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the Chancellor accept that we welcome the confidence with which he presented his statement? During the statement he allocated a sizeable increase to National Health Service expenditure in England, but the peripheral regions show a greater need. Will he confirm that sums have been allocated to those regions for their National Health Service expenditure so that we shall not have to make up such expenditure from our block grants?

Mr. Lawson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the figures before me refer to England. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Northern Ireland——

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): And Wales.

Mr. Lawson: And for Wales, indeed — have block increases according to the formula. They are putting out statements today which, I hope, will answer the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that it is understood, not only in the House but throughout the country, that a reduction in public expenditure as a share of the national income will give the best opportunity for the private sector to provide productive jobs for those people who are looking for jobs? That is what he is doing, and I hope that he will continue to do it.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. The Opposition's obsession with the public sector at the expense of the private sector is quite extraordinary. It was significant that in his question about investment the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made no reference whatsoever to the fact that I am predicting a 5½ per cent. real increase in business investment in 1988.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): When the Chancellor started on his crazy walk of cutting the public sector borrowing requirement when he should have expanded it to bring down unemployment, he said that the reward would be lower interest rates. Now that he has got it down to what he says is the lowest level for 17 years, why are real interest rates at record levels and so much higher than those of our competitors? What excuse will he use for them next year?

Mr. Lawson: The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that unemployment is coming down and interest rates have already come down by half a point.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend re-emphasise the words in his statement that at the heart of the Government's economic policy is the defeat of inflation? Will he confirm that the word "defeat" means that his target is to secure stable prices? Is it still his aim that after 12 or possibly 13 years of Conservative stewardship there will indeed by stable prices?

Mr. Lawson: That is indeed the target. My hon. Friend is right. However, we have never at any time during the more than eight years that we have been in office been able to say precisely by what year we shall reach any particular point in the road towards that, let alone reach the destination. It would be rash to give a specific date for that now.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): If the economy is as strong as the Chancellor has suggested, and if the PSBR is forecast to fall to a mere £1 billion, surely this is an almost unique opportunity not only to assist the British economy but to contribute to the international economy during a period of some danger of recession, by expanding outwards in Britain, reducing unemployment and increasing the national wealth?

Mr. Lawson: I should have thought that we were more than making our contribution by virtue of the fact that we have the fastest-growing major economy in the world. What the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting would simply lead to a new resurgence of inflation, and that is something that I am not prepared to tolerate.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the broad strategy that he has revealed this afternoon and on its detailed application? He will be aware more than most that the long-term real future of the country depends, first, on the merits of its science base and, secondly, on the vitality of its technology. However, the figures that he gave us this afternoon revealed that he is prepared to spend only a mere 4·5 per cent. of the sum that he is allocating to social security on increasing the support for science over the next year, and a mere 3 per cent. of what he is proposing to spend on social security in the year following. Will he consider altering that balance somewhat more in favour of science?

Mr. Lawson: I know the consistent view that my hon. Friend has taken about the importance of science, long before that become the fashionable cry, and I pay tribute to him. However, I think that perhaps he misunderstood what I said and, if so, that is my fault. The science figure that I gave was the figure for university science. In fact, the total extra Government spending on civil science and technology in the autumn statement is an extra £200 million a year.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Surely the Chancellor accepts that if the American President and Congress accede to the complaints that he and other Conservatives have been making about the size of their budget deficit and move to reduce it without a corresponding increase in economic activity by the nations of western Europe and Japan, it will trigger the international recession that is now hanging so clearly over the world's economic scene? Therefore, as he claims that Britain is now the strongest-growing economy, will he not take the lead and come forward with major proposals for growth to avoid that recession before it takes us down?

Mr. Lawson: I am not quite sure where the hon. Gentleman has been. If he had been a close observer of the economic scene, he would have seen that we have had an unprecedented period of real growth. Last year we were the second fastest-growing major economy in the Western world. This year we are the fastest-growing major economy in the Western world. In 1988 we shall continue to grow faster than the average as a result of policies which include a steady reduction in the PSBR. Far from inflated public borrowing causing greater real growth, all it causes is a greater burden of debt interest and the likelihood of rising inflation. That is precisely what happened under the Labour Government, which, I assume, although I am not entirely sure, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) supported.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my right hon. Friend agree that to control public expenditure of some £150,000 million to within a few hundred million pounds is a major achievement for any Government? Can he possibly explain to a new Member such as myself why it was not possible during the 1970s for the Labour Government to do that?

Mr. Lawson: It is a remarkable tribute to the improved control procedures that we have put in place over the years that we are able to control public expenditure in the way that we have within the year and, having made plans, we can then stick to them. As for why that did not happen under the Labour Government, I do not think I have time to go into that interesting story, but I advise right hon. and hon. Members to read Lord Barnett's book.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Can the Chancellor of the Exchequer explain how the proposals for social security increases accord with the statements made by the housing Minister that there would be money available under the proposed Housing Bill to fund the proposed increases in rents in the market economy? The proposals that we have heard this afternoon covering inflation and the modest amount towards the 20 per cent. of the rates to be paid by those on benefits do not leave any money available to take account of increased housing benefit. Therefore, those proposals will result in benefit being further taken from those already receiving it and transferred from those in need to the profits and pockets of the private landlord.

Will the right hon. Gentleman further explain to the House why, if he is willing to intervene to prevent a disorderly market, as he explained to us last week, and is willing to intervene with public expenditure to prevent a disorderly society, with increases to the police and the prison service, that he is unwilling to intervene to prevent further distress to be caused in our inner cities and to our unemployed by increasing rather than decreasing public expenditure?

Mr. Lawson: As I have said, public expenditure is increasing, although it is not increasing as fast as the economy as a whole, in order to allow more room for the private sector and the wealth-creating sector to expand. That is the policy that we are pursuing and on which we were re-elected by a decisive majority earlier this year. It is a policy with which we shall continue.

As for social security spending, I announced massive increases in that spending. I announced an extra £1 billion in 1988-89 and an extra £1·9 billion in 1989-90. A substantial part of that is increased housing benefit. In the housing figure that I gave, money is also included for the housing action trusts, which are part of the new policy on housing to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement will be welcome throughout the country and no less in the north-east of England where the Government's policies were exemplified last night with the night shift at the Nissan plant increasing production, increasing exports as a result of that production and increasing by 350 the number of people employed. It is because of those policies in the north-east that the Conservative party is the only party that is growing in the region.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right and the reinvigoration of the economy of the north-east is currently one of the most exciting developments in this country. Although I do not want to refight the election campaign that caused the Labour party so much distress, I must say to Labour right hon. and hon. Members that the plain fact is that if they continue to show themselves to be so out of touch with what is happening on the ground they will never get within a mile of winning a general election.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The Chancellor should know that his hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has been misleading him and that the people of the north will view with great distress and great sorrow the statement that he has made today. May I also remind the Chancellor that the people of the north voted overwhelmingly for the Labour party? Perhaps he needs to read the statistics of the general election.

May I remind the Chancellor that the cuts in the regional development grants to the north-east are about 78 per cent.? If the right hon. Gentleman is truly serious about offering proper hope of future development to areas such as the north-east, he should consider that every authority in the north is asking whether he will address those particular cuts and restore to regions such as the north-east the sort of support and structure that will enable those regions to invest properly in the manufacturing industries and to bring proper new hope to the north.

Mr. Lawson: It is a complete fallacy to assume that the amount of economic activity in any part of the country is solely or even mainly dependent on what is paid in regional development grants. What matters is the prospect for industry of profitable investment and also industry's confidence in the future. That confidence has been transformed under this Government. But since the hon. Lady mentioned regional assistance, let me quote the figure again. This autumn statement shows that, for 1988-89, we have increased our provision for regional assistance by £160 million.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Although it is not apparent, I hope that my right hon. Friend is feeling just a little bit smug this afternoon. Is he aware that he is basking in the envy of finance Ministers throughout the developed world for being able to make such a statement this afternoon? I especially welcome the virtual disappearance of the public sector borrowing requirement. However, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the debt interest that the Government must pay gobbles up about half of the revenue from income tax and that, therefore, it is vital that we continue to keep the lid on borrowing and reduce the amount of money that we must pay for debts incurred by previous Administrations?

Mr. Lawson: I think that I liked the rest of my hon. Friend's question rather more than his opening remark. I believe that my hon. Friend is right about debt interest. One of the problems from which the United States is suffering at present is that, as a result of the policies that it has been pursuing since 1979, debt interest, as a proportion of GDP, has doubled whereas in this country it is declining. That decline, coupled with the real rate of growth of the economy, is one of the reasons why we are able to spend more money on priority programmes.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Chancellor of the Exchequer laid great emphasis, and rightly so, on the increase in manufacturing industry in the past year. Will he pay regard to the fact that the north of Ireland is the only region where there has been a decrease in manufacturing industry and where, at present, there are more people unemployed than are employed in manufacturing industry? Will he impress upon his colleagues that, unless unique steps are taken to redress that imbalance, the problems of the north of Ireland in relation to the general economy and, in particular, manufacturing industry will increase?

Mr. Lawson: I am conscious of the problems of the Northern Ireland economy and in so far as public expenditure plays any part, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt be aware that public expenditure in Northern Ireland is approaching £3,000 per head compared with £2,000 per head in England and about £2,500 per head in Scotland. I am well aware that there are acute problems as a result of the political difficulties and troubles in Northern Ireland and the fact that Northern Ireland perhaps has more than its fair share of older industries. Clearly the future must lie in the development of newer industries, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is keenly aware of that.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While I commend my right hon. Friend and the Government for the extremely prudent way in which they have dealt with our economic affairs, which heralds well for the future, might I ask him to give to the House as part of his announcement further details about what additional resources will be allocated to roads because they are running into the ground? Secondly, will he consider future additional resources for the hospital service? Bearing in mind its outstanding success in treating more patients and in the advance of medical science, that service will need more than he has announced in the allocations this afternoon.

Mr. Lawson: The amount of extra spending on transport in 1988 will be £60 million of which a significant proportion will be on bridge maintenance, one of the most important areas of the road programme which needs attention. The increase of £700 million for the National Health Service is the biggest increase ever announced for that service.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If everything has been going so well for the last few years as the Chancellor would have us believe, and since he has managed to claw back more in taxation this year than he thought he would and spent less proportionately on public services, so reducing the public sector borrowing requirement to one quarter of 1 per cent., why was it necessary just a month or so ago, before the crash on the stock exchange, all of a sudden to increase bank rate by 1 per cent., which was a savage blow to manufacturing industry?

Mr. Lawson: Manufacturing industry is doing extremely well, as has been borne out by CBI surveys carried out since the increase in interest rates by 1 per cent. on 6 August. It was necessary to do that at the time because of the overall financial situation in the economy and the risk, had I not done that, of a resurgence in inflation. Subsequently the position has changed and I felt it right to reduce interest rates by ½ per cent. The hon. Member ought to accept the views of industry itself as to what the state of industry is. Industrialists are unanimous that it has never been healthier than it is today.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the attainment of his highly satisfactory forecast must depend to a considerable extent on the maintenance as far as possible of satisfactory business relationships with our major trading partners overseas? To prevent the resurgence of economic nationalism and protectionism which did such terrible harm before the war, will he wholeheartedly endorse the British Government's commitment to the completion of the internal market in the Common Market by the target date of 1992?

Mr. Lawson: We are giving high priority within the Community to the completion of the internal market in its true sense, that is to say, breaking down the barriers to trade. Of course, the main danger to protectionism comes from the United States and, in particular, the United States Congress. I should like to pay tribute to the President of the United States who has made absolutely clear his determination, in so far as it is within his power to do so, to veto any protectionist Bill which comes from Congress.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Chancellor reflect a little on the state of the British economy? Has not the level of growth been unevenly spread? While there has been growth in service jobs and in manufacturing in the south-east and the midlands, industry, particularly manufacturing industry, has decreased in the north. Left to the so-called free play of the market, the north and Scotland will continue to decline.

Will the Chancellor say what the increase in defence expenditure means in real terms? Will he also give us further insight into his thinking on the international sphere? I do not believe that any thinking person predicts a slump like that of the late 1920s and 1930s if international Governments coalesce and take meaningful and purposeful decisions. The right hon. Gentleman cannot expect the President of the United States to resist protectionist activities unless he gives this House and international economic consultants an idea of his thinking.

Mr. Lawson: As for the wider economic issues to which the hon. Member rightly attaches importance, it would be better if I discussed those in the economic debate on Thursday.

Defence spending is planned to fall very slightly in real terms over the period ahead. On jobs in manufacturing and elsewhere, it is important to distinguish between what is happening to output and to jobs. Output in manufacturing is growing faster than output in the rest of the economy. Because it is becoming more and more capital intensive, the growth in jobs, which is happening in both sectors, is faster in non-manufacturing industry.

As for unevenness throughout the economy, it is encouraging that the fall in unemployment over the past year — the biggest fall ever recorded — has occurred throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): While I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and particularly his skilful management of the economy, may I ask whether he appreciates that unless the Treasury resources in full National Health Service pay awards many health authorities will suffer dire financial consequences?

Mr. Lawson: Obviously the figures that I have quoted for the National Health Service include money for the pay awards that have been made. But there is also tremendous scope for getting better value for money out of the Health Service. That is what we are determined to do to provide a better service to the patient.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Chancellor accept that Government expenditure on regional assistance, even allowing for the increase of £160 million and the two subsequent increases, is still in real terms 30 per cent. below what it was when they came into office? In view of the persistent levels of unemployment of about 20 per cent. in many areas in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the north-east and the north-west, should there not be greater capital expenditure than the £1 billion increase which he announced to relieve unemployment in those areas?

Mr. Lawson: I am not sure where the hon. Member gets his figures from. The real increase in spending on the Health Service under this Government since 1978-79 has been 31 per cent. As for regional policy, I have already announced increases in spending and have repeated them several times today.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In presenting his excellent White Paper, which is a tribute to his good housekeeping, did not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor find it acutely depressing that, of the £800 million increase in overall public expenditure by comparison with the January White Paper, £520 million was an upward revision of our contribution to the EEC, with further upward revisions planned for next year, the year after and the year after that? Will the Chancellor explain why there was a massive miscalculation in January of about 52 per cent. for this year?

Mr. Lawson: The main reason is that we have secured a smaller proportion of the spending on the common agricultural policy than we had originally estimated. I share my hon. Friend's concern at the problem of Community expenditure. That is precisely why the Government, and in particular my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, are so determined to get a proper reform of the common agricultural policy and a proper budgetary discipline introduced into the Community.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Will the Chancellor clarify the real percentage increase in university funding over the next few years? Is it not the case that it will not in any way match the reduction in university funding over the last four or five years and so

[Mr. John Garrett]

universities will continue to be run down and well qualified students will once again this year and next be turned away from their doors?

Mr. Lawson: I do not have to hand the figures that the hon. Member has asked for, but I assure him that universities will not be run down if they are run properly.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a growing respect, not just in the House but, more important, outside, for the coolness and expertise that he has shown in dealing with many of the problems that have recently arisen? Does he also recognise, however, when praising manufacturing industry, that there is a potential nutcracker effect in the rising cost of commodities and the burgeoning power of the pound, or weakness of the dollar? If the pound continues to rise by 5 cents a week, that very competitiveness will act to dampen down manufacturing industry and exports, which the country sorely needs.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend represents a constituency in Birmingham, which is one of the hearts of manufacturing in this country. [HON. MEMBERS: "Used to be."] It still is. Let me say to him first that, while various pluses and minuses can be drawn from the events of the past few weeks, commodity prices are not likely to rise much in the present circumstances. Secondly, manufacturing industry has to control its own costs, and it has done so very remarkably. If my hon. Friend looks at one of the charts in the "Autumn Statement", he will see that this year our unit labour costs have risen less than those of our major competitors for the first time since 1983.

The weakness of the dollar is not a matter under my sole control, although, under the terms of the Louvre agreement we are seeking as great a degree of stability as possible. British industrialists, who speak to me a great deal, are more concerned about our rate of exchange with the deutschmark and other European currencies. Nowadays Europe is a much bigger market for British industry than is the United States.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must bear in mind that we have a further statement and an important debate, in which there is great demand to speak from hon. Members. I shall allow two more questions from each side of the House, but I shall give preference in the subsequent debate to hon. Members who are not called to ask a question on this statement, if they will remind me.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): When making the education allocation, will the Chancellor take into consideration any future pay claims by the teachers, or has he already fixed a rate of 4 per cent.? Does he not agree that a fixed rate would lead to disruption in schools?

Mr. Lawson: The teachers have been awarded a massive pay increase averaging 16 per cent., and that is fully taken into account in the figures. As for next year, the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay has been given an overall cost envelope of £300 million for the total cost of the increase.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Does my right hon. Friend accept that no tribute from the Conservative Benches can adequately reflect his masterly stewardship of public finances? Can he trump his autumn statement by reaffirming the Government's commitment to the longer-term reform of public expenditure and, in particular, a fairer allocation between different parts of the United Kingdom and the different income groups within it?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not believe, however, that it would be entirely appropriate to trump the autumn statement on the very day that it is being published.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Why is the Chancellor so pompous and so out of touch with manufacturing industry? Does he not realise that manufacturing industry is complaining about interest rates that are twice those of our competitors, about inflation far higher than theirs and about electricity prices that are already higher than theirs, even before the swingeing increases to be announced shortly?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what will be the effect on our exports to the United States of any attempt to reduce the United States deficit? While he may get his statement through with the majority that he has behind him, does he not realise that the fireball who has been appointed as Conservative party chairman will have considerable difficulty in selling this dubious prospectus to the country?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman ought to have a chat with his own Front Bench about the United States budget deficit. While he is still singing the old tune of bigger and better deficits, his Front Bench has now been converted —at least in regard to the United States—to a smaller one. That is what they are saying this week, anyway; perhaps they will change their minds next week.

As for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, I can think of no better recommendation for a Conservative party chairman than that he should be a Treasury Minister.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): When considering Government borrowing policy, will my right hon. Friend cast his mind back to the advice that was given to him on 19 October 1984, exactly three years before black Monday, that he should emulate the Americans and boost the budget deficit and borrowing? According to that advice, the vitality and success of the American economy relied solely on high borrowing.

Does it surprise my right hon. Friend that that advice, which was given in Cardiff to a group of Welsh salesmen, came from the Leader of the Opposition? Does that not adequately represent the total bankruptcy of Opposition economic policy?

Mr. Lawson: It does, and that advice was given on many other occasions by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Opposition Front Bench. It is the good fortune of this country that the Government rejected it, both at the most recent general election and at the previous one.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order afterwards.

Electricity Industry (Financial Targets)

4.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

As the House knows, it has been the policy of successive Governments to agree targets for the nationalised industries which set their financial framework and which enable them to plan their operations in a commercial manner. The industries then decide how to achieve these targets either through price increases, cost savings or a combination of both.

The present target for the electricity supply industry, which covers the three years 1985-86 to 1987-88, is a 2·75 per cent. average return on current cost assets. The Government have therefore been discussing with the Electricity Council the targets for the years ahead. Although the details of individual boards' targets have yet to be finalised, they have agreed an overall target for 1988-89 and 1989-90. The industry's external financial limit, which was announced by my right hon. Friend this afternoon, is based on this target.

In considering the target for these years, the Government have had to take into account the fact that, although in the recent past the electricity supply industry has had surplus capacity, that position is now changing. On current forecasts, the Central Electricity Generating Board envisages that at least 13GW of new capacity will be needed to meet demand by the end of the century. The industry also needs to modernise its transmission and distribution system if it is to maintain secure and economical supplies into the next century.

At a time of surplus capacity, it is possible to meet extra demand by using that surplus at relatively little extra cost. In the past, this has been reflected in a low rate of return. It took account of the fact that some of the industry's assets were under-used. That has resulted in the industry's prices effectively remaining unchanged since April 1985, and in prices falling by at least 15 per cent. in real terms over the last five years.

When new capacity has to be built to meet additional demand, the costs of meeting that extra demand rise. It must be right that the rate of return should rise to a level closer to that which nationalised industries are required to earn on new investment as a whole. This is currently 5 per cent. The Government have therefore agreed that the industry's overall target return on current cost assets should be 3·75 per cent. in 1988-89 and 4·75 per cent. in 1989-90.

The CEGB and the area boards are now considering their individual profit targets. Until this process is completed it will not be possible for the industry to be specific about the consequences for electricity prices. In particular, the Government expect the industry to consider carefully the scope for improving the rate of return through increased cost efficiency. However, preliminary indications are that it will be necessary to increase prices by an overall average of 8 to 9 per cent. on 1 April 1988 and substantially less in the following year. There is likely to be some variation in these figures for individual boards and different groups of customers. I am determined that Britain will have a modern, secure and efficient electricity supply industry in the years ahead. This will involve a massive investment programme and that in turn demands an improved rate of return for the industry.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The statement by the Secretary of State confirms our worst fears about the intentions of the Government in privatising the electricity industry. They are proposing a totally unnecessary price increase that has to do with the confiscation of the electricity supply industry income so as to provide the Treasury with funds and fatten the industry for the process of privatisation. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the electricity supply industry has exceeded all the statutory financial targets set for it by the Government, the present target being 2·75 per cent.? In the last five years the industry has exceeded its targets by almost £1 billion. It has met all its investment requirements and presently has an excess capacity of about 30 per cent. It has reduced its costs and prices by 15 per cent. since 1982.

Does not the Secretary of State accept what the Electricity Consumers Council says, that achieving those targets is a success by any criterion? Can he confirm, as the Chancellor did, that electricity prices are already the lowest in Europe? Will he tell his right hon. Friend that, as pointed out by Mr. Baker, the managing director of the CEGB in his speech to the CBI conference yesterday, prices charged by publicly owned electricity industries—such as those of Britain and France—are half those charged by the privately owned electricity industries in America and Japan? Perhaps the Minister could confirm that.

Does the Minister accept, as pointed out in the Electricity Consumers' Council report on privatisation, that over the last five years the Treasury has confiscated from the electricity supply industry a total of £2 billion by way of the negative EFL targets imposed upon it? That was equivalent to £1 billion last year alone and by any stretch of the imagination that is an energy tax imposed upon our people solely for Treasury requirements. Is the Secretary of State also aware that the Chancellor's statement not only added £1 billion to electricity prices — which is what 9 per cent. actually means — but imposed negative EFL requirement of a further £1 billion? Does he accept that the £1 billion EFL requirement and the £1 billion increase in prices is a £2 billion burden on the industry and will be paid for solely by the consumer for Treasury and privatisation reasons?

Does the Secretary of State expect the House to believe that an increase is necessary for the investment programme that he has spelt out? The recent report by the Electricity Council called a medium term development plan makes it clear that the investment programme for both conventional and nuclear energy right up to the end of the century does not require a price increase to finance it, provided

"that there is no significant increase in the industry's financial target."

The point is clear and the Secretary of State must admit that these taxes, these charges, have nothing to do with an investment programme or with sufficient resources to pay the costs in the industry. They are solely about fattening the electricity industry for privatisation. The Secretary of State's call for further cost reductions will encourage the electricity boards in their desire to switch from British coal to further coal imports. Some estimates say that that will cut manpower in the coal industry by 50 per cent. That is a further price to be paid for the privatisation of electricity.

[Mr. John Prescott]

Is the Secretary of State not ashamed to impose this privatisation tax on the electricity consumer at a time when he is a member of a Cabinet that is removing the fuel allowances from many of our poor and our pensioners? We already have the obscene record of far more people dying from hypothermia than in any other civilised country. This increase is totally unnecessary and is imposed as a privatisation tax. It bears out precisely what we said, that privatisation means people will get less and pay more for it.

Mr. Parkinson: May I tell the hon. Gentleman, in the midst of his fine fury, that he supported a Government who put up electricity prices by more than 30 per cent. above the rate of inflation? Even after this price increase, we shall have seen prices fall in real terms. We shall take no lectures from the hon. Gentleman about price increases. The hon. Gentleman talked about the industry achieving its targets. In 1978 his own Government said that it was important for nationalised industries to achieve their targets, because out of the profits came the necessary future investment. Although an average rate of return of 2·75 per cent. has been achieved, the rate of return this year is 2·45 per cent. The industry goes into a period of a massive increase in investment with a rate of return which is less than half the rate of return that his own Government said was desirable for nationalised industries.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to confirm that electricity prices are the lowest in Europe. Even after these increases they will remain the lowest in Europe. The hon. Gentleman's point about public and private companies is irrelevant. He is comparing prices from different countries with varying exchange rates and is drawing the wrong conclusions. There is no reason at all why we should follow the pattern of American prices. When the hon. Gentleman talks about Treasury confiscation, he is describing the repayment of debt. The Treasury advanced substantial funds to the industry when it went into its investment programme and the money now being repaid is outstanding debt. The hon. Gentleman had better learn that repaying debt is not the same as confiscating anything. The hon. Gentleman has added together the price increase and the negative EFL and said they added up to £2 billion. In part, the price increases fund the EFL, so there is no point in adding them together. The increases are a source of the funds needed to produce the negative EFL.

The medium-term development plan is now out of date and the investment programme is being accelerated. The medium-term plan was introduced in 1986 and covers three years and seven years on the investment programme. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the tables he will see that. We are bringing forward a massive increase in investment. The hon. Gentleman said that the reduction in coal costs is a way of putting pressure on costs and said that the industry will interpret this as an invitation from the Government to reduce the price that it pays for coal. There are other costs that are capable of being reduced, and I hope that the electricity industry will focus on those. For example, there is a salary bill of nearly £2 billion. There is scope for cost savings. The industry has been achieving such cost savings and is convinced that it can continue to do so.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Does my right hon. Friend accept that those who wish to see the proper financing of the massive £1 billion a year investment programme for the future of our electricity supplies will commend his realistic approach to the problem of raising that finance? Will he confirm that this is the first price increase since 1985 and that if it is averaged over the past two years it comes to far less than the increases that were experienced when the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was Secretary of State for Energy?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right. He recognises, as I do, the need for a modern, efficient electricity industry if British industry is to have a chance in the future. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in his second point.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Is the Secretary of State aware of the devastation and damage that his statement will have on local government? The additional cost to the Leeds education department will be about £0·25 million and, to the local authority in Wakefield, which is in my constituency, it will be more than £1 million. It will have an even more devastating effect on hospital services in the Yorkshire and Humberside regions because we are already witnessing hospital closures in the Pontefract and Wakefield health authority areas. Is he aware of the damage that his statement will do to those authorities? Will he take his head out of the sands of political dogma and take note of what is happening in the regions?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman must understand that, if Britain is to have a modern industry, we must invest a great deal of money. Some of his hon. Friends came to see me recently to urge me to bring forward orders for companies which make electricity supply equipment. They recognised that a huge investment programme will produce many extra jobs. The proper price for electricity is a vital part of the cost of an efficient electricity service, and that is what we are determined to have.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Does my right hon. Friend find it strange that the Opposition make constant demands for increased public investment in infrastructure and, particularly, for new coal-fired power stations, yet they seek to deny the electricity industry the necessary funds to pay for that investment? Will he explain to the Opposition Front Bench that, just as taxpayers have invested money in the industry in the past, it is right that they should reap some reward and that, if further investment is needed, it should be funded by electricity consumers, not by the taxpayers at large?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right. The industry is about to embark on a £40,000 million investment programme. It did not order any new power stations for eight years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—because of an overestimate of needs, as a result of which we had massive spare capacity. Twenty-seven of our coal-fired stations are now regarded as approaching redundant technology. Magnox stations will have to be replaced in the foreseeable future. Opposition Members must understand that a massive programme which in itself will produce many jobs in the industries that make the equipment—as my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) said—is a vital element in the modernisation of Britain.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Secretary of State accept that the only people to gain from the totally unnecessary £1 billion increase in prices to consumers will be the get-rich-quick merchants on the stock exchange, when electricity is privatised? Will he accept that that is the purpose of this move and that the losers will be the old and the cold, the poor and the sick who cannot afford to pay these prices? They may well argue that a better return would be gained from a proper investment programme in energy conservation which protects both the Government's investment in the CEGB and those people who find it hard to pay their bills, including the 1,200 who die as a result of energy poverty each year and the 90,000 who have their electricity supplies cut each year?

Mr. Parkinson: The chairman of the Electricity Council, Sir Philip Jones, said today that an increased rate of return is both inevitable and necessary. He recognises, as I do, that we need a modern industry. I am tired of hon. Members who come to my office to ask me to encourage the industry to invest huge sums of money in modern plant and then complain about the cost.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Are not these higher targets, which are in the long-term national interest, well below real commercial rates of return? Will they not leave the private electricity producers with an enormously unfair competitive advantage against the CEGB, thus holding up investment from the private sector, which could give us cheaper energy?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is correct. We are aiming to achieve targets in two years' time that are less than the rate of return that a Labour Government identified as desirable for nationalised industries. We are moving from a low base to a base that is still below the figure that the Labour Government said was necessary.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is the Secretary of State aware that very few hon. Members and people outside the House will be deceived about the real reason for the statement this afternoon? Is not the real reason for the statement simply to fatten up the industry in preparation for privatisation? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that privatisation means the further demise of the mining industry, as was admitted yesterday by the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, who said that miners could lose jobs? Will the Secretary of State confirm that a minimum of 30,000 more miners' jobs will be lost through the privatisation of electricity?

Mr. Parkinson: The Government have invested more than £9,000 million in the mining industry since we took office. That is more than the market capitalisation of ICI. The Government have shown their commitment to producing a modern, efficient coal industry. We have an investment programme amounting to £2 million a day. If that investment is worked properly, and modern working methods are put into place to accompany the modern machinery, I see a bright future for British Coal. However, if there are wasteful overtime bans and waste and strife in the industry, the industry will have a grim future and it will have earned it.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that no company in the public or private sector can hope to stand on its own two feet commercially with a rate of return of 2·45 per cent. and that any company that wants to be independent of Government subsidy must raise its rate of return and do so either by increasing prices to the appropriate level or by reducing costs and one hopes, by doing both?

Mr. Parkinson: I want to quote from the previous Labour Government's White Paper on the nationalised industries:

> "An adequate level of nationalised industry profits is essential to the continuing well-being of the industries and of the economy as a whole. They provide some of the funds for very large investment programmes necessary to maintain supplies and services to the public."

That is a Labour Government explaining the need for nationalised industries to make a sensible rate of return. We do not believe that 2·45 per cent is sufficient. My hon. Friend is right to stress that.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As a member of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs group of hon. Members which was courteously, patiently and constructively received by the Secretary of State for Energy on Tuesday, may I ask what assurance the Secretary of State can give to the power engineering industry about the consistency of the flow of orders that many employed in the industry so badly need over the next two or three years? Will he comment on the financial assessment in relation to privatised nuclear stations?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is right. Our power supply industry has been through a very difficult time. As I said earlier, no power station was ordered for eight years. That period is now coming to an end and we see a steady flow of orders for power stations to be commissioned in this country between now and the year 2000 and for a considerable time after that. We can look forward to a period of growth and stability in that industry. One of the principal limiting factors at the moment is the length of time taken by public inquiries. However, we are anxious to get ahead and make major investment in the industry and that means orders for the power supply industry. In our manifesto we made it quite clear that the Government are committed to a continuing nuclear programme. I have to fit that commitment into our plans to privatise the industry and I am doing that.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Although I am a supporter of the privatisation of electricity and although I understand the need for an investment programme and the desirability of increasing the rate of investment, at the risk of sounding a slightly discordant note, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend appreciates that the prospect of an increase of the order of 9 per cent. is a cause for some concern, particularly as one contemplates the effect that that increase might have on the low paid and those on social benefits? Will he give the House an undertaking before we move to price increases of the order of 9 per cent. in what is after all an essential service that he will have discussions with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to see whether they can take into account the considerable effect that such an increase would have on certain sections of the community?

Mr. Parkinson: No Minister likes to come to the House of Commons to announce that there will be a price increase of this size. I believe that a failure of supply in the years ahead is a much more fundamental threat. It is absolutely vital that we modernise the industry. Of course the figures feed through into the retail price index and most benefits reflect that. However, I note my hon. Friend's comments and I am sure that my right hon.

[Mr. Parkinson]

Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will also have heard him.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Following the question from the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) may I ask whether the Secretary of State really appreciates the impact that his announcement today will have on those on low, fixed incomes and particularly on old-age pensioners? While the Secretary of State has said that the increase will feed into the RPI, does he agree that it is a cruel deception of our old-age pensioners for the Secretary of State for Social Services to come to the House last week and announce a pension increase on the basis of a 4·2 per cent. cost of living increase and then for the Secretary of State for Energy to come here today and take back a very large proportion of that which was given to our pensioners by his right hon. Friend last week? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that millions of old-age pensioners in this country tonight will wish that he had remained in the wilderness a little longer?

Mr. Parkinson: I want to repeat the point that I made earlier. I believe that it is absolutely vital for the elderly and everyone else that we have secure supplies of electricity. That is what the Government are trying to ensure. The exact details of the increases have not been settled for the reasons that I have explained and they will take place next April. They will not take place this winter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stress that to pensioners who express concern to him.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Is it not hypocritical of the Opposition to complain of the prospect of higher electricity prices when their policies for coal would increase the price of coal and therefore the price of electricity enormously? With regard to a greater contribution from nuclear energy, will my right hon. Friend confirm that a higher contribution from that source would tend to keep electricity prices down? Does he agree that the Opposition's opposition to projects such as Sizewell B and Hinkley Point C remove their right to claim to be the friend of the old-age pensioner?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right about coal costs. The electricity industry pays a substantial premium to British Coal for the right to use British coal, because it recognises that British Coal is in the process of modernising itself and it recognises the long-term value of a reliable, competitive supplier. Opposition Members today have really asked why we did not pay more for our coal. That would have increased prices still higher. We believe that the country needs a diverse source of energy supplies. We believe that a nuclear component in the electricity supply industry is essential as a reliable long-term supplier of base load power.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Was the Secretary of State for Energy in the Chamber when the Chancellor of the Exchequer was answering questions on the Autumn Statement? Did he hear the Chancellor say to his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) that he expected basic commodity prices to fall? If he did, what is the Secretary of State doing making this statement?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not need to answer for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He seemed to be doing pretty well for himself when I listened to him and the hon. Gentleman did not seem to be able to lay a finger on him. I am dealing with the cost of electricity and the need to improve the rate of return, which is to improve the security of supply.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): How does the praise lavished on the cheapness of French electricity by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) today lie side by side with the Labour party's opposition to any investment in and expansion of our nuclear power industry?

Mr. Parkinson: Far be it from me to defend the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), but I do not think that he did say that our prices were higher than the French. He said that French prices were higher than ours. However, I agree that the Labour party has a problem because the nuclear industry is a vital part of our future plans and we need it to secure supplies and to give us diversity. Yet the Labour party opposes it without suggesting anything but to use more coal at a higher price, which will shove up prices even further.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the Secretary of State accept that everything that he has said today about the cost of capital expenditure on the electricity supply industry has been common knowledge to people with an interest in the matter for 18 months? Does he accept that the medium-term development plan specifically said that capital expenditure until the year 2002 had been taken into account in the electricity supply industry's pricing policy and went on to say that retail tariff increases would be below the rate of general inflation? Will the Secretary of State come clean and admit, as all Labour Members know, that he is fattening the calf before the privatisation of the industry?

Mr. Parkinson: That is not true, as I have said before. I have explained why we are doing it and the reasons that I have given are the true reasons. I am not prepared to pander to the hon. Gentleman's prejudices.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Are any of the proposed increases in charges required for any reason other than the achievement of financial returns? Secondly, to help mitigate the burden of those increased charges on some people, will my right hon. Friend, in his discussions with members of the electricity supply industry, suggest an extension of the Economy Seven hours? Thirdly, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the increased returns that will be derived as a result of his statement will ensure that there will be no delay in Sizewell B and thus in orders coming to the nuclear industry based in my constituency, which will save jobs?

Mr. Parkinson: Financial returns are not an end in themselves; they are being achieved so that they generate an income base which will support investment, the need for which I have tried to explain to the House today. I note what my hon. Friend says about Economy Seven and the nuclear industry and I am pleased to tell him that Sizewell B is going ahead to schedule. Orders worth more than £700 million have already been placed with British companies for equipment for that, and it is on target to be finished on the set date.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Did the Secretary of State overhear the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), in response to the charge that the right hon. Gentleman was fattening the calf for privatisation, exclaim "Nothing wrong with that"? Does the greedy and unpleasant face of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire speak for the official Conservative party or does the right hon. Gentleman's Uriah Heep hand-wringing reflect the official view? Will not many British people despise the moral imbalance between such a swingeing increase and the fact, which the right hon. Gentleman has refused to confront in his answers, that at the same time the Government are withdrawing the pitiful means of support for those who rely on fuel subsidy?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was a Member when the Labour Government were putting up prices by 30 per cent. more than the rate of inflation and I do not think that he was listening when I told him that, even after this increase, price increases in the past six years will have been lower than the rate of inflation. There will have been a fall in the real price, something that the Labour Government never managed to achieve, despite all its post-dated concern.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I rise in response to popular demand from the Opposition.

Will my right hon. Friend remind us of the trend in prices in the electricity industry over the past few years, before and taking into account, the projected increase that he has mentioned? Can he confirm that any distinction between consumers of electricity and taxpayers is rather artificial, since we are all in our different ways taxpayers and consumers?

Mr. Parkinson: On price increases, the simple fact is that for five years under the Labour Government prices increased by 30 per cent. more than a high rate of inflation and under this Government, after this proposed increase, prices will still have increased by less than the rate of inflation. There will have been a real reduction in prices.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the price increases that he has announced today will be a severe burden to Britain's manufacturing industry, particularly to high energy users such as the glass industry? How much of the 13 GW of new capacity that he has announced for before the end of the century will be nuclear and how much will be coal-fired?

Mr. Parkinson: Six of the stations will be pressurised water reactors and four will be major coal-fired stations and they are roughly equal in size. There is also a substantial investment programme to clean up the emissions from the existing stations, costing about £800 million, which must also be taken into account as part of the cost of maintaining a coal-burning capacity. Therefore, substantial money will be spent on the coal side of generation as well as on the nuclear side.

Mr. Bob Hayward (Kingswood): Can my right hon. Friend give the approximate number of jobs that will be involved in the modernisation programme over the next few years? Will not the vast majority of those jobs be concentrated in the midlands, the north of England and Scotland, and thus be a major economic generator in those regions?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot give my hon. Friend the figure for which he asks, but I can tell him that an industry which has been starved of orders — the industry that supplies the electricity supply industry — will receive more than £40,000 million worth of orders over the next 12 years, and that must be good news. Moreover, virtually all those jobs are in the regions and in Scotland.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Secretary of State aware of the serious damage that the price of electricity has caused the poorest and most vulnerable sections of Britain who now perceive energy as almost a luxury? The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that disconnections have had a direct effect on the ability of such people to heat their homes during the winter. Is it not clear that the Government are placing profit beyond the recognition of people's needs, which will create a clear understanding of the Tory party's energy policy?

Mr. Parkinson: A major programme which is running at the moment will be enlarged to help the elderly in particular to use energy more efficiently. It is tragic that at present people of limited means cannot afford to spend money on saving money by insulating their houses properly. We have a major programme, for which I have obtained extra funding, to help with that. We hope this winter to complete another 150,000 houses, which will take us well beyond the half million. Therefore, we have a programme for helping the most vulnerable to save on their energy bills.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that by April next year there will have been a three-year period with no increase in electricity prices, equivalent to a reduction in real terms and prices of some 15 per cent? Therefore, even with the new increases, we are still ahead in ensuring a reduction in real terms and prices overall for the consumer, the pensioner and everyone who uses electricity in Britain.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is correct. Prices have been stable, which means that when inflation is taken into account there has been a real reduction in prices over the past five, not just the past three, years. The period of spare capacity is coming to an end and we are entering into a period when we must make substantial investment, which must be paid for. Of course it is with reluctance that we propose these increased rates of return. We are doing so to enable the industry to fund necessary programmes.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): As for the starvation of orders during the past eight years, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, does he agree that he appears to be an innocent casualty of lack of forethought and planning by others? Does he further agree that 3,000 power engineering workers on Tyneside who have paid for the lack of investment and lack of forethought with their jobs during the past two years and will pay through their electricity bills because of unnecessary price increases during the next two years, will have paid rather a high price? Does he further agree that privatisation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not fair to ask a second question when so many hon. Members wish to get in.

Mr. Parkinson: The starvation of orders about which I spoke arises because a major nationalised industry made a major howler in predicting the energy requirement for the country. That created overcapacity, and as a result, the

[Mr. Parkinson]

industry had a period of plenty followed by one of famine. The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on the fact that his party was in government for much of that time.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Although I recognise the need for proper returns, may I ask my right hon. Friend to consider the number of thefts and disconnections? Is he aware of the new cashless token meters which are being developed by the North-Western electricity board?

Mr. Parkinson: I know that the problem of disconnection is serious, and I have taken up the matter with the industry and the area boards. I know that they are aware of the problems faced by the elderly. I shall draw that point to the attention of the industry again.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Today's announcement is good news to Babcocks in Paisley, which has had many redundancies recently. Does the Minister intend to meet the chairmen of the regional electricity boards and ask them how many cut-offs there have been in the past financial year and if this increase will mean more electricity cut-offs?

Mr. Parkinson: The House should know that it is in the Register of Members' Interests that I was a non-executive director of Babcocks for some years. I learnt of the problems for the electricity supply industry when there is a flood of orders and then there is none. I know this from experience; I have been to Renfrew, and seen the huge investment there. There is a factory capable of excellent work. It has a first-class work force, but the one thing it does not have is orders. The Government are determined to create a modern industry using modern equipment.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, had it not been for the privatisation programme for the electricity industry, the Opposition would have been faced with the embarrassment of a Secretary of State for Energy taking the advice of the Labour party to raise the rate of return on assets? Does he also agree that, whether the electricity industry is in private or state ownership, investment is needed to replace the Magnox stations which are running out of time? It would make no difference whether that industry was in private or public hands.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right that in this context the question of privatisation is a red herring. Whether the industry remains in public ownership or is privatised, investment will have to be made. A previous Labour Government who instituted a policy on nationalised industries said that a proper rate of return is a vital part of an investment programme.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very important debate ahead of us. I will allow questions to go on until 5.35 pm. I hope that every hon. Member who is rising in his place will be able to ask a brief question by then.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that if these proceedings were televised millions of people would have had the opportunity to see the Secretary of State, who has shown no adequate understanding of the heavy blow that will be dealt to those on low incomes when the increases come into effect? Why should pensioners and others on low incomes have to bear the brunt of the increases and suffer the consequences during the winter months when they cannot heat their homes adequately now? Why should they suffer all that just so that the Government can pave the way for privatisation?

Mr. Parkinson: I shall return the compliment to the hon. Gentleman — why should they have suffered massive real increases under his Government, when under this Government they have benefited from real reductions? Quite frankly, his crocodile tears are being shed rather late. If he had been a little more forceful when his party was in government, perhaps he would have had more influence. We will not take any lectures from him.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Further to the right hon. Gentleman's earlier responses on the future of the power engineering industry, which will come as welcome news to my constituents who rely on Northern Engineering Industries for their livelihoods, will he assure the House that no part of the investment programme that he has announced today will be delayed by his determination to carry on with privatisation?

Mr. Parkinson: I wish to make it clear that the prime consideration is the security of supply. Recently we have had a good example of the dangers of an interruption to supply. Our transmission system is becoming old and needs modernising. Our power generation industry needs modern power generating plant. We are determined to ensure that that modernisation is not interrupted—it is top priority.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): Has not the Secretary of State made it clear that he intends to privatise the industry, and no question about it? Why is there such a rush to press ahead with the investment, which he described as being much needed, under the umbrella of the public sector? Why is he not prepared to wait until the industry is privatised and then allow it to go to the market in the usual way to raise the money and to suffer the consequences of that and of imposing price increases?

Mr. Parkinson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman was listening to his hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) who just asked me to give an assurance that the investment programme would not be interrupted. The point that I am trying to put across to the House is that the industry must develop an income base that will support the huge investment programme that is needed both now, when it is in the public sector, and later when it is in the private sector. We shall not allow the investment programme to be interrupted pending privatisation, as the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): If a price increase is so essential, why were we not told about it in June before the election? Why, suddenly, are we faced with a 9 per cent. increase? I challenge the right hon. Gentleman to admit that that increase is not necessary for the investment programme. Why does he not come clean with the House and admit that privatisation is at the centre of the issue?

Mr. Parkinson: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is very well informed on these matters. I assure him that privatisation was not part of the consideration about this increase. The reason I have come to the House to announce revised rates of return is that the Government set targets for three years, and that period ends next April.

We must now set new targets for the industry. The chairman of the Electricity Council agrees that an improved rate of return is necessary. We are setting new targets at the end of a three-year term and in circumstances where the position has changed.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that the proposed price increase will have a disproportionate effect on those on low or no income? Does that not make a mockery of the Chancellor's purported generosity when he made his Autumn Statement only a short time ago? Is it not true that consumers, who are the majority in this country, are being invited to pay high prices simply to boost the profitability of the industry to make it attractive to investors, who are a small minority?

Mr. Parkinson: The consumer is being invited to pay a higher price so that the industry, on which we all depend for our electricity supplies, can modernise itself and get ready to meet the capacity gap that has been identified and that everybody agrees exists.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that now that he has heard what has been said from the Labour Benches, his statement is a disgrace and he is a disgrace for making it? Is he aware that his party and his Government knew about this increase before the election, but said nothing about it? They never said—*[Interruption.]* It is no good Ministers shaking their heads. They never said a word about it. May I tell the right hon. Gentleman something that he does not know—that as sure as night follows day, standing charges will be increased alongside the increase he has anounced today? He probably did not know about that.

Mr. Parkinson: I think that we have just seen a fine example of the hon. Gentleman at his self-indulgent worst.

Mr. Haynes: You are such a smooth one——

M. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Haynes: I will see the right hon. Gentleman outside.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): What advice does the right hon. Gentleman have for those living in the north of Ireland, where the cost of electricity is 33 per cent. more than in any other region, where the cost of coal is 12 per cent. more and where there is no mains gas? Will he consider this matter and try to impress upon his colleagues that there should be some recognition of that disparity in the Social Security Bill, and especially in the social fund that, unfortunately, will come upon us very soon?

Mr. Parkinson: I think that I am right in saying that my announcement does not cover Northern Ireland and does not affect Northern Ireland prices. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I recognise that the right hon. Gentleman does not susually speak on Scotland, but can I assume that his announcement about the return on capital employed and the likely prices impact will not apply to Scotland? Does he accept that, because of what he had said, there will be widespread anxiety about what might happen north of the border? Does he further accept that the position is different in Scotland, with a different investment pattern over the next few years? Given those circumstances and the fact that the combined profit for the two Scottish boards in 1986 was £422 million, would it not be monstrous if Scotland was threatened with the sort of increases to which the right hon. Gentleman referred? If he cannot reassure us on that point, will he use his considerable powers of persuasion to ensure that the Secretary of State for Scotland comes to the House soon to clarify the position?

Mr. Parkinson: I will do that. I think that I know the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, but I do not wish to give it in case it is wrong. These matters are in the province of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is proving only that an empty vessel makes the loudest noise, and doing so very successfully. I will ensure that the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) are brought to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Ministerial Statements

5.38 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you reconsider your practice of taking points of order that arise out of statements at the end of all the statements, rather than at the end of each statement when the appropriate Minister is present? It will be within your recollection that in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) the Chancellor of the Exchequer said threateningly, "If the universities are run properly". The clear implication of that was that he, as Chancellor, was making a judgment on a matter that was not the direct responsibility of the Treasury. If the Chancellor makes such a remark, in that context and in that tone that he used, should he not be given an opportunity to explain exactly what he meant and why he thinks the universities are not run properly? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman wants more pressure to be put on them.

Mr. Speaker: I shall keep this matter constantly in mind, but I think the whole House agrees that the current practice is of benefit to the House. What the hon. Gentleman is suggesting merely leads to a continuation of Question Time, which I think the whole House agrees is not the proper way to proceed. However, I shall certainly bear the matter very much in mind.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask for your guidance. I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Energy for his statement on the electricity supply industry. As it is clear from his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that he is not responsible for electricity supply in Scotland, should not the Secretary of State for Scotland have been present to inform us of the implications for the electricity supply industry in Scotland?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Government Front Bench. I heard what the Secretary of State has just said about that matter.

BILL PRESENTED

RIGHT OF PRIVACY

Mr. William Cash presented a Bill to establish a right of privacy, to make amendments to the law of evidence, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 45.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 4105/87 on the pricing of medicinal products for human use be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Orders of the Day

Employment Bill

Order for Second reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Liberal party.

5.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

I shall be brief in opening the debate. The Bill is being presented against the background of two welcome trends — the largest sustained fall in unemployment since records began, and the lowest monthly total since the war of days lost because of industrial disputes.

Unemployment has fallen not just over one month, or even two or three, but for 15 months in succession. In the year to September adult unemployment fell by over 400,000, which is a record for this country, and faster than in any other major industrial country. This summer there were 370,000 more people in jobs than last year.

Nor has that improvement been confined to just one area or region. The biggest falls in the rate of unemployment have been in Wales, the west midlands and the north-west. Within the overall total, the number of long-term unemployed people — the number of people who have been out of work for more than a year—has fallen by 110,000 in 12 months to the lowest level for three years. There are fewer unemployed 16-year-old school leavers this September than in any year since 1974.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are discussing the so-called Employment Bill, which is an anti-trade union Bill, yet the Minister is quoting employment figures that have nothing to do with the Bill. Will the Minister get to the point?

Mr. Speaker: The Secretary of State has been on his feet for two minutes: I imagine that this is his preliminary explanation.

Mr. Fowler: With no particular respect to the hon. Gentlemen, that is the most bogus point that I have heard him make for a long time. He does not want to hear about the welcome trends in the fall in unemployment, and for him to argue that on the Second Reading of the Employment Bill I cannot talk about unemployment takes him into new realms of foolishness.

Mr. Heffer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With due respect, that has nothing to with the Bill, which is about trade unions and the effects on them. The employment issue has nothing to do with the Bill. If the right hon. Gentleman is to keep within the rules of the House, he should talk about the Bill and not spread propaganda about the so-called levels of employment that does not affect my area, because unemployment has increased.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Secretary of State will help the House by concentrating on the Bill. Every hon. Member is responsible for his speech and must draw up his remarks in the way that he chooses, but we should concentrate on the Bill.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that part II is concerned with training and employment. His actions reveal that he has not read the Bill. Our challenge is to improve further these trends and to bring unemployment down even lower. The Bill takes up that challenge with a range of measures.

The Bill also tackles the area of industrial relations. The legislation enacted by the Government since 1979 has done much to improve industrial relations. Thanks to that legislation, many more trade union members have had the chance to vote on whether they want to strike, and union members are now more ready to tell their leaders that it is a risk that they do not want to take.

The statistics on days lost due to industrial action again tell their own story. The figures for 1986 show the lowest number of working days lost because of disputes for over 20 years. There were fewer strikes during 1985 and 1986 than at any stage since the war.

No one would suggest that Britain's economic recovery could have been achieved or, once achieved, sustained by trade union law reform alone. Equally, we would have achieved very little without that reform. This country has turned its back decisively on industrial anarchy, which reached its culmination in the winter of discontent in 1978 and early 1979. It was such strike action that not only reduced industrial output in this country but exported British job after British job overseas.

The decline in the number of days lost because of strikes is a key element in Britain's new-found economic strength. The changes that have been made since 1979 have made an undoubted and real contribution to that. The extraordinary legal immunities that have been enjoyed by trade unions have been removed.

The Bill takes the process of industrial relations law reform a stage further. The essence of this step-by-step process of change and reform is a determination to ensure that the framework of law is appropriate to match the needs of the day and to respond to any omissions that have become apparent.

It was in that spirit that the Government published the Green Paper, "Trade Unions and Their Members", last February and put forward a number of issues and suggestions for change as the basis for public consultation. During the election we made it entirely clear, and in detail, on what issues we intended to legislate. No one can claim that we have in any way hidden our intentions. The Bill puts into effect the promises that we made. Many of its provisions simply build upon the examples that some unions have given us of how the rights of members can be secured. The Bill aims to spread that good practice throughout the trade union movement.

The Bill is concerned with the right framework of law for trade union affairs. By that I mean the framework that is necessary, above all, to protect and ensure the right that ordinary trade union members want and need. It puts the interests of the individual trade union member first and foremost. At times, precisely this approach has caused alarm to some trade union leaders in this country.

A fundamental point must be made — trade unions are powerful and unique institutions. They are not, in spite of what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) suggests, like social clubs or sports clubs, which concern themselves with the individual's leisure activities. Trade unions can influence the employment of their members and affect the viability of the workplace, and thus the entire future of the individual trade union member.

Although there have been substantial improvements in industrial relations over the past few years, there have also been some remarkable abuses. For example, it is absurd that some trade unions should claim the right to be able to transfer their funds through the international banking system to avoid the jurisdiction of the British courts. Yet that is precisely what took place during the miners' strike. The NUM did precisely that. As long as "Artful Dodger" devices of that kind are used, the process of law reform cannot be complete.

The Employment Act 1980 was concerned with adjusting the balance of power between employers and trade unions. The Employment Act 1982 set out new responsibilities for unions and employees. The theme of the Trade Union Act 1984 was to promote democratic practices in trade union affairs. The Bill is essentially concerned with giving new rights to trade union members and setting out new ways in which such rights can be enforced.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Does the Secretary of State agree that the reality of the Government's approach has been, not to balance power, but to shift it from the trade union movement — that is, from labour to capital? In recent years we have seen more and more power acquired by capital rather than by the generality of the trade union movement. I do not instance individual unions, but the union movement in general. It has been weakened by the shift of power from labour to capital. That has been the Government's sole intention with this and other measures.

Mr. Fowler: The purpose of the legislation that we have introduced since 1979 has been to shift power to members of trade unions. It may be that one or two Opposition Members do not agree with that. All the opinion polls show that the overwhelming majority of people support what we have done in reforming trade union law.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall continue my remarks for a moment, if I may.

Trade union members must have protection from abuses of power by their unions and must have the right in respect of their unions that they are entitled to expect in a free society. That provides the first major theme of the Bill.

Clause 1 provides union members with the right not to be called out by their union without a properly held secret ballot which produces a majority in favour of industrial action. Clauses 3, 4 and 5 give the union member the right not to be disciplined by his union because he chooses to go to work rather than to take industrial action.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way at the moment.

Clause 6 gives the union member the right of access to his union's accounting records and the right to have professional advice when inspecting them. Clauses 8 and 9 give trade union members the right to stop their unions' funds being applied for unlawful purposes or the union handing out indemnities to those who are found guilty of criminal offences.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall give way in a moment.

Clauses 12, 13 and 14 give the trade union member the right to a postal vote in elections for union governing bodies, and for the elections of general secretaries and presidents, with the assurance that such elections will be subject to proper standards of independent scrutiny. In addition, clauses 7 and 29 give the union member who resigns the right to know that the deduction of union subscription from his wages by his employer will cease as soon as that resignation takes effect.

Mr. Heffer: Has the right hon. Gentleman worked out this matter on the basis of logic? The Government insist that there must be a ballot. A majority of members may decide to take certain action, and a minority may decide not to do so. Will the Secretary of State apply that principle to a regiment of soldiers? A minority may say that they will not go over the top and not participate in a certain battle. What would happen to them? *[Interruption.]* Exactly. They could be shot. If the right hon. Gentleman applies that principle to a regiment of soldiers, why does he not apply it to a majority of workers who decide to involve themselves in a battle for higher wages?

Mr. Fowler: For the very good reason—I shall refer to the precise point later—that a member of a trade union owes a certain duty, as well as other duties, not only to his union, but to his employer.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way for the moment. I shall come back to precisely the point that the hon. Gentleman asked me about.

The rights that we are providing will be available to all trade union members. Many trade unionists have some such rights under their contract of membership with their union, and to that extent the Bill merely confirms that, but there are examples of union rule books and union practices that do not guarantee such fundamental rights.

The first clause provides an example of the protection of rights. The clause gives a union member the right not to be called out on strike or to take other industrial action in breach of his contract of employment without a proper secret ballot. Even the Labour party, as I understand its position, recognises the need to come to terms with this demand from union members, though till now it has fudged the question of exactly how it would use the law to guarantee it. At the moment, only employers and their customers and suppliers have the right to stop industrial action which has not been supported in a properly conducted secret ballot. Under the Bill that right is extended to the individual trade union member, and in this respect it provides a natural complement to the 1984 Act.

Mr. Caborn: As the Secretary of State said, some people will support the principle of a strike ballot, but, once a decision is taken to strike, to allow people to go against a democratic decision seems to be alien to all institutions in the United Kingdom. During consultations on the Green Paper, what representations did the Secretary of State receive, particularly from employers, on that important principle? Many employers who would have supported the Government on the principle of the secret ballot are now concerned about the whole industrial relations set-up if we negate the principle of the democratic process.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman if what he has said is that the Opposition are now in favour of clause 1. That is precisely what we have been fighting for over the past eight years. Until now the official Opposition have not distinguished themselves in supporting that principle.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: Let me answer the question.

Clauses 3 to 5, the ones with which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) is concerned, provide that where a union has taken disciplinary action against an individual for refusing to strike, he will have the right of complaint. Once a declaration has been obtained that such discipline is unjustifiable, the union member will be able to apply for compensation. As the hon. Gentleman said, we consulted on that proposal. He is perfectly right. Some employers are opposed to it, and some are in favour of it. Again, the majority of the public are in favour of what is being proposed.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way for the time being.

A number of points are to be put in respect of the proposal. There is the basic legal position that, although, in general unions are protected against the legal consequences of inducing employees to break their contracts of employment, the individual trade union member has no such protection. That gives the hon. Members for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) and for Sheffield, Central one distinction between the positions that they set out.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall continue the argument and then I shall give way to one or other of the hon. Members.

The union member has many obligations. Under his contract of employment he certainly has an obligation to his trade union, but he also just as certainly has an obligation to his employer. Of course, he has a wider obligation to the community and, indeed, to his own family. Such separate duties and obligations can obviously pull an individual in different directions. Our view is that, in coming to a decision, he should not be influenced by the fear of disciplinary action being taken against him by his own trade union. The House should not be in any doubt whatsoever that there have been instances when unions have disciplined members for not striking, and some such instances were set out in the Green Paper.

I give way to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), but I fear that he will have to be the last.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Will the Secretary of State disclose, first, the number of replies that he has had on clause 3 and from whom they were received? Surely we are entitled to know that, following the issue of the Green Paper. Secondly, he is a member of a Government who were elected on a minority vote. Therefore, if some people disagree with legislation that the Government propose, such as the poll tax legislation or that on education, is the right hon. Gentleman saying that they have a right to dissent? He is dealing here with the central democratic issue of a majority and a majority vote. He pressed for a secret ballot, and we now have that ballot. How on earth can he justify what he is saying?

Mr. Fowler: For a very good reason. I shall ask my hon. Friend to give what figures or analysis we have on this, but the position that I originally described is no secret. The right hon. Gentleman asks what the distinction is. A union member has not only an obligation to his union, but a contract of employment with his employer, which he is being urged to break. There is a whole set of examples in the Green Paper, and I shall give just one.

In the summer of 1982, obviously before the requirement for secret ballots, but nevertheless indicative of the kind of action that can be taken, about a quarter of the NUR's membership declined to obey a strike call by their union. The union disciplined about 12,000 members. The "NUR News" from that period states that the penalties suffered included loss of the right to hold office, loss of the right to participate in certain elections, loss of the right to be represented at disciplinary hearings and a whole range of other things. Whatever else we disagree about, let there be absolutely no doubt that unions have taken, and are prepared to take, action in a discriminatory way against their own members.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Randall: Will the right hon. Member give way?

Mr. Fowler: I shall give way on one last occasion to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), who has been trying to intervene, but if I give way any more I feel that I shall extend the debate far too long.

Mr. Randall: Many reasonable people will find that the Secretary of State's proposal is quite unacceptable. There is a basic principle at stake which many Labour Members and, I am sure, Conservative Members too, believe is fundamentally important, in that if there is a collective vote and the minority decide on a particular matter to undermine it, that is basically undemocratic. I have listened carefully to the Secretary of State's counter-argument. Nevertheless, when the Bill is debated in Committee I believe that many people will assume that the Government are attempting to undermine the trade union movement and to weaken it further; in other words, that this is just an ideological line that the Government are taking.

Mr. Fowler: I shall obviously listen to what is said in the debate. I do not run away from the fact that this will be an issue that will be debated at some length in Committee.

The Bill gives new rights to trade union members, but it goes further than that. Whatever rights are given to trade union members, they are of little practical use to them unless they have the ability where necessary to enforce those rights, and that is a further major theme of the Bill —the removal of obstacles that stand in the way of union members taking complaints to the courts against their unions. The Bill improves the position of individual trade union members in a number of important ways.

Clause 2 will ensure that unions will no longer be able to delay a case from being heard in the courts simply by spinning out their own internal procedures for dealing with members' grievances so that these are still grinding on more than six months after the member started the process of complaint. Clauses 3, 4 and 5 will ensure that unions will not be able to take disciplinary action against a member simply because that member has sought advice or assistance from the Certification Officer or the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members. Clauses 18, 19 and 20 and schedule 1 set up a Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, and clause 21 provides that the Certification Officer will be able to refund expenses incurred by people attending hearings at his office.

Of those provisions, the most important is the role and function of the new Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members. The case for action here is clear. Because the whole process of application to the court can be expensive and daunting for the individual, trade union members with complaints about elections are already offered another route for complaint — through the Certification Officer——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way again. The Certification Officer issues decisions and is given power to make declarations, but he cannot issue enforcement orders. He cannot operate as a court. To obtain such an enforcement order it is necessary for the trade union member to make separate application to the court. Anyone taking that action requires exceptional determination and faces substantial expense.

There is now an additional reason for action. The Bill creates a new duty owed by trade unions to their members not to authorise industrial action without obtaining majority support through a secret ballot. That is the very first clause of the Bill. In a case like that, the individual must take a complaint to the High Court to get an injunction. The Bill proposes that the commissioner's financial help will be available to him. It is in the public interest that the statutory duties in industrial relations legislation are observed, and basically what is being proposed is that a public authority should play a role in securing observance of the law. Trade union members should not be deterred from bringing cases to the courts because of their complexity and the financial costs involved.

My hon. Friend will deal with a number of other issues in part I, but I draw the attention of the House to one other area in part I—the closed shop. The Bill removes all legislative support for the closed shop. It protects the employer against the use of union muscle to force him to dismiss or refuse to employ a non-trade union member. It also protects the employee by providing that dismissal for non-union membership will always be unfair.

Clause 10 removes the present legal immunity applying to industrial action to create or maintain any sort of closed shop or closed shop practice, while clause 11 changes the law so that any dismissal from a job on the grounds of a person's non-union membership will always be unfair dismissal for which the victim can get compensation. Taken together, those clauses bring to an end any legal protection of the closed shop in this country.

At the same time, I also draw the attention of the House to the provisions in clause 29. The object of the clause is to ensure that in appropriate cases it will be possible to take legal action against a Civil Service union that induces its members to take unlawful industrial action. The clause does no more than confirm the legal position thought to apply before a recent judgment of the divisional court and puts Civil Service unions in exactly the same position as any other union with respect to industrial relations law.

[Mr. Fowler]

Part II deals with another vital theme — the importance of training. We should be clear on the position that we face. We need training to help unemployed people take full advantage of the job opportunities that are now available, but we also need training for those in work to ensure that we remain competitive. In other words, we need training for the employed as well as for the unemployed, and we need training at all ages—training through life. We certainly need training and a skilled work force if we are to hold on to our existing markets overseas and if we are to win new ones.

The background to clause 23 is that the jobcentres have now been transferred to my Department so as to make possible the creation of a comprehensive new employment service that covers both helping unemployed people to find jobs and the payment of benefit. The functions remaining with the commission are primarily now concerned with training. The Bill provides for the Manpower Services Commission to be renamed the Training Commission to signal that new role as the focus of our national training effort.

The restyled commission will obviously have a special responsibility for the training programmes that it runs direct, but its remit will go much wider than that. It must act as a catalyst for training provision by employers as a whole. Training in work is primarily the responsibility of employers. It is employers who create the demand for training and are the customers for it. That is why I also intend to use the powers provided in clause 23 to appoint additional employer members to the new Training Commission. I want to ensure that all the new major sectors of employment, including the new and expanding service sectors, are actively involved in the development of our training arrangements and can play a direct part.

There is one area of our training provision that is already both well established and well able to stand up to international comparison — our provision for young people. Since 1979 we have developed comprehensive training arrangements for 16 and 17-year-olds. Nineteen eighty three saw the launch of YTS, with a guarantee of a place for every 16-year-old school leaver by Christmas. In 1986 YTS became a two-year programme, giving increased opportunities for vocational training. In 1987 we extended our guarantee to unemployed 17-year-old school leavers. Next year we will guarantee every unemployed 16 and 17-year-old a YTS place at any time before their 18th birthday.

The position for 16 and 17-year-olds is that in future they can go into employment, continue in full-time education or have a guaranteed place on a youth training scheme.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): What sort of scheme?

Mr. Fowler: Schemes that are currently providing more and more permanent jobs for those who participate. A total of 75 per cent. of those leaving youth training schemes now go into jobs or on to further training. On average, 60 per cent. take up jobs. Eighty per cent. of YTS trainees who were asked about the scheme when they had completed it said that they were satisfied and were happy with the training that they had been given.

Mr. Grocott: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether any of his colleagues have found the schemes so attractive that their own children are currently employed on them?

Mr. Fowler: I do not have the first idea about the answer to that question. Everyone to whom I have spoken during the months that I have been doing this job has spoken highly of YTS and the standards that are now being attained. It is a pity that the Opposition do not put their muscle behind YTS and the increased opportunities for young people in this country.

In the circumstances that I have laid out, the Government see no reason why we should continue to allow a young person who is able to take up a YTS place and who is guaranteed a place to refuse the offer and choose to live on benefit. It is that option that the Social Security Bill, debated by the House yesterday, will be taking away. We recognise that there are some young people who cannot hope to find a job or take up a YTS place. That may be because they are chronically disabled or a single parent. They will continue to be eligible for income support. In addition, child benefit will continue to be paid for three or four months until the school leaver finds a job or YTS place.

Clause 24 ensures that young people under 18 who become unemployed at a later stage are paid a bridging allowance of £15 a week for a maximum of eight weeks in a year until they can be found a suitable YTS place.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The right hon. Gentleman probably knows, or I hope he does, that under the existing provisions young people who are unemployed but claiming benefit can study for 21 hours a week if they prefer that as a way of obtaining qualifications. Many take up that opportunity and obtain O-levels and A-levels and go on to obtain further qualifications. I assume that the right hon. Gentleman is wiping out that option. Is he not concerned about that?

Mr. Fowler: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I am ensuring that young people obtain a bridging allowance. However, I will ensure that the hon. Lady's point is answered in the reply to the debate.

The Bill gives effect to specific commitments in the manifesto on which the Government were re-elected five months ago, but it does more than that. It marks an important step forward in guaranteeing the democratic rights of trade union members. What is significant in the steps that we have already taken to reform industrial relations law is that the process of reform has been carried out with the support of the public. That same support is evident again for the Bill.

A MORI opinion poll published by Times Newspapers shows that 70 per cent. of trade union members, and 64 per cent. of those voting Labour, back the strike ballot proposal in clause 1. Only 31 per cent. of trade unionists oppose the proposal to protect non-strikers against union discipline, and an earlier poll showed that this had the support of nearly three out of four members of the general public. In other words, the reform of industrial relations law has the support of the public, including the support of many trade union members.

The Bill also develops further the training strategy of the Government. We now have excellent training for young people, and increasingly those training opportunities are leading to permanent jobs. Our next priority must be to make further improvements in training and retraining for the long-term unemployed, while at the same time ensuring that the employed work force is trained in the skills that are needed to compete in world markets.

The Bill is an important step towards that goal. It will help create a labour market where excessive union power is held in check, where industry can thrive, and where the talents of working men and women are developed to the full. That is what the Bill is about, and I commend it to the House.

6.16 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Despite its title, this Bill is not a pro-employment Bill. It is an anti-trade union Bill. It owes its existence to the obsession of the Conservative party to try to resurrect the anti-trade union bandwagon at every election. It is only fair to say to the Secretary of State that, in my view, he did not give one good reason today as to why another Bill is needed for any new and necessary industrial relations purpose. We shall be pressing him hard in Committee. He manifestly failed to answer several of the fundamental questions asked by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Even the employers recognise that with this Bill the Government have really gone over the top. For example, the British Institute of Management describes it as

> "undemocratic and possibly obstructive to good industrial relations."

Indeed, contrary to all the Government's claims about democratising the unions, the Bill is profoundly anti-democratic. For the first time in the history of English statute the Bill proposes, as several of my right hon. and hon. Friends have pointed out, to enshrine in law the principle that minorities shall be legally protected if they disobey a majority decision democratically reached after a secret ballot. There is no other country in the world that has seen fit to legislate for such a principle. There is no other organisation in this country, statutory or voluntary, that is legally prohibited from enforcing its own rules. Such is the bottomless pit of the Government's unique hostility to trade unions.

Clause 1 is thoroughly objectionable on several counts. It destroys the deep-seated respect for majority decisions that is held universally throughout the country. It devalues the ballot. What is the point of having a ballot if those who disagree with it can then safely set it aside? It will actually encourage workers to take industrial action without bothering with ballots so that they can be seen not to decide anything. If the clause discredits a ballot to strike, it must, by the same token, discredit a ballot to return to work. Therefore, it may well result in protracted strikes even after negotiated settlements have been reached.

It is the Government's hypocrisy, above all, that stands out so sharply in all this. They are happy, indeed anxious, for union members to take their unions to court to uphold the rule book. However, as soon as the union seeks to apply the contents of that same rule book, the Goverment will not have it. It is the David Owen principle of industrial relations: one plays the game until it comes up with results that one does not like and then one walks off with the ball. That principle will be no more conducive to harmony in industrial relations than it has been to harmony in the SDP.

There is not a golf club in the country—let alone organisations responsibly representing millions of workers —that operates on the principle of requiring a secret ballot and then encouraging people not to abide by the outcome. Even the Government's staunchest supporters —the CBI, the British Institute of Management, the Institute of Personnel Management, the Conservative trade unionists, the Engineering Employers Federation and even the Freedom Association—cannot stomach that principle. I hope that there will be enough fair-minded Conservative hon. Members—perhaps even right hon. Members—with the decency and honesty to recognise that this clause represents a standing repudiation of democracy so that we can defeat it in the House.

It is all the more important that the Bill should be defeated, because the Government now propose to give wrecking minorities even greater powers. Clause 16, to which the Secretary of State gave little attention, rules that a ballot for industrial action must command not only a national majority but a majority at each workplace. The Government have no mandate for that proposal. There was no mention of it in the Green Paper last February or in the Tory election manifesto. There is no justification for it because it flies in the face of democratic theory and practice. There is no precedent for it as no other organisation in this country, voluntary or statutory, is hobbled by such unreasonable impediments.

It is as if it had been decided at the last election that constituencies that produced a winner who was not Tory could opt out of the decisions made by the Tory Government returned with an overall majority of seats throughout the country. I wonder what the Prime Minister would feel about that. The Bill goes even further than that in its obsession with the blocking tactics of minorities. It is as though it had also been decided at the last general election that, even in constituencies where the Tory won, the minority who voted for another candidate were not to be bound by the majority decision. Then, to cap it all, when the Tory majority in any constituency tried to discipline the minority to comply with the majority verdict they were to be told that they were legally prohibited from taking any such action to bring the minority into line. Do the Government really think that such a system is fair and reasonable? Of course they do not. They would be the first to be outraged by it. It is monstrous that they can force trade unions to abide by procedural distortions which, if they were applied to them, they would bawl out of court as arrant nonsense that stood democracy on its head.

The truth is that no Cabinet, board of governors, company board room or voluntary society can operate on such principles. Why, therefore, are the unions to be singled out for these perverse and anti-democratic rules? The Bill has been dubbed by many a scab's charter. It is more accurately described as an anarchists' charter.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Although I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman in that I think that the measure may be undemocratic, he should not tell the House that the proposal was not in the February Green Paper. The suggestion that Members should have the right to retain membership of a union and yet not to strike appears on page 7 of the Green Paper.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman seems to be confused. He is referring to the proposals in clauses 3 and 5, which are, indeed, referred to in the Green Paper. I

[Mr. Meacher]

referred to clause 16, and I assure him that there is no mention of that proposal in the Green Paper. I am glad to see the Secretary of State nodding assent. I repeat that there is no mandate for this denial of democracy in the Green Paper or in the Tory election manifesto.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we cannot draw an analogy between trade unions and democracy? In fact, Scottish Labour Members have been demanding what the hon. Gentleman says we have been demanding from the trade unions. They have told us that we do not have the right to rule in Scotland because they have a majority there. Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that in trade union affairs, where a trade union may instruct a man to break the law — to break his contract of employment — that man must have the right to decide for himself whether he wishes to follow that instruction?

Mr. Meacher: The trouble with the Government is that they want to have their cake and eat it. They want to ensure that the rights of minorities are protected under so-called employment legislation, which is actually anti-trade uinion legislation, but they will have no truck with the rights of minorities in the House. For them, there is no question of the large majority of Labour Members in Scotland being allowed to opt out. The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention precisely to the hypocrisy at the root of the Government's policy.

The denial of democratic choice is apparent in another of the Bill's main provisions. Union membership agreements or closed shops, as they are normally described, are already covered by secret ballot established under this Government's previous legislation and requiring an electoral threshold of approval far in excess of what the Prime Minister regards as sufficient for her tenure of office. Such ballots require the support of 85 per cent. of those voting, which is more than twice the 42 per cent. voting support which the Prime Minister received and which she regards as adequate. The Government now propose to abolish their own balloting provisions, established only three years ago, simply because those engaging in such ballots had the nerve to commit the unforgiveable sin of voting overwhelmingly in favour of continuing with the closed shop.

The Government have disregarded the employers' wishes. The British Institute of Management memorandum says:

> "it is believed that the closed shop can provide a stable focus for negotiations where it takes into account the natural groupings that occur in an industrial environment. If the majority of employees vote for it and continue to do at regular intervals, the closed shop should be allowed to exist."

Those are the words not of the Labour Party but of the British Institute of Management. Disregarding the views of employers and those at the sharp end of industry, the Government decided that if members did not come up with the right choice in the ballot that they had given them, they would take away that ballot. That is the moral of it.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has made much of the fact that the proposals in clause 16 did not appear in the Green Paper. However, he will concede that the proposal concerning the approved closed shop was in the Green Paper and, indeed, in the election manifesto. In fact very few people indeed have taken advantage of the approved closed shop arrangements.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State makes my point for me. Of course it was in the consultative Green Paper. The purpose of the Green Paper was to consult opinion in industry, but when the employers said that the closed shop should be continued, the Secretary of State ignored the evidence. What is the point of having a Green Paper? That is always the problem with this Government. They completely ignore even what their supporters say about industrial matters.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is taking his argument to absurd lengths. He must recognise that the proposal was set out in the election manifesto and that the Government were re-elected, with an overwhelming majority, on that manifesto.

Mr. Meacher: It is far more relevant that, with regard to the consultation exercise on the closed shop, not only the TUC but most, if not all, of the employer organisations — the Secretary of State should have published the results of the exercise—recognised that the closed shop has a valid role to play and do not want it to be abolished.

The Bill is not only anti-democratic. The second fundamental objection to it is that it thoroughly discriminates against trade unions. Contrary to the central principle of English statute, that similar persons or bodies should be treated in a similar manner, the Bill singles out trade unions from all the major institutions for unprecedented and prejudicial state regulation of their internal affairs. The unions will be subjected to rules which the Tory party would never accept for itself. The Bill outlaws the closed shop, but does the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the main author of the Bill, accept that for himself? He is a member of the Bar, which is perhaps the foremost example of the closed shop.

The Bill insists that unions are answerable to their electorate. Does the previous Secretary of State for Employment, who was responsible for the Bill, accept that for himself? He owes his position entirely to patronage and is not answerable in another place to any electorate. The Bill requires that the unions' principal executive committees should be subject to election. Does the Cabinet, which is the Government's principal executive committee, accept that for itself when not one of its members is directly elected? The Bill insists on secret ballots for union presidents and general secretaries. Did the former Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who was responsible for initiating secret ballots for unions, accept that for himself when he was the non-elected chairman of the Tory party?

The Tory party—I noted what the Secretary of State said today—likes to say that trade unions are different. The Green Paper refers to

> "the considerable importance to individuals of their position in the labour market."

I agree, but how do they explain why private employers, whose importance to individuals in the labour market is without question, are free from even the most basic electoral accountability to their staff or customers? How does the Secretary of State explain that shareholders normally choose their directors and make other key decisions by show of hands at their annual general meetings, which is precisely what the Bill would outlaw?

Mr. Winnick: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Conservative Charter Movement, led by Mr. Eric Chalker, has complained bitterly that the position of chairman of the Conservative party is not subject to election and is appointed by one person? Is it not the height of hypocrisy for the Conservative party to lecture trade unions on how they should conduct their internal business when the Conservative party is one of the least democratic organisations in the country?

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I look forward to the Minister's response—if he can give one.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): After raising some delightful red herrings, will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether the Labour party is in favour of secret postal ballots for the election of trade union leaders?

Mr. Meacher; I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads "New Rights, New Responsibilities", which is our precise statement on that point. We are in favour of secret ballots before industrial action.

Mr. Leigh: Secret postal ballots?

Mr. Meacher: If the hon. Gentleman listened to my speech, he might be persuaded that, although the Government are obsessed with postal ballots, they are probably less democratic and rather unwise.

The same meticulous over-restrictiveness towards trade unions, combined with blind disregard of similar faults on a far bigger scale in other bodies, is present everywhere in the Bill. Although there is no evidence of trade unions refusing to comply with previous trade union Acts, the Bill set up a so-called Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, who will no doubt spearhead a public campaign, aided and abetted by the Freedom Association, to provoke complaints against trade unions. But the Government make no move to set up a commissioner for the rights of small shareholders in the City which, after the recent spate of financial scandals, might be needed more. The Bill legislates to give a right of access to trade union accounts, although that has never been denied, yet the Government do nothing to secure for employees the right to see their company's accounts, which is far more important. The Government have even vetoed the proposed EC legislation which would have given employees minimal rights in that respect. The Bill provides for independent supervision of union ballots, yet the Government turn a blind eye to the far greater and more serious corruption and misbehaviour in the City.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Rubbish.

Mr. Meacher: The Government should recognise, if they have not already, that Tory Members are far more likely to make multiple share applications than trade unions are to exercise multiple votes.

Mr. Sayeed: Cheap.

Mr. Meacher: It may be cheap, but it is true.

The Bill goes out of its way to assure union members that they will not be deprived of access to the courts if there has been a breach of statutory rights or the common law, although there is no evidence that they have been denied access. But the Government deliberately ignore the fact that hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens are denied access to the courts to get their basic legal rights because of Government restrictions on legal aid and the cuts in law centres.

The Bill not only discriminates against trade unions but contains instance after instance of the Government stepping up hostile action against unions and individuals in direct defiance of their previously stated clear decision. The 1983 Green Paper stated:

> "The wide variety and differing circumstances of trade union electoral arrangements suggest that it would be unrealistic to attempt to achieve the desired standards by requiring through legislation a single method for all types and levels of union elections."

But without advancing a shred of evidence since that date, that is exactly what the Government are demanding in the Bill.

In 1985, the former Secretary of State for Employment—now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—firmly rejected postal ballots. I hope that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle will listen to this. On 23 April 1985 he said:

> "I understand from the research . . . that, in a fully postal ballot conducted by the AUEW, which has confirmed these findings, 200,000 members never received a vote and 20,000 received a vote to which they were not entitled."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 775.]

However, in this Bill the Government are enforcing compulsory postal ballots.

On YTS, the Tory election manifesto made it clear that the Government would remove benefit from

> "those under 18 who deliberately choose to remain unemployed".

However, the Government are now being much harsher and are putting forward a proposal to remove benefit from all young people under 18, irrespective of the circumstances and even if they have done what is expected of them and got a job but then had the misfortune to be laid off.

The Secretary of State for Social Services has made a strong speech denouncing dependency. However, under the Bill the waiting allowance will reduce income and make school leavers more dependent on their parents. The Secretary of State for Education keeps coming to the House to preen himself about choice in schools. However, the Secretary of State for Employment is abolishing choice in the post-school YTS, and so on and so on.

Indeed, part II of the Bill, on training schemes and the Manpower Services Commission, which is really a separate Bill in itself, displays exactly the same characteristics of an over-domineering Government further restricting rights, centralising power to itself and again going back on its own previous commitments. I remind the Secretary of State that it was a Conservative Government of more generous aspirations who, in 1973, separated benefit payments from jobcentres to enhance the image of job creation. Today a Conservative Government of much meaner intent are bringing them together again because they are far more concerned to restrict benefit entitlement to reduce artificially the unemployment figures than they are to create new jobs.

None of the changes that are being made to the MSC was sought or approved by it, or even desired by the employers. They will transform the commission from an independent body into the Government's pliant poodle, centralise power in the hands of the Secretary of State for Employment and open up the Government's ultimate objective—the privatisation of training.

[Mr. Meacher]

Clause 25 is a real Trojan horse. It paves the way for the Secretary of State to define community programme workers as "non-employed". They will therefore receive "benefit-plus" payments, as they are called, instead of the current hourly rate for the job. It is yet another major wage-cutting exercise as well as, no doubt, being designed to mop up the JTS which has proved such a monumental flop.

Nor are the YTS changes, which are tantamount to job conscription, any more acceptable to the employers than they are to the unions. Perhaps scheme quality will suffer because of the influx of unwilling trainees, or those trainees will be forced into the more charitable but over-stretched voluntary sector schemes, or they will lose all income support. The Government are directly defying strongly held MSC views that the voluntary nature of YTS is central to its purpose.

The Government defend the Bill as extending individual rights and giving protection to union members. In fact, almost everything in the Bill does precisely the opposite. If the Government were genuinely concerned about extending rights, why cannot the new commissioner, unlike the equal opportunities commissioner or the race relations commissioner, with whom the Government compare him, take action where necessary on behalf of the employee against either the union or the employer? Why is the new rights commissioner limited to grievances about a union, for the existence of which the Government have not provided any evidence, when the employers are engaged in a far more serious undermining of employees' rights through defective health and safety arrangements and widespread illegal underpayments of wages?

If the Government were genuinely concerned about individual rights, why do they not provide fair and proper protection against unfair dismissal, which must now be feebler in this country than in many Third world countries? Why do they not provide a right to reinstatement when an industrial tribunal so orders? Why do they not provide the right for women to receive equal pay for work of equal value, or maternity rights so that they can return to their jobs after having a baby? Why do they not provide protection against victimisation by an employer when an employee complains of a breach of statutory employer duties? *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I could have the Secretary of State's attention. Above all, if the Government are serious about rights, why do they not provide a right not to be dismissed when involved in industrial action after a majority ballot — a right that exists everywhere in the West except in Thatcherite Britain?

Because the Government are not genuinely concerned about employment rights, because their excuses for the Bill are opportunistic humbug, and because the Bill will greatly worsen industrial relations, we shall unreservedly vote against it tonight.

6.46 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to have the opportunity of following the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I shall make a short speech and deal only with the conduct of elections for trade union officers. Rebelling against one's own Government and being proved right is not the way to win friends and influence the hon. and right hon. Members on the Treasury Bench. However, some hon. Members may remember that during the passage of the Trade Union Act 1984, 35 Conservative Members rebelled against the Government because they wanted to insist on the provision of secret postal ballots. I was assured by the then Secretary of State for Employment that he hoped that secret postal ballots would become the norm as a result of that Act. I predicted then:

> "when ballots are held in 1986 under the provisions of the Bill, postal ballots will simply be found not to have become the norm. What do the Government mean by the norm? Do they mean 50 per cent.? That is an optimistic figure by any account. They will not achieve 50 per cent. Do they mean a mere handful? Of course it will be a mere handful, possibly what we have at present;"—[*Official Report,* 24 July 1984; Vol. 64, c. 855.]

I am sorry to say that recent research, conducted by a barrister, Mark Loveday, for Policy Research Associates, which was a survey of the 22 largest trade unions, shows that, as I predicted, only a handful of trade unions had adopted secret postal ballots although the Secretary of State thought that that might become the norm. Indeed, only four major trade unions have adopted them. Of them, the Royal College of Nursing already had secret postal ballots, and the Union of Construction and Allied Trades Technicians adopted them only because workplace ballots were unsuitable because they did not have the sites.

Clearly, there is a necessity for the Bill and I warmly welcome it. I pay due tribute to the Secretary of State for moving the Second Reading today. To give some credit to the Government, secret ballots are much more practical in 1987 than they were in 1984 because the 1984 Act required trade unions to compile a central register.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I take it that the hon. Gentleman wishes to increase participation in trade union matters. Is he aware that where there are full postal ballots rather than workplace ballots fewer people become involved? Might that not be one reason why most trade unions have not adopted them?

Mr. Leigh: Surely democracy is more important than anything else. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the investigation into the Transport and General Workers Union ballot and to an article in *The Observer* of 14 April 1985 which stated:

> "One shop steward, for example, said that he had not voted, nor had his members. When he raised the matter following press allegations, he was told by a friendly union official that the ballot forms for his members and members in other companies had not left union headquarters but had been filled in on their behalf in the union's offices. We were also told of one official who was complaining of 'writer's cramp' from filling in the ballot forms."

Is that what the hon. Gentleman wants? We want democracy and believe that it has a vital part to play in our national affairs.

I turn now to two small points that concern me. Firstly, I am concerned that when a member receives a ballot form in the privacy of his own home, he should have some idea about the position of the candidates for whom he is being asked to vote. Therefore, I hope that, in Committee, this Bill might be amended to make it a requirement that candidates should have the right to provide a short manifesto to union members. We cannot have a situation in which the militant is allowed to achieve, by stealth, in the privacy of the member's home, what he was unable to achieve by intimidation in the union branch or the workplace.

My second point concerns clause 14(2), which states:

"The trade union in question—must, before the ballot is taken or the election held, appoint a qualified independent person ("the scrutineer")"

We must ensure that the scrutineer is truly independent. I believe that the Bill should be amended in Committee to require that the scrutineer has no connection with the trade union movement. I illustrate my case by referring to the Unity bank, which is the trade union movement's bank. It provides a number of worthwhile services for the trade union movement. In the promotional literature for all those services it stresses its close links with the trade union movement. However, it has also set up a new service called Independent Balloting Services.

It is interesting that, in the promotional literature for Independent Balloting Services, the Unity bank makes it quite clear that that organisation is totally independent of the trade union movement. However, I suspect that this so-called independent service has been set up to circumvent the intentions of this Bill.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar) *rose—*

Mr. Leigh: No, I shall not give way, but I shall sit down in a moment.

When this Bill becomes an Act we must ensure that we have a truly independent scrutineer.

I believe that the trade union militant fears democracy, fairness and secrecy of ballots as Dracular fears the approaching dawn. I believe that this Bill will ensure that we finally rid our industry and trade union movement of the militant scourge that has plagued us for so many years.

6.51 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): When I first read this Bill I thought that it was a shabby and shameful proposal for any Minister to bring before the House. When I listened to the Minister speaking about the Bill I thought that it was also explosively dangerous. I believe that unless we can alter it substantially as it goes through the House it will lead to great difficulties in industrial relations. I believe it is a great tragedy that the Minister, speaking on behalf of the Department of Employment, should have dared to introduce this measure to the House.

Perhaps I can assist the Minister and everyone else, by explaining how it is that we have the extraordinary proposal—the main topic of discussion so far— that a member who has voted in the minority should have the right to upset the majority decision. The Government believe that proposition should be accepted. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has already said that this proposition is opposed by a whole range of bodies, including what I had always previously thought to be a laughable organisation, the Conservative Trade Unionists' National Committee. Even that committee is opposed to this proposition. However, I can explain how clause 3 came to be put forward.

I have the highest respect for the lawyers at the Department of Employment. Indeed, over many years, I have been assisted by them. I am sure they know what they are up to and for that reason I call clause 3 the "wager clause". I believe there was a wager between the lawyers who were advising the Secretary of State. I believe that one of them said to the other, "I bet you cannot introduce or frame a clause of such anti-trade union dedication that it would be opposed by the Conservative Trade Unionists' National Committee." That was the wager and it was accompanied by another wager that they could get such a clause past the new Minister. Perhaps they thought that that wager was a good deal easier.

Such is my explanation for clause 3. I hope that that clause will be known as the wager clause throughout the discussions on the Bill. I cannot believe that the Secretary of State seriously brought that clause forward—he made few defences of it today. I hope that he will withdraw that clause from the Bill—it will still be a bad Bill for other reasons—because that would be the best way forward. If the Government persist in trying to put that clause on the statute book they will make a laughing stock of the Bill, a laughing stock of themselves and a laughing stock of a great deal of the rest of their industrial relations measures. Therefore, I hope that the Government will take my early advice. It could all be fixed in Committee. We could have an early vote, a few of the Ministers could be taken off to the races and we could defeat the clause. That is the best advice I can give to the right hon. Gentleman and I am sure that he will consider it carefully. Indeed, I am sure that his advisers will, even if he does not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West dealt admirably with the proposal for a commissioner. I am not sure of the size of the staff for that commission. This is the Government who have been curtailing all the services that are provided for carrying out health and safety regulations, regulations that might assist the labour market and regulations that provide for the protection of decent conditions for people in work. The Government have refused to provide resources for such work, indeed they have curtailed such services, and I should like to know how much the commissioner will be paid and how big a staff he will be able to employ. Perhaps some of the people serving him will be transferred from the health and safety inspectorate or some other organisations as the right hon. Gentleman, in common with his predecessors, tries to injure the way in which some previous excellent legislation, passed by the Department of Employment, is put into effect.

I have another simple solution to the problem of the commissioner. It is clear, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West has already said, that this commission is quite different from any other that operates. We could have a simple amendment in the Bill that would say that the post of commissioner should always be occupied by the current chairman of Conservative Central Office, unless of course, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was again asked to undertake that responsibility. Indeed, as long as the right hon. Member for Chingford is around I suppose he might take on that post. It would keep him out of other kinds of mischief.

One way or another, this clause was obviously devised to assist the Conservative party. I do not see why it should not be plainly stated—it certainly would not make any difference to the operation of the Bill—that, with the establishment of this kind of commissioner, the Government's intention is to give every kind of support to every kind of dissident in a union who is opposing the general policy of his union—strike action or any other action.

If the Secretary of State persists with this proposal it will make the whole Bill ridiculous. It is a further illustration of the shocking nature of part I of the Bill. Indeed, part I of the Bill certainly cannot be called an Employment Bill. It would be better called the Vendetta Against Trade Unions Bill or the Miscellaneous Vindictive

[Mr. Michael Foot]

Provisions Bill. I believe that the House of Commons will have the sense, over time, to alter and transform this Bill if possible or, better still, kill it.

The Secretary of State tries to pretend that the second part of the Bill has some honourable pretensions. Certainly, it is not as bad as the first part of the Bill, but nothing could be. However, I do not believe that the origins of the second part of the Bill are quite as the right hon. Gentleman describes.

I believe that, over many years, the Department of Employment has had many fruitful ideas regarding carrying through measures for training and for assisting the employment market. Indeed, I believe that, on the whole, those ideas have been better than the ideas of many other countries and I believe that they should have been encouraged. However, I do not believe that there has been much encouragement from Lord Young. Previously he was at the Manpower Services Commission. Then he went on to the Department of Employment and his fingerprints are on this measure. He has taken part of the operation away to the new Ministry which he is occupying and he has left behind part of it for the resident Minister to operate.

It is a strange transformation because away back in 1974 when the Manpower Services Commission was established the move was in the opposite direction; that is to say, a new body was to be established at one remove from the Department of Employment. Whether that was right, I do not know. At any rate, when we came into office in 1974 we said that it would be ludicrous to tear all that up; we felt that it was better to let it continue. We did not try to alter the organisation and control of the commission. We did not try to push in trade unionists or push out the others. We did not try to use the subversive method that the right hon. Gentleman is using.

The Minister pretends that he is not altering the balance of control over this body even though he wants greatly to reduce the proportion of trade union representation. He knows well that after he has carried through this reform the impartiality of the body will be greatly impaired. It has been difficult enough for trade unionists to co-operate with many of the measures imposed upon the Manpower Services Commission by the Government. If effective control over that body is to be watered down in such a way that the power of the Minister becomes much greater and the power of the trade union representatives much weaker, the body will be weakened altogether.

All that was not taken into account when Lord Young's proposals were carried through. Lord Young has had a malign influence on the whole of these operations for many years. He has not applied his mind properly to the problems. Wherever he has been, whether at the Manpower Services Commission or the Department of Employment, he has always been looking over his shoulder at the master, or rather the mistress, behind him to see what she is demanding that he should do. Therefore, what should have been an objective operation of the Department of Employment to deal with the unemployment crisis facing the nation has been distorted by the way in which Lord Young has done his job. He is continuing these malignant and malign influences.

Lord Young has never had to face the person who may be subjected to the tyrannies which he has imposed. Extra inquisitions will be imposed by the second part of the Bill. I get the impression—I do not think it is false—that Lord Young would much rather find one alleged scrounger than provide 10 real jobs. He would much rather use the power of the state and all its mechanisms to find ways to remove a young boy or a young girl from some register so that he could go along to the Prime Minister a week later and say that he had got another 100,000 off the unemployed list. That is the way he has applied his mind.

If Lord Young had had any imagination he would have applied his mind to the real problems of the huge increase in short-time work. We are all in favour of short-time jobs as well as long-term work but we do not want the long-term figures mangled by the creation of part-time jobs. The majority of people in part-time employment are women and they have as much right to decent conditions and to protection as any other citizen. If the Government continue with the policy of removing protection from the growing numbers of people in part-time employment, they will create much greater and more explosive problems.

From what the Secretary of State has said, it seems that these matters are being dealt with in a prosperous way. But in my constituency, where there has been chronic unemployment of 17 per cent., 18 per cent. and 20 per cent. since 1979, there is very little sign of any diminution. There has been some reduction but it has been very small. We have still got far more young people without a real prospect of a job than we had seven or eight years ago. As the problem piles up year by year it becomes very serious. At the end of it the Government say, "We will not provide anything fresh for you. What we will provide is a fresh mechanism by which we will get at you." Some people will be frightened of going to unemployment offices. We set up jobcentres where people could go and consult properly. We made the system much more civilised. One of the best things that happened over the past 10 years was getting jobcentres into the best places, in main streets, away from the back streets and away from indignities. We gave people encouragement to come in and the knowledge that they would get the best possible aid. That is what the right hon. Gentleman is interfering with if he proceeds with some of these proposals.

The right hon. Gentleman also wants to alter the training system. There have been some improvements in training, but many more young people were being trained properly 10 years ago than there are today. They had decent apprenticeships in different industries. The Government smashed all that to pieces in their first two or three years in office. They took away regional grants. They made the problem infinitely greater in areas which have had to face persistent unemployment. Now they come along not with a remedy but with a measure which will be regarded up and down the country as a piece of vindictiveness, hitting the trade union movement when it is down.

I can remember longer than many hon. Members. I was not a Member then but I know what happened after the 1926 strike when a Conservative Government thought that they had got the trade union movement down. They said, "Now that they are down we will kick them because we want to kick any life or spirit out of them. Now we have got them down, let us screw them down and keep them down." So legislation was introduced which became the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927. It took away a great range of trade union powers. The Government thought that they had got the trade union movement down for ever, but they had not, because the Labour movement pledged that one of its first acts when it got a full majority in the House would be to sweep those vindictive measures off the statute book.

I hope I do not strike too much terror into the Government Benches when I recall the militant, revolutionary figure who came to that Dispatch Box to propose the abolition of the 1927 Act. It was Sir Hartley Shawcross who introduced that as one of the first measures proposed by the 1945 Labour Government. He was the revolutionary figure, the well-breeched leader of the "sans culottes". It was he, with all his legal knowledge at his disposal—I think he is still alive and kicking but not quite in the same cause that he was then — who introduced the measure. The House was proud to wipe out such a bitter piece of class legislation. That is what it was in 1927 and that is what this is today.

H. G. Wells said that the class war was an old practice of the English ruling classes. Every now and then they have spasms when they forget, such as in the days of Macmillan and his sort, when the "wets" were in charge. But they return to their roots—to the old game of saying, "Once we have the power, we will use it to take away rights that people in this country have had for 20 or 30 years."

We are going to get those rights back. One day—I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman will be here to see it—there will be a Labour Minister at the Government Dispatch Box, who will wipe away these measures. They are bitter, vindictive and utterly opposed to all the decencies that we accept in British public life.

7.10 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): In rising to address the House for the first time I am mindful of the honour and privilege of being a Member of it. The trepidation with which I make my first speech is tempered only by the knowledge that even the greatest statesmen who have served the country have had at some stage in their careers to rise and address the House for the first time.

Indeed, I follow in the footsteps of a great statesman: Francis Pym represented the old constituency of Cambridgeshire and, more recently, Cambridgeshire, South-East, for some 26 years. During that time he occupied many of the highest offices in the land, and for all that time he served both his constituency and country to the very best of his ability. He did so in a way which is an example to us all, and which I shall find it very difficult to emulate over the years in which I hope to represent my constituency. It is only right and proper that Francis Pym has now taken his place in the Upper House, where his counsel can still be heard.

The constituency that I am proud to represent includes many of the features that are at the forefront of Britain's revival. In it have taken place, and are taking place, many of the technological developments and the advances in research that are at the forefront of our economic recovery. The enterprise culture has blossomed and boomed there perhaps more than in any other part of the country. The very atmosphere seems to breathe and encourage success. However, it is a very large constituency and, geographically, a very rural one—stretching from the Essex-Suffolk border to around Newmarket and taking in the vast majority of that great centre of the British bloodstock industry, and extending upwards into the Fens and the city of Ely, including the magnificant cathedral that makes it the centre of tourism in that part of Britain.

However, the area has its problems. Fortunately, they are the problems of success. The pressures of development, if not handled properly, threaten to destroy the very fabric of our community. There is a further problem: the businesses that are currently booming, expanding constantly and providing massive numbers of extra jobs face an even greater threat to their continued development. The great perversity of our current economic scene is the shortage of skilled staff. That is why I am addressing myself to the Bill, and particularly to part II, which deals with training. I am sorry that much of the vehemence of the Opposition is concentrated on part I. I can only assume that they support most of the section on training, which, in my view, is of much longer-term importance to the country. I welcome the clauses on training and the greater emphasis placed on it by my right hon Friend in appointing a Training Commission.

Before I was elected, I was general manager of a company specialising in training and management development. My duties included running a substantial youth training scheme and many other MSC schemes. I also served for a time as a member of an area manpower board, and I have seen many of the MSC schemes from different perspectives. In my view, the youth training scheme that my right hon. Friend has already developed is one of the Government's greatest achievements over the years since they were elected in 1979. However, I have a few caveats.

First, and probably most important, if, as we all hope, the number of young people in strict unemployment is coming down, partly because of the improving employment picture and partly because there are slightly fewer school leavers, the challenge to us all to ensure that the youth training scheme continues to develop is even greater as the necessity for it appears to diminish. The YTS is not concerned merely with keeping people out of the dole queue, which is the accusation thrown at it by those who wish it ill. More important, it is a means of ensuring that all young people who leave school at the age of 16—or, now, at 17—whatever their level of academic ability or achievement, can go into work and gain the skills that are necessary for work. That does not mean only the manual and practical skills, essential though they are. It also means the skills of working discipline—personal skills, which are equally important to holding down a job and doing it well. All those skills are vital if young people are not only to obtain jobs in the future, but to play a full and lasting role in Britain's economy.

Many firms and businesses with which I have been associated understand that and use YTS as the normal route of entry for 16-year-olds, not simply as a means of paying only £28·50 a week. It is, of course, open to an employer to pay any figure above that minimum, and, in my experience, many do so. The framework of YTS provides an opportunity of training in a combined programme lasting for up to two years, to ensure that when young people reach the age of 18 they have learnt many of the basic skills that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their working career. That is a good basis on which to build, and I hope that in the next few years the Training Commission will take steps to develop it into a three-year scheme. It would then compare favourably with the apprenticeship schemes that it is now replacing in

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many industries. It is a pity that only about 10 per cent. of trainees have formal employee status, as opposed to trainee status, and I hope that the commission will set an increase in that figure as one of its chief targets over the next few years.

My second caveat is that we must ensure that industry takes up its own responsibilities for training. One of the sadnesses that I faced in my career, until my election, was the low level of importance attached by some industries to training. They pay considerable lip service to it, but when it is time to come up with the goods they are found wanting. That is their loss and the loss of the country and the economy.

It is no use threatening to institute massive levies on every business so that the Government, through some different arm, can redistribute and dispense those levies as they see fit. Contrary to what we have hard, and no doubt will hear again, it just does not work. Seen from the grass roots, it is not a good use of resources. What we have to do is to encourage, persuade and cajole industry to recognise its own responsibilities for the development of its staff — to recognise that it must make a major investment, which is worth every penny. The most important investment that a company can make is in training its staff for the future.

As the number of people on the youth training scheme declines, the Government and the Training Commission will be tempted to begin to reduce the financial input. I know that it is the Government's policy to move the burden of training more to the employers. That is right, and is as it should be, but we must be careful to ensure that we do not go too fast too soon. We must make sure that the slack is gradually taken up by industry so that the developments that have been at the forefront of the advances in the youth training scheme in the last few years are not lost.

Even with inflation down to its present highly satisfactory level, the costs of training, especially in rural areas, where YTS trainees can be spread over many square miles, are considerable. Like everything else, the costs keep rising and I hope that my right hon. Friend will recognise the great cost and only gradually shift the burden to the employers. The burden should be shifted, but we must not do it too quickly, because if we do something will be lost in the middle.

My final caveat is that the development of YTS in the last few years has spawned a number of private training operators. I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has left the Chamber, and noted the cynical way in which he spoke about privatised training. One of the major factors in the success of the scheme has been the development of private training operators, often in competition with established colleges of further education. Many colleges succumbed to the temptation of simply tacking the YTS on to their existing courses of study. Over and over again that failed miserably, because the very ethos of YTS and its concepts of integrating work and training into a combined package and of appraisal and assessment were new and could not simply be tacked on to existing programmes.

Fortunately, professional trainers were there, as opposed to professional educators. They were able to take up the opportunities offered and in many cases they forced colleges of further education to recognise the great differences. The colleges now understand that if they are to run the youth training scheme and provide the level of service that young people deserve and require, a rethink is necessary. The results of that rethink are now beginning to show in the efforts of many of those traditional providers.

In the proper shifting of the burden that is bound to come, I urge my right hon. Friend to make sure that private providers are not put at risk. We have already heard expressed the great antipathy of the area manpower boards, the trade unions and the established institutional providers against the private sector. It would be a great shame if private sector competition were lost. The private sector has taken great steps towards moving the whole ethos and understanding of the skills of training forward into the future. It is not good enough for the Opposition to say that we should hark back to 1974 when the Manpower Services Commission was first developed. Today, everything to do with training is totally different, because training is a different ball game. The skill training profession has moved a whole street ahead of where it was in 1974. We must recognise that. There is no point in looking back, because in those days training did not do half the job that it professed to do.

I welcome the clauses in the Bill to ensure that every young person will have the opportunity to train and to make a responsible choice. They will be able to go into the planned programme of training and work provided by the Government, or choose to be unemployed. The social security changes that were given their Second Reading yesterday are welcome. It is estimated that about 6 per cent. of young people refuse YTS and that about 7 per cent. pull out of the scheme because they believe that it is doing them no good. That is about 40,000 people a year, and we must try to reduce that figure. If the young people who dither and wander, or who become sceptical or disenchanted with YTS, are to be persuaded that the scheme has something to offer, we must make sure that the developments that have taken place in the last four or five years continue at the same pace.

The opportunities are there and the importance of the YTS has not diminished even though, perhaps, its original purpose begins to fade. We must ensure that industry takes up the challenge of using YTS as the normal route for training and accepts the responsibility for gradually paying a greater share of the costs. We must ensure that young people will accept the concept of YTS as being in their best interests. We are already moving fast down those roads. If we can do those things we will have taken the first step towards ensuring that the successful, booming industries and businesses in constituencies such as mine are not continually faced with the problem of a shortage of skilled staff. Sadly, such shortages are even now beginning to hamper development. That is not in Britain's interests, and I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that the skills are available for the future.

7.26 pm

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), and to compliment him on his maiden speech. Interestingly, it is 15 years today since I made my maiden speech. During those 15 years I have taken part in may employment debates. The hon. Gentleman clearly brings to the House a wealth of experience that will be useful. He is certainly worth listening to when he speaks about training. I detected from his speech a certain rebelliousness that may manifest itself as the years go on. I warn him to look at what happened to his predecessor in his constituency. He had the courage to rebel and had his head chopped off for doing so.

Perhaps it is not inappropriate to mention in this debate that it has always amused and interested me to note that the Conservative Government have constantly said that they will take a step at a time in industrial relations. It intrigues me to know that the man who advocated the policy, planned it and carried it out was shifted from the job 18 months after he had started it. He has now been promoted to the House of Lords and many of us think that that is quite proper.

Like most employment Bills, this one is good in parts and poor in others. On Second Reading one has to decide how to vote. If this Bill consisted only of part I, I am certain that I and my hon. Friends would vote for it. We would certainly have sought to amend it during its passage. However, when we added to it part II and coupled to it our objection to clause 3 in part I—about which I shall say more shortly—we were persuaded to table the reasoned amendment that has not been selected. That means that we shall vote against the Second Reading of the Bill.

Before I deal with the clauses of the Bill, I must put on record my serious doubts about its timing. We are told that the Government's employment policy has proceeded step by step, but the man who advocated that policy did not last very long in the job. Bearing in mind the amount of employment legislation introduced by the Government since 1979 — much of which, incidentally, has been supported on these Benches—it would have been wise to give us a breathing space and a period of consolidation. That is what is now called for in respect of employment and industrial leglislation.

Like other employment Bills introduced by this Government and previous Labour Governments, this Bill does not lay the foundations for good, sound, industrial relations to see us through into the next century. I anticipated that the Minister would claim, as he has done, that, under this Government, the number of days lost through strikes has been considerably reduced. I gladly concede that point and welcome it, because the strike weapon is a crude weapon which must always be available, but should be used as a last resort rather than a first resort. The Government would be wrong to assume that the reduction in the number of days lost through strikes is due entirely to their employment policy because it has as much to do to do with their unemployment policy as with their employment policy. The Government have been content to have unemployment as a weapon in their armoury against the abuse of trade union power, which undoubtedly existed in the early 1970s, and to use it as a weapon in their economic policy. It is a pity that this Bill takes no steps to encourage industrial democracy and worker participation or to recognise the importance of good, modern trade unionism as practised, for example, by the EEPTU.

However, we must deal with the Bill as it is, and I shall start with part I. I welcome clauses 10 and 11 which remove the two remaining legal supports for the closed shop. I was surprised that the Minister allowed the Labour Front Bench to give the impression that the Bill made the closed shop illegal. It does not do so, but it removes immunity from people who work in a closed shop. It does not mean that there can no longer be a closed shop.

I have always opposed the closed shop. When the Employment Bill was debated in Committee in 1980, I moved that the closed shop should be made illegal and, on 23 April 1980, I voted for an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) to make the closed shop illegal. I welcome the Government's ultimate, although belated, conversion. I do not like the closed shop, and I have said so frequently since 1974. I said so in 1980 and I said so again in 1982, as reported in column 784 of the *Official Report* on 8 February in the debate on the Employment Bill.

The Bill does not make the closed shop illegal, but I welcome the removal of legal support for it. I wish that it dealt more specifically with the pre-entry closed shop, but it does not. Apparently, the only way round the problem is for a person to get a job and then resign from the union, but the union may refuse membership initially, thereby preventing him from getting the job. The Bill ought to have dealt with the pre-entry closed shop, but it does not and it is a poorer Bill for that. The Government cannot claim that they overlooked this point because, in the evidence submitted by my party in response to the Green Paper, we made it clear that the Green Paper did not deal with the pre-entry closed shop and, in our opinion, it should have done.

We welcome clauses 12 and 13. My late lamented colleague Mr. David Penhaligon attempted to deal with the principles now proposed in clause 12 during the passage of the Trade Union Act 1984, as column 81 of the *Official Report* for 26 March 1984 will show. If David is anywhere about now, he must be smiling and thinking, perhaps correctly, that what the Liberals said in 1984 others think and act on in 1987.

On 23 April 1985 the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) moved a motion during the alliance Supply day calling for postal ballots. There is a moral in that. That shows that the right hon. Gentleman is not always wrong and that he can be correct on occasion. More importantly, it demonstrates yet again that such a sensible proposition could and should have been introduced years ago in previous legislation. Before leaving my consideration of part I of the Bill, I want to refer to clause 3. We will certainly vote against the clause as the Bill proceeds in the House, assuming that the Bill receives its Second Reading this evening, as I am sure it will.

The SDP-Liberal alliance rejected the proposal in clause 3 in its written response to the Green Paper. People have been shouting for the evidence to be made available. They need only go to the Library and get the Library brief, as much of the evidence sent in response to the Government's proposals is contained in it. It is interesting that, in response to the Green Paper, the TUC, CBI, the Freedom Association, the British Institute of Management, the Industrial Society, the Engineering Employers Federation and, yes, even the Conservative trade unionists all opposed the suggestion made in clause 3. Despite all that advice, the Government have persisted in including the clause in the Bill.

Clause 3 states that a vote on whether to strike can be taken. However, if people do not want to strike, they should not worry because, whatever the result of the vote, they can please themselves and ignore it with total

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immunity. That is shaking the shilling. No one, certainly not I, is in favour of kangaroo courts. I have considerable doubts about union fines, sending people to Coventry and other action that some unions take. However, I would have thought that a union should at least have the right to expel a member or refuse continued membership to someone who, after a ballot has been taken, refuses to accept the ballot's result. I should have thought that that refusal of membership could be carried out bearing in mind clauses 10 and 11 about the closed shop. Therefore, as many Opposition Members have said, we must conclude that the clause displays the Government's hatred of the trade union movement.

I very much hope, for the sake of future industrial relations, that the Government will have the sense to withdraw or seriously amend clause 3 before the Bill has its Third Reading. The Minister must be aware that good industrial relations cannot be achieved by encouraging weak unions. My Liberal colleagues and I and, I understand, SDP Members are against clause 3. SDP Members, like us, believe in the majority decisions of a postal ballot being recognised by all members. I understand that tonight even the Sainsburyites also agree with that conclusion.

In addition to clause 3, we have serious reservations about part II of the Bill. If the Government were seriously to introduce a policy for all 16 to 18-year-olds—and I repeat "all"—we would be delighted. However, as it is, part II appears unfair and even unworkable in some parts of the country. It is very badly thought out. For example, the implementation of part II will differentiate between education and training. If a youngster stays on at school until he is 18, he will get nothing. If he takes Government training, he will be paid. If he refuses training, however inadequate, irrelevant or far from home, he will get nothing. If he attends a training course, quite irrespective of its quality or of his progress on it—that is a very material point when people are made to undertake a course that they do not voluntarily want to undertake—he will still get paid.

Part II is not well thought out. The Liberal party has taken some expert advice on this. Over the weekend I telephoned more than one person. Indeed, there are people who know a lot more about this than I do.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman should beware of the advice of the right hon. Member for Devonport.

Mr. Smith: I did say "expert advice", so the hon. Gentleman may assume that I did not telephone the right hon. Member for Devonport.

I have been told that, while the quality of available training has improved over the years—and we concede that—there are still some areas in the country where it is not good enough. We cannot forget or overlook the Government's record on training. A Conservative Government, for party political reasons, abolished some excellent industrial training boards. I opposed their abolition, as did my colleagues. Therefore, we are highly suspicious of and doubtful about the Government's basic attitude to training and especially the quality of training.

The present so-called training was motivated by a desire to occupy idle hands. That is not a bad thing. I can say that as the windows of my house were put in at midnight last night. It would not be a bad thing to occupy idle hands. However, when the training was first brought in, its object was to occupy idle hands and reduce the size of dole queues. I am not decrying that as an objective. However, I submit that that is the wrong basis and wrong motivation for a national training scheme to be successful.

There is no guarantee in the Bill about the quality of training. There is no guarantee about the choice of training course that can be followed. Indeed, some of my colleagues advise me that in their areas there is no choice of type of training. Is a young person to be compelled to leave home if no suitable training course is available in his area? Is he compelled to leave home to obtain payment?

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) made a valid point from the Opposition Front Bench. No doubt the Minister will respond to it in his reply. What about a young person who at the moment can resit O-levels and still obtain unemployment benefit? Where will he or she stand once the Bill reaches the statute book? The principle is riddled with holes. The real solution would be training and education, including industrially based training, with cash allowances for all. Until we have such a policy, we must reject a major section of the Bill. We reject it because of its lack of vision and because there is no guarantee of quality, choice or relevance of training.

I repeat that we welcome some parts of the Bill, However, there are other parts that we oppose. As I have said, we regret the Bill's failure to lay a long-term basis for good industrial relations based on a real partnership between employees and employers.

The Government had a wonderful opportunity in 1987 to start on the path of a modern approach to industrial relations. They have failed to take that path and, instead of bringing Britain's trade unions to better and more modern practices by persuasion, and by financial help and encouragement where necessary, they have chosen once again, particularly with clause 3, the path of confrontation. That is why we shall be voting against the Government and the Bill this evening. Their policy lacks vision. It is not properly thought out, and what is needed tonight is not Second Reading but second thoughts.

7.44 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): This is an interesting and significant debate tonight in a number of ways. First, it is significant for a truly exceptional maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). He showed a wide experience and knowledge of employment and training and spoke with authority about his constituency and its people. He is an eloquent and worthy successor to Francis Pym and I am sure that all hon. Members will look forward to his future contributions to our debates.

Secondly, the debate is significant for the courage of the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) in seeking to predict so early in the Session how the alliance will vote on this or any other Bill during the life of this Parliament. We welcome the support that he gave to parts of the Bill and, as always, his detailed comments strike well with his experience and knowledge. One does well to listen carefully to what the Liberals have to say because in many aspects of industrial relations law they have signposted a faster speed in many of the reforms that we have introduced.

But perhaps the debate is most significant of all for the contribution that took place in the opening moments when the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) intervened in the opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He is not in his seat now. He left the Chamber immediately after his rather noisy interruption. Indeed, he has a reputation for leaving platforms rather suddenly. The sadness of that interruption was his saying that he could see no connection between unemployment and restricive trade union practices. That casts a searchlight on the problems of Liverpool as they have developed over the years. There is the closest and most fundamental relationship between unemployment and restrictive trade union practices, which our legislation has sought to address.

This legislation, and that which has preceded it, arises from the serious abuses within the trade unions that must be addressed. That is not something we invented out of the blue. The step-by-step approach has been in response to specific abuses. Just as most of the main planks have now been laid in place, so now we are looking at the loopholes that have been opened up by some union leaders, or, in the case of some, the bolt-holes to which they have run to avoid facing re-election. It is now well time that those loopholes were closed and, as was presaged by the hon. Member for Rochdale, doubtless other steps will be taken in the future to address further abuses as they become apparent.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) spoke with some humour of the organisation of Conservative Trade Unionists. If he addresses seriously the lessons of the Labour party's election defeats in 1983 and 1987, he will laugh on the other side of his face. It is the Conservatives who have banked the votes of millions of trade unionists because it is our legislation that addresses their real concerns.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can the remainder of us in the Chamber continue with the debate on the Employment Bill while the hon. Gentleman gives us his world tour? This is an important Bill and the hon. Gentleman has yet to address it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have not heard anything out of order so far.

Mr. Batiste: It is interesting to observe already in this debate, as in every previous debate on trade union reform in the House, that the Labour party will do everything within its power to avoid progress simply because its policy is to return absolute power to union leaderships, to abuse a rank and file bound hand and foot. It is that progress of reform that the Bill is taking forward, however much as they fight against it.

I am sure that every Conservative Member welcomes interventions such as has just been made because, as they are broadcast to the country, rank and file trade union members know that that is the face of today's Labour party, just as it has been in the past.

The CTU has been referred to by two previous speakers. To put the record straight as vice-president of CTU, the Bill, as a package, is widely welcomed by all CTU members. It is equally true to say that there are some mixed feelings about parts of it, and they have been referred to. But let us make no mistake, the bulk of the Bill's proposals arise out of representations by CTU members as a result of their own experience on shop floors and in their unions and as a result of abuses of which they have first-hand experience. They strongly welcome the Government's wholehearted and comprehensive response to the complaints that they have put forward.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I have listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman about the CTU's submission on the Green Paper. He has said that there was universal support from members, with or without a secret ballot. Is he therefore repudiating the CTU's response in the Library, which makes it clear that it opposes the Government's proposals in clause 3?

Mr. Batiste: If the hon. Gentleman had listened, he would have heard me say that the package as a whole enjoys the CTU's support, but there are mixed feelings about certain aspects of it. *[Interruption.]* I shall deal with that in my time, not in the time given to me by the Opposition. It is fairly typical in the trade union movement, whenever a speaker is saying something unpopular, to shout them down.

The Bill addresses some specific and important abuses. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the problem that has been posed in recent times by the practice of some unions of not making their accounts readily available to the public. In the last year, I fear that I strained your patience——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not bring me into these matters.

Mr. Batiste: Let it suffice to say that I am most grateful to the Government whose legislation, in making accounts more readily available, has ensured that I shall never again have to strain your patience in referring to such matters.

The protection of union funds is another important factor. It cannot be right that trade unionists' money is available as an indemnity to their leaders who choose to break the law and expect to be bailed out from the consequences of their actions. That is another reform that is long overdue.

Another overdue reform is to ensure that all members of union executive committees face regular re-election. I wonder whether, in Committee, Labour Members will oppose the amendment that will ensure that Mr. Scargill once again faces election, or has he told them not to? We shall wait to see what the Labour party's attitude is in Committee, but I reckon most Conservative Members know what it will be. Labour Members will knuckle under and do what the militant union bosses tell them. As to secret postal ballots and the independent scrutiny of them, one must accept what the hon. Member for Rochdale said. The Liberal party has consistently argued for the postal ballot and it is right that it exists now. I am delighted that the Conservative party is in unison with the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Does my hon. Friend agree that this measure should have the support of Mr. Arthur Scargill? During the election in which he became the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, he said he would welcome election. It was only after he had been elected that he changed the rules so that he would not have to face re-election.

Mr. Batiste: I am delighted that the Government are now giving Mr. Scargill the opportunity to fulfil his dearest wish and face his members for re-election. It is a pity that that union, which has a long tradition of

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democracy, will face a ballot of its members only because of Government legislation. That highlights the fact that this legislation is being introduced in response to abuses.

I was interested in the comment of the hon. Member for Rochdale about the closed shop. He must be aware that in the view of Conservative Members a closed shop is an abuse. It does not fit well into a democratic society.

The hon. Member for Rochdale mentioned the pre-entry closed shop and the lack of protection against it in the Bill. In the eyes of Conservative Members, if we do not take steps now, such a measure will undoubtedly have to form the basis of a further step forward.

I was looking through the Bill for some mention of the political levy. When it was debated previously we were told that we should not press for an opting-in system instead of the opting-out one. We were told that unions were going to improve their procedures and people would be able to opt out more easily, but we hear that, in some unions, people find it increasingly difficult to opt out. Almost despairing, I turned to schedule 3 which is headed, "Minor and Consequential Amendments", and found reference to changes to the Wages Act 1986. I would be most grateful if the Minister, in summing up the debate, could say whether he considers that those minor and consequential amendments will improve the ability of union members effectively to opt out of the political levy, and whether this will provide some solution for the obstructions which, all too often, they face.

Mr. Allen: Is there any shred of evidence of obstruction about the political levy after the recent ballot?

Mr. Batiste: Many people in the CTU keep telling us that they find it difficult or impossible to opt out. That evidence really matters. It is not the bogus academic research that the Opposition continually quote.

I am sure that the Opposition are waiting for my next point, which relates to disciplining those who refuse to take part in strikes. Happily, in the Conservative party nobody is mandated to follow anyone else's point of view and nobody casts block votes for other people. The MORI poll quoted by the Secretary of State shows clearly that large numbers of trade unionists support the Bill, as I do. The ballot has considerable significance because it determines whether immunities from the normal laws of the land in the area of contract will apply.

Society is entitled to ensure that a damaging strike does not occur unless there has been a properly conducted ballot and the majority of the members of that union want a strike. However, it is quite another matter to say that everyone in that union must strike, whatever the conflicting interests. Why should people be forced to give up membership of a union that they value? Unions are not just about strikes. They are about a great deal more than that. Why should those who return early from a strike —having listened to an offer by the management but not having had a further ballot—be thrown out of their union? Fundamental issues of human rights are involved, so the Government are right to press ahead. The MORI poll will show that the majority of the population—and, indeed, the majority of trade unionists—will support the measure when it is explained properly. Most of all, we support the creation of the ombudsman. In so many other aspects of our society, he has given power to the individual to make his voice effectively heard. All too often, the large battalions grind down the individual. Therefore this is, perhaps, the most important single provision in the Bill.

Parties are judged by what they say and do. Our trade union policy, thus far, has brought us the support of large and growing numbers of trade unionists in election after election. That is not surprising because, as we have witnessed tonight, the Labour party sits on the side of intimidation and oppression. That is the Labour party's alternative, and was clearly put in the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. He said that one day a Labour Minister would stand at the Government Dispatch Box and sweep away this legislation. If trade unionists want to hear in one sentence what this debate is about, that is it. But they do not want this legislation swept aside because they know that it is a Tory Government with Tory legislation who have given them the rights that they deserve.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate got off to a late start and a large number of right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to take part. Brief speeches will reduce the number of disappointments.

8.2 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The uncomprehending complacency of the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), especially his suggestion that the present levels of unemployment have nothing to do with the Government's policies, would have tempted me to take issue had it not been for the appeal that you have just made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and of which I am very conscious.

The hon. Gentleman reminded us of the exchange between the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). I wonder whether a Government should have the unfettered right to decide the title of a Bill. If a document is headed "Employment Bill", one might be forgiven for thinking that it has something to do with creating employment. This Bill creates employment for no one other than an army of legal advisers. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) suggested an alternative title. My candidate for the most honest title would be Industrial Relations (Victorian Values) Bill.

I am sorry that I follow the hon. Member for Elmet because I had hoped to begin on a conciliatory note. I wanted to explore whether there was any common ground remaining in this Chamber. I believe that there remain some propositions on industrial relations that have not been questioned, certainly not since 1906 or even 1875. The most fundamental of those is that to treat terms of employment, rates of pay or working conditions as matters for contract negotiation between an employer and an individual employee would be wholly unrealistic because a contract presupposes two parties with roughly equal bargaining rights—something that has not obtained in this country since the industrial revolution.

To suggest to a school leaver in my constituency, to a man or woman in his or her 50s, or to a housewife seeking part-time employment that, in 1987, they are free individually to negotiate the terms of their employment with an employer would be like telling a mouse that it is free to negotiate with the cat. The only way that employees can achieve any bargaining position is by acting collectively. If that is disputed, I hope that the Government will say so honestly because then, at least, we will know where we stand.

But if that is accepted, the ability of employees to bargain even collectively depends, if all else fails, on having some collective sanctions—the right to take some form of individual action. If we destroy that right, they are as much at the mercy of their employers as were the serfs of the 13th century. That is why virtually every country that claims to be free expressly recognises the right to strike. In this country, for historical reasons, we have sought the same result by recognising immunities in trades disputes from the legal consequences which otherwise would have followed. Throughout this century, the debate has centred on the proper extent of those immunities.

I said that I wanted to be conciliatory, and I say that I accept that part of that debate has been about the rights of individuals who do not wish to take part in collective industrial action — although by definition, those individuals have seen fit to join a trade union. Of course their rights must be recognised, but they must be balanced against the rights of all the other individuals who, when it is appropriate, wish to avail themselves collectively of industrial action. That is what this debate is about.

When the Secretary of State introduced the Bill, he said that he was concerned to protect the rights of individuals. That is a commendable objective—I wish that he would do it more often, and I certainly do not wish to discourage him. Indeed, I wish that the Government would do it more often. I wish that they had been concerned with the rights of individuals when they introduced the new regulations on immigration. We were trying to persuade them to be concerned about the rights of individuals when we discussed the Social Security Bill last night. We only wish that they would be less selective in their concern. But we do not complain about their concern for the rights of individuals, provided that the rights of individuals who do not want to take part in industrial action are balanced against the rights of those who think otherwise and who will, by definition, be the majority.

All the arguments over the years about scab labour, the extent of the right to picket and so on have arisen because everyone knows that a strike can be busted if it is not a collective strike and if there are enough people who will not join it. So even when the majority has taken a decision, that decision can be made ineffective. Even majorities have rights, and I did not think that the Opposition would have to remind the Government of that. I remember that, in Standing Committee on the 1982 Employment Act, we tried to point out to the Government that the ballot was not a universal panacea for every problem. They did not agree; they thought that majority rights were the last word on the subject. Of course, we were talking then about majority approval for the closed shop, and I agree with the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) that we are now talking not about abolishing the closed shop — only about making it wholly ineffective. That is a distinction without a difference.

Clauses 10 and 11 would be my candidate for the Booker prize, and I still venture to hope that they will be awarded the Nobel prize for literature. Those clauses provide that even if the Government's balloting procedure has been followed, and the majority is in favour of a closed shop, it still cannot be enforced. During the 1984 Trade Union Act, the Government applied their enthusiasm for the rights of the majority to industrial action and said that that should depend on the wishes of the majority. Again, the Government were not wholly consistent. They said that a strike could not begin without a vote, but one did not need a vote to end it. They rested their case on the rights of the majority and they prescribed in great detail how the ballots should be conducted. Unions which had been running ballots for years without any complaints had to change their procedures.

Now the Government are saying that they did not really mean what they said about the rights of the majority. Even if the majority vote to take industrial action, the minority can make it completely ineffective. That manifest unfairness has been apparent not only to the TUC and the Labour party but to the CBI, which said that that unfairness would undermine the balloting process, and the other organisations and societies that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent.

When considering whether the Government believe that the law should regulate industrial relations the list of inconsistencies becomes worse. Some employees are fortunate enough to have good relations with their employers. Since the Donovan commission, those who have attempted to consider this matter objectively have recommended improving the arrangements for resolving differences, and then the question of industrial action would rarely arise. I have some professional experience in these matters and I believe that such an improvement could be achieved if the Government wanted it. But some employees have genuine grievances, and the Government are creating situations that will lead to yet more grievances.

In the Local Government Bill, the Government are proposing to compel councils such as Sandwell council in my constituency to invite competitive tenders for public catering arrangements which everyone agrees are running perfectly well. I believe that the council will receive some low tenders, and they will come from companies which achieve their low costs by reducing the earnings of catering staff or by replacing them with people who feel compelled to work for platters. Those employees will have a genuine grievance.

We have always believed that there are two possible responses to such grievances. The first is for the Government to say, "We will ensure that the law is capable of redressing your grievance", and the other is for them to say, "This is not a matter for regulation by the law; it is better if the law stays out of it." That was the philosophy that the Government have adopted on self-regulation for the City; it was their view on wages councils and it was their view when they reduced the staff of the Health and Safety Executive. But the Government are not choosing either course. They are not saying, "The law will redress your grievance" or, "The law will stay out of it." They are saying, "The law will not redress your grievance, but if you take steps to redress it yourself in any other way the law will intervene to ensure that those steps are ineffective."

The Government want the law to intervene in the affairs of trade unions. The rights of the majority are not so vital after all, that union rules which have been approved by a majority should be enforced. Indeed, in the 1984 Act, and still more in this Bill, the Government are in flagrant breach of International Labour Organisation convention No. 87, which is a point that we shall develop in Committee.

[Mr. Peter Archer]

Now the Government are anxious to encourage any disaffected member — whatever his reason for being disaffected—to seek redress in the courts, and they are appointing a commissioner to encourage him. There will be no commissioner to help employees enforce their rights against bad employers; there will be no commissioner to help them cut through the morass of social security regulations when they are made redundant.

In his previous incarnations, I had to write to the Secretary of State on more than one occasion to complain that the staff at the DHSS office in my constituency were so desperately over-stretched that people were kept waiting for decisions and for their money, yet no resources are being given to solve that problem. The commissioner will simply be dedicated to disrupting the smooth working of the unions and frustrating the wishes of the majority.

Some of us have spent our political lives urging people to respect the law — even in places where it was not popular to do so. I believe that the vast majority of people want to respect the law. They want only to be assured that the law will respect them. The Government's proposals will ensure that they will see the law as intervening only to frustrate their attempts to redress their grievances.

The Bill has nothing to do with the rights of individuals. Those of us who care about the rights of individuals resent that principle being used as a wrapper to conceal what is in the package. The Bill relates to the Government's obsessive feud with the trade unions; it is not directed at any problems. We have not heard of any problems to which the proposals will relate. It is not a measure that has been asked for by employers. They want to get on with meeting their orders and most of them are not complaining about their work force. The Bill is a piece of pure class spite.

If all the officials who have been busily engaged on the Bill had been engaged in creating employment, the Secretary of State would have earned himself a better place in history.

8.15 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I consider it a pleasure and privilege to be able to make my maiden speech this evening. I apologise to the House for missing some of the opening remarks of the Secretary of State. I shall acquaint myself with them by reading *Hansard* tomorrow.

Many hon. Members knew Tom Normanton, who represented Cheadle for 17 years. I was very pleased—many hon. Members have expressed similar sentiments—when Tom was granted a knighthood. Tom was well liked in the House and in the constituency of Cheadle. He was a well-known figure, and when he walked about the constituency people would recognise him, which demonstrated the sort of following that he built up over those 17 years of dealing with constituents' problems. I am sure that our increased majority at the general election had a lot to do with his work over those 17 years, and I certainly do not underestimate the task that lies before me.

For hon. Members who do not know Cheadle, it is located in the north of England and is a very prosperous part of the country. It is proud of its historic links with Cheshire, although it currently resides in the county of Greater Manchester. I must point out to the House—hon. Members will have to decide for themselves the reason for this — that many of my constituents still regard Cheadle as being in Cheshire. They are keeping a watchful eye on the fact that Manchester's boundaries are close, and I make a plea that they stay exactly where they are. My constituents react with horror at the prospect of Manchester's boundaries moving further south.

Hon. Members may find it surprising that Cheadle had an agricultural past. It has developed tremendously, particularly as a residential area, and there are exciting economic developments ahead. Cheadle gives the lie to the generally held view that the north is an industrial and commercial desert. It does a grave injustice to the problems of the north to draw a line across the country and say that below that line everything is all right, but above it everything is wrong. That often happens, yet if any hon. Member visits Cheadle he will see that it is a prosperous part of the north of England. I know that Cheadle has its fair share of entrepreneurs, because for 20 years I worked in sales and marketing in the export and home markets and I built up many contacts in the Cheadle area.

It is my intention, if I have the chance to do so, to draw attention not only to the problems that the north faces—we must draw attention to them—but to its successes. It is important that people know that success can happen there. Otherwise, how on earth will we attract all the people whom we need to avail themselves of the advantages that await them in the north? People must go to Cheadle and have a look.

Although Cheadle is a prosperous constituency, it recognises that other parts of the north and south do not share that prosperity. I recently appealed for professional personnel managers to come forward and offer to link their services with the YTS scheme to help to train youngsters, particularly the long-term unemployed, who do not have skills that relate directly to their employment. My commercial experience has shown that young people are quite capable of doing a job. They have the necessary skills, but they do not always have the ability to communicate them when they go for job interviews. Twenty people immediately stepped forward to offer their services free of charge to those who were less fortunate than themselves. That says a lot about my constituency. It is one of the reasons why I am proud to represent it.

At the last general election, well over 50 per cent. of Cheadle electors voted Conservativee. On the Cheadle doorsteps it was obvious to me that one of the Government's greatest successes was their industrial relations achievements and improvements. In large measure, they were brought about by a reform of trade union law. Trade unions belong to their members. They do not belong to anybody else — not to trade union leaders, or even to executive committees. They belong to individual trade union members.

Cheadle will welcome the latest Employment Bill as another step forward in the process of improving trade union democracy. I particularly welcome clause 6, which creates a duty on trade unions to have their acccounting records available for inspection, particularly by their members. It is right that trade union members should be able to avail themselves of that right.

Of further interest to me is clause 12, which extends to non-voting members of a union's principal executive committee, general secretary and president the requirement for regular elections. That must be the case. It is difficult to perceive how any hon. Member could object to that clause.

Like its predecessors, the Bill provides an extended democracy within the trade union movement. It is a natural progression in a legislative sphere that has shown great success, which has been recognised throughout the trade union movement, and particularly by the membership. Ten years ago we were told that it was not possible to bring such democracy to trade unions. We were told that the trade union leadership would not wear it, but we have seen great changes, and all of them have been to the benefit of trade union members. How different now are industrial relations and the freedoms that are available to trade union members.

Although I shall support the Bill, wiser and more experienced hon. Members have said that amendments and alterations can be considered in Committee. Therefore, I hope that we shall look carefully at all the clauses to ensure that we get things absolutely right and succeed again where we succeeded before.

If I must say anything to the Secretary of State and, indeed, to the Government, it is that the intent of the Bill is to strengthen the rights of individual union members. The most effective way of ensuring that is to outlaw the closed shop in all its forms.

I thank the House for listening to me so politely.

8.24 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his maiden speech. I note that one of his interests is industry. Coming from the north-east, I agree that success can happen in the north. Our complaint is that, all too often, the Government's activities have denied our ability to exploit our potential. However, the hon. Gentleman displayed a confidence and competence—if, unfortunately, a rather jaundiced view of the subject—that will stand him in good stead and enhance the quality of debate in the House. I am sure that he will represent his constituency and party in the way in which we would expect. I understand his feelings. It is barely two years since I made my maiden speech. Like the spokesman for the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), I expect to be here in 15 years, listening to other maiden speeches. However, in that time, I do not expect that I shall grow in stature in quite the same way as the hon. Member for Rochdale has done.

In his initial remarks the Secretary of State referred to the number of working days lost through strikes and the importance to industry of getting the number of strike days down. Yet the number of days lost because of injury and illness, as the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, is about five times the number of days lost through strikes. Indeed, every year, the number of days lost through unemployment totals a massive 700 million. If the right hon. Gentleman had paid as much attention to the problem of illness and accidents when he was Secretary of State for Social Services and to unemployment now that he is Secretary of State for Employment rather than the somewhat minor problem of strikes, he would have served the country rather better.

The first sentence of the Bill refers to new rights for trade union members. That sentence is so cynical that it is laughable. The Government, representing the interests of big business and profiteers, have about as much interest in working people as Adolf Hitler had in the rights of Jewish people. In every piece of employment legislation the Government have weakened working people's rights by preventing their organisations from being able efficiently to represent their interests. That is what the further measure is all about, and Conservative Members are quite aware of it.

If the measures in the Bill were applied to other organisations, societies or clubs, it would be impossible for such entities to function in the way in which they were intended to do by those who formed and control them. Indeed, it is interesting to note the Tory party's double standards in insisting that ballots and democratic accountability are essential to the running of trade unions, while its chairman is appointed out of the blue—I hope that hon. Members will pardon the pun—without any say whatsoever by members of the party or even its elected Members of Parliament.

Conservatives might hasten to say that how they choose to run their organisation is a matter for them. If that is true for the Tory party, it is equally true for other organisations, including the trade union movement. It is for trade union members to decide, as the hon. Member for Cheadle said. Trade union members have more opportunity than Tory party members have to influence and change the administration of their organisation.

The Bill is based on the Government's Green Paper, entitled "Trade Unions and Their Members", which opens with a statement about the Government's achievements in limiting trade union activities. However, the Green Paper does not detail—it is conspicuous in not doing so—what the Government will have achieved by limiting and reducing the rights that working people have enjoyed. The result will be a serious worsening of the right to pursue unfair dismissal claims, taking young people out of the limited protection of wages councils and forcing them to undercut adults for low-paid jobs, and a worsening of the maternity rights of pregnant women by denying them the right to return to work in their old jobs and by generally making the return to work provisions more complex.

The Government propose to pursue further achievements. One of the achievements of the Employment Act 1982 was to give employers the right to sack striking employees and selectively to rehire. The same Tory party that introduced that legislation proposes in the Bill that workers need protection against that possibility and should therefore be able, first, to insist that a legal ballot be held before industrial action is taken, and, secondly, to ignore the result of the ballot if it is in favour of action, but again have legal protection against discipline by the union for defying the result. That is turning democracy on its head. It is nonsense, hypocrisy and a recipe for bitterness and recrimination.

Conservative Members had a majority at the time of the 1982 Act. Does that mean that those who did not vote Conservative at the last election need not obey laws passed by the Government? That is exactly the same principle as the Government propose in the Bill. No Government or law can ever make people respect one another, co-operate with one another, or work with one another if they do not support one another in hard times as well as in good times. That is a fact of life, and nothing in the Bill can change that. I have no doubt that the Government will be forced to back down from those anti-democratic proposals when the Bill reaches the Committee stage.

The Bill aims to weaken the unions and to strengthen the ability of individuals to wreck the unions. There are individuals who would relish the opportunity to do that in furtherance of their own selfish ends and political

[Mr. David Clelland]

prejudices; people such as Mrs. Irene McGibbon, who came to prominence during the miners' strike when she organised the "miners back to work" movement. Both she and her husband were paid-up members of the Tory party. She was a Tory local government candidate in 1983 and received a standing ovation at the 1984 Tory party conference. [HON. MEMBERS: "So what?"] I am explaining the motives of some of those individuals who are supposed to benefit. Arthur Dungate received £10,000 in a case against Hounslow council over a closed shop agreement. He was an active member of the Right-wing Freedom Association. There was also Joanna Harris, who took Sandwell to court over its closed shop and was rewarded with a candlelit dinner with the Prime Minister. We are told that those and others are the poor innocents whose interests the Bill will protect.

The Bill is intended to deny rights and freedoms to millions by curtailing the effectiveness of the organisations that were formed to protect their interests, rights and freedoms that are recognised in most civilised countries but which the Secretary of State said today were extraordinary. In Spain the right to take industrial action is protected in its constitution. In France, unlike in Britain, workers cannot be dismissed while they are on strike. In Italy, similarly, there can be no dismissal during a dispute. In Greece and Portugal it is illegal for an employer to substitute employees during a strike, unlike in Tory Britain, where workers such as those at HFW Plastics in my constituency were sacked and replaced for standing up for their rights and dignity.

HFW Plastics knew very well how to use the Tory legislation. Its work force had agreed to a wages standstill for two years to help it out. It promised improvements when the work position improved. When it failed to live up to that promise, the workers — mostly young men and women on low pay — decided that they no longer felt obliged to work extra hours. They stopped working overtime—after a ballot, I might add—in the hope that that would encourage the employer to negotiate. They were then threatened individually by letter and told to promise in writing to, as the employer put it, "work normally". Most were intimidated and did sign, but a few stood up for their right to work only contracted hours. They were sacked for their trouble and that was more than the majority could take, so they went out on strike in support of their sacked colleagues.

The employer used the powers under the 1982 Act and replaced them all with young people desperate for work in that area of high unemployment and little job prospects, at a rate of pay considerably below the already low rate of pay of the sacked workers. The new work force was bussed into the factory every morning under heavy police protection. After many months of bitter confrontation, the workers lost their fight. That is the freedom that the Government seek to strengthen further in the Bill—the freedom of employers such as HFW Plastics to exploit people and play off one section of a desperate community against another. For people who have to go out to work that is not freedom. That is an erosion of freedom, and the Bill seeks to continue that erosion.

The Green Paper states:

> "The right of the individual to choose to go to work, despite a call to take industrial action, is an essential freedom."

What about the rights of the 3 million or more who are out of work? Is it not an essential freedom that they be allowed to work, or is that freedom essential only when they are taking the job of someone who is perhaps fighting to improve the conditions of his job, not only for himself, but for others?

Who supports the essential freedom that the Green Paper talks about? It appears that no one other than the Government approves of the inclusion of that essential freedom in the legislation. Against the proposed right to go to work despite a ballot to strike is the Institute of Personnel Management, the TUC, as one might expect, the CBI, the British Institute of Management, the Industrial Society, the Engineering Employers Federation and even the Conservative Trade Unionists and the Freedom Association. It is a measure of the extremism of the Government that they are taking this action and including this measure despite the opposition of so many powerful organisations. It is important that all those organisations recognise the danger to industrial relations that these measures pose. They are a recipe for industrial chaos. Many of those powerful organisations are experts in industrial relations and they know that, but this arrogant, power-mad Government are going blindly on despite their advice.

There are all the other measures that have been referred to by my right hon. and hon. Friends. One proposal is to give the Secretary of State the power to appoint a Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, who would be able to assist a trade union member contemplating or taking legal action against a union, and even pay the legal costs involved. Only recently a constituent attended my advice service to ask about legal aid. Her teenage handicapped son had been found dead in bed at a handicapped home at which he was staying. Despite assurances about his death by the authorities responsible for the home, she wanted an inquiry into the circumstances of her son's death. That death certainly left questions unanswered. She was told that she did not qualify for legal aid to pursue the case even though she did not have the money to finance her own inquiry. The reason for the refusal was that the amount of compensation involved did not warrant legal aid. In our popular capitalist society, apparently her son was worth only £60. That is only one example of thousands where people have been unable to get justice or peace of mind because they do not have the money.

Such is the determination of the Tory party to do all that it can to eliminate its political opponents that it ignores the pleas for help from such people, yet it spends taxpayers' money on enabling the further undermining of trade unions by politically motivated individuals such as those that I described earlier.

Apart from those direct attacks on the unions, there are also proposals to impose almost impossible and extremely costly administrative burdens. Under the Bill, that some member who will be able to defy the express wishes of hundreds or thousands of his or her colleagues will also be empowered to inspect the accounting records, audited or otherwise, of the union. Unions will have a duty to keep such records available for inspection by any member, who may be accompanied by an accountant.

Which large organisation could possibly function under such a legal duty? Even the CBI, in its response to the Green Paper, recognised the administrative nightmare that that could be. The Government apparently disagree. If that is such a good idea, why not impose the same duty on other organisations? After all, there is no obligation on the part of companies to give shareholders the same sort of detailed information as it is proposed unions should give.

Provision is also made to facilitate the selfish by obliging employers who deduct union dues from pay to stop making those deductions if a member indicates his or her intention to resign from the union. There is no duty on the member or the employer to inform the union of that resignation. The union will have the administrative burden of tracing individual resignations from among thousands of members in order to inform officials, correct records and so on. In spite of that, the unions will be obliged by other parts of the Bill to keep records constantly up to date in order to facilitate compulsory postal ballots.

The Government intend to threaten individual officers of the union — full-time, paid employees — by denying them the support of their employer if they are caught up in legal proceedings as a result of doing their job. I did not notice the Secretary of State for the Environment volunteering to pay his own legal costs on the numerous occasions on which he ended up in court because of his lawlessness. However, it is to be different for trade union employees.

Most people, even those who would argue for the right of an individual not to belong to a trade union even though all his or her workmates are members, would probably agree that those who do not wish to be part of the organisation cannot, in fairness, insist on benefiting from the activities of the organisation, particularly if they positively oppose its activities. Yet clause 10 proposes that non-union members should not be treated less favourably than members. Those who are paying their dues and supporting the union will pass on any benefits in terms of improved conditions or remuneration to those would-be leeches, who already have a larger take-home pay because they do not pay union dues.

The Government propose to outlaw the closed shop. What for? How big is the so-called problem of people being allegedly intimidated into union membership? The Green Paper states that since August 1980—seven years —there have been only sixty complaints of dismissal for non-union membership. Thirty of those cases were settled by conciliation. The Government hope to encourage resignations from unions because, in the words of the Green Paper, on which the Bill is based:

> "Further restrictions on the closed shop would provide greater flexibility in the labour market and increased freedom of choice for employers when recruiting."

Working people who might be tempted to save their union dues because they think that they are all right or those who might not be in unions and wonder why it should be necessary, should ponder those words carefully. Therein lies the whole philosophy of the Tory party in relation to working people. They are items to be traded on the market; to be played off one against another; to be used and discarded at the will of the employers and in the interests of profit. That is what the Bill is all about and the Government may inadvertently have done working people a big favour by alerting them to the real nature of Tory freedoms.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is not much time left. I repeat my plea for brevity, please.

8.44 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) on his excellent and interesting maiden speech. Making one's first speech in the Chamber is always an unnerving experience, but I think that we would all agree that he acquitted himself with distinction. We look forward to further contributions and frequent participation in debates in the future. It is interesting to compare my hon. Friend's maiden speech, which was so constructive, with the destructive speech of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He not only refused to say what the Labour party would do on trade union matters if it was in office, but spent the whole time in destructive discussion rather than in being constructive, which is what we would have hoped.

I regret the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). It was an interesting and entertaining speech and it was certainly to the fore, but he was the poodle of the trade union barons and the trade unions when he was the Secretary of State for Employment. We must never forget that.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the Bill. It is a relatively short measure but it is of considerable significance. I support it and the general philosophy behind the Government's approach to a step-by-step reform of trade union legislation, which has been so successful to date. I want to confine my comments to a brief discussion of four of the provisions in the Bill: postal ballots, the commissioner, the closed shop and the Training Commission.

During the last Parliament I served on the Standing Committee which considered the Bill that eventually became the Trade Union Act 1984. We had many lengthy debates in Committee and in the House on the method of the postal ballot. One view expressed forcefully was that the workplace ballot was the most effective means of obtaining the view of union members and that a postal ballot would be ineffective because members would receive their ballot papers at home, place them behind the clock on the mantelpiece and never get round to completing and returning them. That is a quaint view of modern trade unionism and one that needed reform. We are looking at the reform proposal today in order to change the method of balloting to a postal ballot. That will be much more effective than ballots conducted in the workplace.

There was another view debated at great length and that is the one we have heard from the Opposition this evening. It is the old Labour party idea that the old system is the correct one where the views of union leaders and shop stewards are paramount and the membership is ignored and is expected to toe the line. Apart from the——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Evennett: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. Opposition Members have spent so long in diatribes against the Bill that those of us who have sat here for many hours have only a short time in which to make our points.

I welcome the fact that postal ballots are now to be instituted. I am pleased to see that the Bill requires ballots on political funds and for the election of senior union officers and executive members to be conducted by post. Secret postal ballots must be the order of the day. A fully

[Mr. Evennett]

postal method of elections and independent scrutiny will enhance the democracy within the trade union movement. It is no good for the Opposition to state that they believe in democracy within the trade unions but thwart every proposal to increase democracy within the trade union movement and give the results of the ballots greater legitimacy.

We all share the view that every union exists to serve its members and the members of every union should have the right to exercise control over that union. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Individuals often find themselves in direct conflict with their union in which the individual is isolated and poorly equipped to fight against the financial, legal and administrative resources of the union. Several constituents have raised that problem with me. I hasten to state that they do not always share my political persuasion. They have a genuine concern and grievance with their union. They look to the Government to change the law so that they can obtain redress for their problems. Although individual union members have been provided with legal remedies against the worst excesses of union misbehaviour, often the aggrieved individuals cannot pursue those remedies because they are unable to challenge the union on equal terms.

Unions are powerful bodies. To an individual member seeking to take them on, they appear to have limitless resources. Individual union members need help and protection from an appropriate quarter if they are to fight effectively for their rights. Therefore, I am pleased that the Bill provides for the appointment of a Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members. Previous employment legislation has attempted to redress the balance so that unions are the servants of their members rather than their masters. Unions are now required to conduct proper elections and to ballot their members before taking industrial action or operating a political fund with their money.

The changes have blown the wind of democracy through union practices and made unions more accountable and responsive to their members. The reforms have been welcomed by the vast majority of trade union members and have attracted widespread support. If a union fails to obey the requirements of the law in dealing with its members, those members must be able to challenge it. Because of the nature of the union's behaviour, that challenge will necessarily be a legal one. There can be few people who relish the thought of litigation and to the individual the idea of taking a powerful body to the law must be unnerving. That individual needs advice, support and perhaps representation and I hope that the commissioner will be able to offer that help to union members.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evennett: No. I am sorry, but I have not time.

It is always difficult to debate the closed shop. I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) when he says that the closed shop provision in the Bill perhaps does not go far enough. I hope that we shall be able to debate other measures in Committee to take the matter further.

All Conservative Members, I believe, oppose in principle the idea of a closed shop because it represents a denial of the individual's freedom of choice. It is wrong that anybody should be compelled to join a union against his wishes, and yet, until the passage of recent legislation, that was exactly what was happening. Only union members were employed and the person who failed to join a union would be dismissed.

Thankfully, the worst excesses of the closed shop have been removed by provisions of the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982. Cases of workers being dismissed for non-membership of a union are becoming more rare. However, regrettably, the unacceptable practices of the closed shop have not been completely eradicated.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evennett: I am sorry, but I cannot. I have no time.

Some trade union members still face difficulties at work. They face harassment, discrimination and abuse simply because they wish to exercise their free will and not become union members. I cite the case of one of my constituents who has never been, or wished to be, a union member. In the recent past his firm was taken over by another firm which operates a closed shop. Since then, he has been harassed constantly at work because of his views. His employer is unwilling or unable to prevent such abuse. As a consequence, his health has deteriorated, largely because of stress and worry. The only thing saving him from being forced out of his job is that he will shortly reach retirement age. A hard-working man with strong principles has suffered considerably and unfairly and that cannot be right in this day and age.

I have been unable to consider all of the points that I wished to raise because of the time factor, but I must conclude by saying that we have heard a lot of artificial opposition from Opposition Members. Conservative Members are determined to reform where that is necessary in the best interests of individual union members and of the future of the country. The proposals are not draconian or oppressive, as Opposition Members wail. They merely continue the programme of step-by-step reform that has been so popular among trade union members and so successful in dealing with the abuse of the power that the unions have exercised.

The broad outline of the Bill should be welcomed and supported. I hope that we shall have much more debate in Committee so that at the end of the day we shall get another Employment Bill on the statute book in the interests of trade union members.

8.45 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): With this nasty and unnecessary Bill the Government are behaving like a dog returning to its vomit. No one can claim that the country's problems — the lack of investment and training or the crash on the stock exchange — are the fault of the unions or that the unions are too powerful in relation to the employers. At a time when rampant fraud and crime in the City are to be dealt with by self-regulation, the Government, motivated by malevolence, spite and ideological dogma, are introducing yet another anti-trade union Bill — the fourth in eight years — to entangle and ensnare the trade unions in even more restrictive and oppressive legislation.

The Government should spare us the cant about protecting the rights of individual workers and employees, given their shameful record of reducing employment rights. They have abolished the fair wages resolution in schedule 11 to the Employment Protection Act 1975. They have restricted the role of the wages councils in guaranteeing minimum terms and conditions for workers in low-paid and poorly organised industries. They have raised the qualifying period for unfair dismissal complaints. They have made things more difficult for workers at industrial tribunals. They have reduced maternity rights for women and advance notification of redundancies. As a result of the Government's reduction of the scope and effectiveness of statutory employment rights, British workers have fewer rights than those of any other west European country. At a time of mass unemployment that worsens the imbalance of power between the worker and his or her employer.

It is against that background that we must consider the one-sided and hostile nature of the Government's attitude to the trade unions as displayed in the Bill. It is pathetic that the Secretary of State should play with words such as democracy. If the Government believed in democracy, they should have started with a postal ballot of members for the post of chairman of the Conservative party. But we know that that was decided by an electoral college of one. Everything to do with the Conservative party is decided by that autocratic one. Hence the servility, sycophancy and toadying on the Government Front Bench. The Government should be the last to talk about democracy.

Trade unions live by ballots. They hold them every day on a myriad of issues. For all their faults, they are probably the most democratic organisations in Britain. They are manifestly more democratic than most companies. They are more democratic than universities, the Jockey club or the Conservative party. Few Conservative Members have any experience of union life. When they discuss union matters they enter a fantasy land, a mythical world of their own, which is a parody of reality. Trade unions were invented in this country. They are native to it. They are not the alien enemy within, and any sensible Government would treat them as partners.

Who wants the Bill? Do the employers or their organisations want it? Have they been demanding it? We all know that the answer to that is no. We all know that the CBI and the managers' organisations like the IPM and BIM—every reputable body in the field—have warned the Government that they are going over the top and that the measures will be counter-productive. They have pointed out that there is little point in ordering the unions to conduct ballots if they are then to be undermined by the legislation. The employers do not want the legislation, the unions do now want it, the practitioners concerned with industrial relations in the field do not want it. Why, then should the Government force it upon them regardless of their express wishes? It can only be out of ideological dogma and malice, because they think there is some political mileage in it, whatever damage it might cause to industrial relations.

Let us consider how the Government propose to undermine ballots. Clauses 10 and 11 deal with the closed shop. In some cases, closed shops have been traditional, as the lawyers in the Conservative party well know. Previously, the Government said that they could exist only if workers voted for them by unprecedented majorities of 80 per cent. or 85 per cent. of those participating—this from a Government who won the support of only 42·3 per cent. of those who voted at the general election.

In practice, where such ballots were held, they were uniformly successful. Do the Government propose to abide by the ballots and to respect the wishes expressed at the ballot box? Precisely the opposite. They propose to abolish the ballots. They say that there can be no closed shops whether the workers vote for them or not. That is hypocrisy. The only ballots which the Government favour are those which they think they will win. When reality intervenes and they lose, they abolish the ballots and rule by diktat instead. What perverted so-called democrats they are.

Clause 3 denies to unions the right to discipline their members if they work when the majority of members have voted to strike in a proper secret ballot. What is the point of having a ballot if it has no effect? Let us consider what is proposed. If the ballot goes against industrial action, it is binding and has to be abided by on pain of the union being savagely penalised if it takes action. But if the ballot goes in favour of industrial action, it is not binding, it has no validity and everyone can do what they like. No doubt the minority will be aided by a small army of police in riot gear. How disingenuous can one get? Why have ballots at all? This is precisely the worry of the CBI and the other employers' organisations, which have said that this undermines the principle of balloting. Why are the Government so pigheaded that they cannot listen to those at the sharp end of industry? The Bill is bound to be seen as a scabs' charter and as hopelessly one-sided.

Like other organisations, trade unions have rules. The rules are the contract between the members and the union. The rules should be honoured and should govern matters such as discipline. Do the Government say that unions should have no discipline or cohesion? No; that should happen only in this partial instance, because previous legislation has decreed that if union members picket other than at their place of work, or in too great numbers, the unions must take action to discipline their members or face legal action which could lead to swingeing fines or the sequestration of their funds. There was a recent example of this at Wapping. Sometimes the Government chatter about giving the unions back to their members, but moving in the sequestrators takes away the unions from their members. That can be done if a union does not discipline its members.

Clause 3 is an aid to strike-breaking. It gives rights to minorities and takes them away from majorities. There must be a balance of collective as well as individual rights. The tradition of democracy is that majority votes prevail. We accept that in every company boardroom, in every organisation in the land and in the House. That is the basis of democracy. There would be chaos if votes were meaningless and minorities went their separate ways, but that is the length to which the Government will go to help scabs to break strikes. Contrary to the impression that the Government are trying to create, we should appreciate the fact that disciplinary rules are used sparingly. In addition, those involved are already protected by the rules of natural justice which, if breached, are grounds for action against the union in the High Court.

The Government want to have their cake and eat it: requiring a secret ballot and then encouraging people not to abide by it when the majority is for industrial action. If the Government believed in equity in industrial relations, they would legislate for the right to strike, which does not exist now. That would mean that during a lawful strike the contract of employment would be suspended and

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could not be torn up by the employer, as happened at Wapping. Instead, the Government are interested only in stacking the cards against the unions and making it difficult to operate coherent trade unions.

There are other thorns to be driven into trade union flesh. Clause 6 would enable members to inspect the unions' accounts with a professional adviser. Unions should and do publish their accounts, but here again they are being singled out to meet standards which no comparable organisations must meet. Shareholders of companies do not have such rights, nor will the Government allow employees the right to company information. The Government have a dismal record on the freedom of information.

Clauses 18 and 19 contain the extraordinary proposal for a new commissioner for trade unions to assist and fund legal action by members against their trade unions. At present, there are few such complaints, so Government policy is to encourage, incite and provoke such complaints and to aid them with a publicity campaign and money. We already have a Certification Officer, who is quite adequate, so this commissioner will be a trade union harassment officer. As my right hon. and hon. Friends said, at a time when health and safety inspectors and wages inspectors, who are there to deal with employers who break the statutory provision, are being cut and at a time when law centres are being cut, money is being made available to single out and attack trade unions. What more graphic evidence could we have of the Government's animus against trade unions?

Other damaging causes include clauses 23, 24 and 25, which deal with the emasculation of the MSC. I advise hon. Members who are interested to read the report of the debate on 13 March 1973 when Maurice Macmillan set up the MSC. He said that it should be an organisation of the parties concerned—the employers, the unions, the local authorities and the education authorities, but not the Government. He said that that organisation should be independent of the Government, and that Government should have a "hands off" attitude. That is now to be destroyed. Its functions are to be taken back and centralised in the Department of Employment. The name of the organisation is to be changed. Six more employers' representatives are to serve in the organisation, and instead of being independent it will now become the tool and the handmaiden of the Government. It is to be neutered and undermined. That will largely be the end of the MSC as we have known it. Another backward and reprehensible step is making YTS financially compulsory.

The Secretary of State knows that the MSC is strongly opposed to making the YTS financially compulsory. He knows that the MSC gave evidence to the Select Committee opposing the withdrawal of benefit and the attempts to make it compulsory. The voluntary nature of YTS was designed in at its inception. People were to be attracted to it by the quality of the training and not by financial compulsion. The Secretary of State also knows that he has recently received a letter from the chairman of the MSC, Sir Bryan Nicholson, opposing what the Secretary of State is doing. However, what has happened to Sir Bryan Nicholson? He has been kicked out. The MSC does not have a chairman. Instead there is a stopgap, who is not a proper chairman. When a chairman is appointed, we shall have to have a look at him because he will be yet another person to have been appointed by an electoral college of one. He will be another stooge; a tool and a handmaiden of the Government, who seek to destroy the MSC as it was set up by Maurice Macmillan in 1973.

The Bill is vile and odious. The Government cannot tolerate any independent thought or any independent centre of power. We saw that when they abolished the Greater London council. If we believe in a democratic pluralist society, we should support free and independent trade unions, not only in Poland, but in Britain. If we believe that, we should throw out this Bill with contempt.

9.7 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I fear that you and I, Mr. Speaker, are suffering from the same complaint. I wish you well.

The Government's reform of trade unions has been an outstanding and popular success. The evidence for that assertion is clear. We now have the lowest level of strikes for 50 years. Many moderate trade union leaders recognise the need for reform. Trade union members have rejected those of their leaders whose ambition and arrogance have tempted them to assume powers to which they were not entitled and to ride roughshod over the wishes of those who elected them. All those facts—fewer strikes, greater responsibility, and power that is exercised by the previously powerless membership—are clear evidence of the welcome that is afforded to the Government's step-by-step approach as embodied in the Employment Act 1980, the Employment Act 1982, and the Trade Union Act 1984.

The Government have been so successful in combating the industrial anarchy of the past and revivifying the nation's economy because their reforms have been demonstrably fair and clearly non-partisan. The concept of fair play has always been one of this country's greatest strengths. The widespread welcome that has been given to the Government's trade union legislation by all shades of unbigoted political opinion would never have happened had not the proposals been so obviously equitable.

Past legislation has not been partisan because it has not meant a transfer of power back to the Government from the unions, but a shift of power within the unions away from the leadership back to the mass membership. In the main, the measures before us today continue this process of essential reform, but contained in the Bill is one proposal that runs contrary to the purpose and spirit of previous widely welcomed trade union reforms. It is contrary to both the purpose and spirit of those reforms as it fails the twin tests of enhancing the rights of the majority of trade union members and fails to be demonstrably fair. I refer to the proposal to permit a union member, without penalty, to ignore a democratically reached decision to strike, yet still retain all the benefits of union membership.

It has been suggested that that proposal is an extension of democracy, that it enhances a basic freedom and that it will lead to greater peace and harmony within the workplace. It will do none of those things.

I trust that we all agree on three basic premises: first, that membership of any organisation imposes duties as well as conferring benefits; secondly, that within any complex society there is no such principle as an absolute right; and thirdly, that in a free and democratic system it is for the good of all that decisions reached democratically are abided by universally. This proposal would permit a person to retain the privilege of union membership while evading the possible penalties. If we believe that a person should be unable to retain his employment after renouncing union membership, for any reason, including their wish not to strike, we should say so and take remedial action.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston) *rose*——

Mr. Sayeed: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I intend to speak for a short time so that other hon. Members may take part in the debate; otherwise I would give way.

If we believe that unions are still inadequately democratic, let us say so and act. However, let us not undermine democratic decision making. After all, we do not permit members of CND to withhold that proportion of their taxes that we spend on defence. We do not permit the people of this country to decide which laws they will or will not obey. Rather, we say that the privilege of membership of a fair and democratic society imposes obligations that must be met by all. Having determined that fact generally, we are wrong to undermine it specifically.

I believe that this measure will prolong rather than limit strike action. There is no doubt in my mind that some employers will be tempted to gamble that a gradual drift back to work will absolve them of the need to face the root cause of strike action.

I believe that this proposal will sour relations within the workplace. When those who take strike action return to work, we can imagine their feelings about those colleagues who will share in any benefits from that strike, but who have suffered none of the financial difficulties of that strike.

Democratically run trade unions, run for the benefit of their members, have a right and proper place in our society. They fulfil a necessary and valuable function. Hitherto the Government have been careful to enhance and entrench democracy in trade unions. Hitherto we have enacted legislation that is demonstrably fair. If we are to continue along that path, we should amend clause 3.

9.13 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I see that tonight I have something in common with the "Unemployment Minister"—I have a poppy on my coat. In fact, other hon. Members also are wearing poppies tonight.

While I have been listening to the debate I have looked at my poppy and I began to think back to what it really meant. It meant that a lot of people died and a lot of people went to war. Quite a few of those people who went to war were from the trade union movement of the 1930s —the era when the trade union movement began to strengthen. I ask the Secretary of State to remember that it was those same people who built up one of the best trade union movements in the world.

Some of them gave their lives fighting a fascist state that took trade union rights away from its people in Germany. The Secretary of State and the Tory Government should not go down the same path as Hitler. Taking freedoms away from people, especially working people, is a dangerous course.

Someone listening to Tory Members might think that trade unions are unpopular, but the results of a Gallup poll published last week showed that 71 per cent. of those interviewed thought that trade unions were a good thing. They were even more popular than the royal family. I hope that the Secretary of State takes that on board when he replies.

Clause 3 is nothing more than a scabs' charter. I worked down the pit for 27 years and I have been a union official for 20 years. I have always honoured agreements with managers but the managers have not always honoured agreements with us. We always had proper strike ballots in the miners' union. Two or three people, perhaps members of the Tory party, might have disagreed with the result and might have wanted to take the union to court, as happened during the miners' strike. We saw what happened to the National Union of Mineworkers. We saw how it was dragged through the courts under law after law and how the courts did it in every time they got a chance.

I hope that when the Bill is in Committee Tory Members will oppose some points in the clauses. It is a disgrace that such a Bill has been introduced. We have one of the finest trade unions in the land. Some hon. Members have referred to Arthur Scargill. They can call him what they like but he is the finest union leader we have had for decades. That same union leader was defending the working class and jobs. Thousands of miners have lost their jobs since the miners' strike.

There have been references to postal ballots. Tory Members have not had a ballot. When did they have a ballot for their leader? When did they have a ballot for the party chairman? When have doctors, lawyers and barristers had a ballot? Some hon. Members said that they were elected on a secret ballot; they may have been, but not on a secret postal ballot. If we can have secret postal ballots for unions, surely we can have them for local government elections and general elections as well.

Finally, let me mention the compulsory nature of the so-called YTS, in which young people are to be thrown into jobs because it is their only alternative to not being paid. It is a disgrace that the Government call that good training—dragging a youth by the scruff of his neck on to a scheme which he has no wish to join. It is deplorable and undemocratic. The Government are going down the wrong path, the path of undemocratic thinking; and I warn them that the trade union movement will not stand for it.

9.20 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Although the debate has not been as long as we should have liked, because of the earlier statements, it has been constructive and valuable, and at least a dozen hon. Members have had a chance to contribute.

I pay especial tribute to the two maiden speeches that have graced the debate. I had the pleasure of listening to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), who succeeded a distinguished Conservative Member. He was able to draw on his experience of training in the work that he did before his election, and I am sure that he will make many valuable contributions in the future. I was sorry that I was not present to hear the speech by the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day), but I understand that his was also a valuable contribution,. and I hope that that he too will continue to make such contributions.

Although the Secretary of State has referred to clause 29 of the Bill, I do not believe that any other hon. Members have done so. The right hon. Gentleman described the clause as giving civil servants the same

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relationship with their unions as other workers have with theirs. We shall discuss that in Committee, but it is fair to say now that the clause deems civil servants who may not have a contract of employment as having such a contract for the purposeses of certain clauses in the Bill, and of anti-trade union legislation generally. We shall want to pursue in Committee whether that means civil servants having the worst of all worlds.

Part II of the Bill, which I believe the Government decided to incorporate only a month or so ago, is of enormous significance. It seeks to implement the Government's new policies on training, and should therefore be taken in conjunction with clause 4 of the Social Security Bill which was debated yesterday. Let me make it clear again that the Opposition are utterly opposed to the policy of denying young people under the age of 18 their entitlement to supplementary benefit, or income support, as it will be called. I could quote the Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), who spelled out clearly in the Committee debate on the Social Security Act 1986 that such a measure would amount to making YTS compulsory, and said that the Government rejected totally the idea of denying young people supplementary benefit.

The Secretary of State managed to raise a great cheer at the Conservative party conference when he attacked young people for pursuing a career filling up benefit forms. To many of us both inside and outside the House, that was a deeply offensive statement. Many hon. Members represent areas where there is youth unemployment on a deplorable scale—areas where, perhaps 10 or 20 years ago, only one or two people in a school class did not obtain a job when they left school, and where now only a handful of a class of 30 have any hope of obtaining a decent job. It is utterly untrue that young people do not want to work, or to take part in training schemes—if they are valuable and will enhance their chances of obtaining a job. There is no evidence from research commissioned by the Department of Employment or anyone else to suggest other than that young people desperately want to work. If they are given the chance and given decent wages, they will do so. It certainly ill becomes any hon. Member to make such attacks on any of our young people.

We are opposed to this measure on the fundamental issue of social justice, but we also oppose it because of the effect that it will have on the training schemes. Hon. Members must recognise that it will not be conducive to more effective training. It will not lead to better arrangements in individual schemes if some young people are there because they have been compelled under the duress of being denied their benefit. Surely hon. Members recognise that the challenge should be to make these training schemes sufficiently attractive so that young people will want to go on them. By introducing this element of compulsion one removes that incentive. If the schemes enhance young people's chances of getting jobs, and if they can see that and get a decent allowance, they will enter them.

It is a mistake to create a new situation in which young people will be compelled, as the Minister for Health said in the previous Parliament, to enter these schemes rather than choose to take part in them in order to achieve better training. The House should be reminded that on every occasion when it has been asked the question the Manpower Services Commission has opposed this measure. I hope that the Minister of State will refer to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) in an interjection. There are many other ways in which young people can better themselves and improve their prospects of obtaining employment apart from participating in a youth training scheme. The 21-hour and 12-hour rules are important and I hope that the Minister of State will answer that point, as the Secretary of State said he would.

Part II of the Bill seems to give enormous powers to the Secretary of State. In that sense, it is an autocratic measure and it seems as if the role of the new training commission will be very different—perhaps more of an advisory role—from the role of responsibility that presently resides in the Manpower Services Commission. We are deeply concerned about clause 25 which gives the Secretary of State power to designate people on these schemes as either being employed or unemployed. It seems likely that this clause will be used to deny trainees their employment status and many of the rights that go with that status.

The Secretary of State spoke about the Government's decision to take the jobcentres back into the Department of Employment and to combine that function in the local unemployment benefit offices. We suspect that this is another measure aimed at harassing people to take part in these schemes. It is a way of trying to make more effective the means whereby civil servants can prevent people from getting benefit on the grounds that they are refusing a job, perhaps because it is totally unsuited to them or because the wages are much lower than those which they previously obtained or, indeed, that they refused to accept a training place. Instead of improving the quality of training and attracting people to it on that basis, the whole emphasis of the Government is to erect an administrative structure as a means of harassing the unemployed and coercing them into accepting places on these Government schemes.

The most important part of the Bill, and the part that has rightly taken up most of the time of hon. Members who have spoken, is part I, which seeks to implement the Government's proposals on the trade unions, most of which were contained in the Green Paper. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said in opening this debate, the genesis of these trade union legislative measures goes back to last autumn, if not the summer, when the Government took a major strategic decision to fight the forthcoming election not on the basis of their record but on the basis of new policies that would seek to carry to even further extremes the ones that they enacted during that Parliament and the Parliament before. At the same time, the Government decided that there were still votes to be had from bashing the trade unions. That was the motivation for the Green Paper.

Many of us hoped that, when the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) took up office as Secretary of State for Employment, he might have provided an opportunity for the Government to reconsider the measures contained in the Green Paper, inserted largely for electoral purposes. Sadly, that has not been the case and we are saddled with a Bill which seeks to implement these proposals. Hon. Members must surely recognise how extreme these measures are. We support the views of the Trades Union Congress. We recognise that hon. Members do not often pay much attention to the TUC's views on these matters, but when organisations such as the CBI and the Engineering Employers Federation are united in their opposition to some of the key proposals in the Bill, hon. Members must ask themselves what is the purpose of these proposals. Surely hon. Members will think again when professional organisations such as the Institute of Personnel Management, the British Institute of Management and the Industrial Society, to name only three, are united in their opposition to many of the proposals in the Bill in respect of trade unions. Hon. Members may ask themselves why such organisations as the CBI and the EEF oppose some of the key proposals in the Bill. Surprising as it may seem, some of them, as employers' organisations, oppose the measures because of their basic unfairness to the trade unions. That shows just how extreme these proposals are.

I wish to take two examples which have not been developed at great length in the debate because, understandably, most hon. Members have concentrated on the outrage contained in clause 3. First, I shall take the proposal which requires all officials who attend meetings of trade union executives to be directly elected. This is an outrageous interference in the affairs of our trade unions. As the Green Paper stated in 1983, it is reasonable for a general secretary to be appointed by a trade union not on the basis of a ballot, but on the basis of his competence and effectiveness in performing his job. It could be argued that executives believe that they are more likely to find the right person through appointment rather than direct election.

Trade unions have different approaches to this matter. Some, such as the AEU, elect virtually all their officials, some appoint them, and others have a mixed arrangement whereby some senior officials are elected and others are not. There is a good case for a system whereby employees elect their executive, who are lay members accountable to the membership, and appoint their senior officials. There is then a very clear relationship — the officials are the servants of the democratically elected executive. If we insist on the direct election of some of those officials, they acquire a different status and therefore a different relationship with the executive. I do not claim that that formula of appointed officials and elected executives is necessarily the better one, but the case for that system is sufficiently strong for it to be outrageous that the Government are legislating to make such an arrangement illegal.

The second example I wish to quote is that of the balloting arrangement. We could spend the whole night quoting Ministers' statements, uttered in the last Parliament, which contradict these proposals.

Mr. Edward Leigh: They were wrong.

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman says that Ministers were wrong. He is wrong, but he is entitled to argue that point because, as he reminded us this evening, he was one of the few Tory rebels who supported postal ballots in the last Parliament. During the Committee stage of the Trade Union Bill, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) spelt out at great length the case for workplace ballots and why they should not be disallowed. The most recent Green Paper states:

> "There is some evidence from the political fund review ballots to suggest a greater percentage poll in a ballot held at a workplace than by post."

Some evidence. That is an understatment, and anyone who studies the data knows perfectly well that with a workplace ballot, in general there is a much higher percentage poll than with a postal ballot. There are good reasons why that happens. Some of the reasons were spelt out by the Minister of State before the election. In passing, I should state that some workers do not want to give their home addresses. Postal lists are difficult to maintain, especially when there is a high turnover of young people, and that problem arises in trade unions with a large number of young people moving from address to address. Even with the most efficient system in the world, a high percentage poll is difficult to achieve.

What is the objective test of a good balloting arrangement? Surely the only objective test lies in the percentage poll that it achieves.

Mr. Leigh: Democracy.

Mr. Strang: That is democracy. The higher the percentage poll, the better the ballot.

The Government are legislating to make illegal those ballots that we know on average produce a higher poll. That is an outrageous and monstrous interference in the affairs of our trade unions. Hon. Members have referred to many other problems in the Bill. For example, they referred to the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members and the requirement that there should be different ballots at different working places and, of course, reference was made to the notorious clause 3.

The other reason why the employers' organisations are opposed to certain parts of the Bill is that they honestly believe that parts of the Bill will be inimical to good industrial relations. If I had the time, I would have liked to read out the important statement made by the Engineering Employers Federation. That statement spells out how clause 3 will lead to poorer industrial relations or undermine the role of trade union officials who play a constructive role in the relationship with employers. The statement spells out how the Bill will discredit the whole basis of the pre-strike ballot and almost certainly lead to more unofficial action.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) spelt out a few moments ago, the Government have systematically whittled away a whole range of working people's rights. They have eroded rights against unfair dismissal; they have eliminated many workers from the protection of the wages councils and have refused to give the wages councils the resources necessary to maintain minimum wages. They have also refused to give the Health and Safety Executive adequate resources. The erosion of workers' rights is one reason why the need for constructive and positive trade unionism in this country is greater now than it has ever been. Another reason for that stems from the growth of temporary, low-paid part-time work. To their credit, the trade unions are turning their attention to that to organise those workers and try to end or minimise the degree of exploitation to which they are subjected.

If anyone studies health and safety at work in this country since the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, they will see the crucial role that the trade unions have played in this area. In areas such as asbestos and the rubber industry, to take two well-known examples, the trade unions have played a major role in reducing hazards at work. I could describe the whole matter systematically, but time does not allow. However, that is not to say that the trade unions did it all themselves. The trade unions and workers have a vested interest in higher safety standards

[Mr. Strang]

at work. It is therefore natural that the trade unions should invariably be in the vanguard in seeking improved legislation and improved working practices to reduce the number of deaths and accidents at work. We stand four square behind the case for positive and constructive trade unionism in this country. That is why we deeply resent the measures in the Bill.

The Government and their predecessors have sought to suppress any democratic institutions which disagree with their approach to the way to deal with our problems. We have had the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan authorities. We have had the shackling of those local councils that are elected by turning local councillors into virtual puppets of the Government. We have had legislation to limit the extent to which local authorities can communicate with their electorates. Now, the trade unions, those great independent organisations which are fundamental to a plural society, are again to be subjected to further legislation designed to undermine them and weaken their contribution to society.

Throughout the debate, speaker after speaker from the Opposition Benches has spelt out the intensity of the Labour party's opposition to the Bill. Earlier this afternoon, in his public expenditure statement, the Chancellor revealed the scope that he had for increasing public spending or cutting taxation. Instead of taking the opportunity to provide additional resources to improve the quality of training in Britain, it is clear that the Training Commission will be forced to provide training places on the cheap and that most of the women and men who will enter the schemes will be paid at a lower rate than under the present community programme.

Instead of making training schemes more attractive and relevant for young people, they are to be coerced on to the schemes by denying them state benefit. Instead of listening to the views of the TUC, the CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation and the Institute of Personnel Management, the Government are going ahead with certain proposals in the Green Paper which all of them have rejected. Instead of providing a legal framework for constructive and positive trade unionism, we shall have another piece of vindictive anti-union legislation which can only damage industrial relations in Britain. It is for those reasons that the Opposition will vote against the Bill tonight.

9.41 pm

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): Let me start on a non-controversial note. It was a pleasure to hear the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). He paid a warm tribute to his predecessor, Francis Pym, who made a distinguished and individual contribution to the House. His successor clearly brings to the House great experience, particularly in training, and will, I am sure, continue to be listened to with care.

We also welcome the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day). His predecessor, Tom Normanton, was industrious here, in Cheadle and in Europe. After hearing his successor's speech, I am sure that the new hon. Member for Cheadle will be a worthy successor as a representative of the north-west.

None of the Bill's provisions will have come as a surprise to anyone who follows these matters. The Bill carries a step forward popular policies which have the approval of the electorate and which have worked for Britain's benefit.

I have given up some of my time to let some more hon. Members speak in the debate because it started late. I apologise in advance if I cannot cover everything, but I shall do my best to respond as fully as I can. For the same reason, I shall be reluctant to give way.

We have discussed training a lot, but nobody today has argued that it is not important. However, some Members have challenged the Government's chosen methods. The new Training Commission will reflect the fact that the training provided for employed and unemployed alike is about the skills required by employers. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East emphasised that employers retain the primary responsibility for the training of their employees and, in their own way, the Opposition appear to support that point.

When Opposition Members criticise training schemes as being Mickey Mouse schemes, time fillers and so on, they presumably mean that they are not sufficiently directed to employers' demands for skills — the real requirements of those who create the jobs— and that is the reason for the changes in the Training Commission.

There is not a new power in the Bill to pay training allowances, with the exception of the bridging allowance. Hon. Members have mentioned today and yesterday the Government's proposal—recommended by Beveridge in 1942 — to stop paying benefits to 16 and 17-year-olds who do not stay at school or college, take up a job or a guaranteed YTS place. The bridging allowance and the provision of the Social Security Bill for 16 and 17-year-olds should not be confused with clause 26 which applies to those over 18. The clause restates the power for benefit sanctions to be imposed on people who unreasonably refuse the offer of an approved training place. It brings the treatment of training in line with employment, but I emphasise that it is not a new power. The power exists under section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975. Therefore, there should be no confusion in the Liberal party, or in what used to be referred to as the alliance.

The Liberal amendment supports the industrial relations part of the Bill, although the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) was more choosy in his support. The amendment suggests that the House should decline to give the Bill a Second Reading because it

> "seeks to disqualify those who refuse to take part in an approved training scheme from receiving unemployment benefit."

As I explained, this is not a novelty. The withdrawal of benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds who refuse YTS is a novelty and is not in this Bill, but it was in yesterday's Bill. If Liberal Members are worried about it, they should have tabled an amendment to yesterday's Bill, although they voted against it. If, on the other hand, they are against the power affecting those over 18, they should have thought of that in 1975, or earlier.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) asked me to comment on the effect of yesterday's Bill on the so-called 21-hour rule under which someone has to be available for work and give up benefits and studying if offered a job. In future, 16 and 17-year-olds who have left school and not found a job are guaranteed a place on YTS. We consider that they should be treated no differently from other youngsters. Income support will continue for those who cannot take a YTS place because of physical handicap or family situation, but it is not intended as an educational maintenance grant.

Ms. Clare Short: The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that some youth training schemes are good and some are not so good. At present young people have the option of YTS, a job—if they are lucky—or supplementary benefit and studying for academic qualifications which lead to real jobs and skills. What the right hon. Gentleman said tonight means that the latter option is closed. He should admit it because poor YTS compared with City and Guilds, real skills and O and A-levels is not good enough. The Bill takes away that choice from industrious young people who want to increase their qualifications and life opportunities.

Mr. Cope: I have explained the position as clearly as I can. The hon. Lady knows that YTS leads increasingly to qualifications or a step towards qualifications.

Part I deals with industrial relations. We have heard the expected complaint that all this is union bashing, and that other countries' unions do not have such legislation. Indeed, we have heard the prediction that international opinion will condemn it. These assertions are well worn, but they are wrong. The claim that other countries do not have comparable legislation does not stand up to serious scrutiny. The people of this country want us to devise our own law and not to copy others. The fact is that a number of our major competitors, including France, West Germany and Italy, long ago rejected the closed shop as this Bill does and as other developed countries have done.

We have also heard tonight comparisons with company law. Some Opposition Members appear to think that it would be a good idea if trade union law was a little more comparable with company law. If that is what they really want, they should remember that company law involved Department of Trade and Industry inspectors, inquiries, penal clauses, massive fines and imprisonment, disqualification and compulsory winding-up. I would be interested to hear whether that is really the sort of law that the Opposition want for trade unions.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) made an entertaining speech, although it was marred by personal abuse of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Young. The right hon. Gentleman asked about the spending of taxpayers' money on a trade union commissioner, and contrasted it with spending on health and safety. In fact, expenditure on the commissioner is expected to be just over £1 million, while only today we have increased expenditure on health and safety at work of several times that amount. Indeed, we spend more than £100 million a year in that way.

The right hon. Gentleman's contribution had beguiling features and one almost forgot that he was the author of the closed shop legislation that was so tight that it led to this country being held to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. Under the Bill's proposals on the closed shop, no employer will be prevented from hiring someone who does not belong to a union, or to the right union. Similarly, there will be no immunity for any strike that is intended to pressurise an employer into treating someone less favourably because he does not belong to a union, or to the right union——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Cope: I am not giving way. I can summarise——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) was given a clear run by the House, and I ask for the same.

Under existing legislation——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Cope: No.

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not persist; he knows the rules.

Mr. Cope: Under existing legislation——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Cope: No, I will not give way. Under existing legislation no one can be——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Cope: Under existing legislation, no one can be fairly dismissed for being a member of a trade union. In future, no one can be fairly dismissed for not belonging——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell both Liverpool Members that they well know the rules of this place and that they must not persist if the Minister clearly is not giving way.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) appeared to have misunderstood clause 16. He thought that it would be necessary for a union to win both nationally and locally to obtain immunity for a strike. In fact, there is no proposal to change the law when a ballot on industrial action is confined to a single workplace or where it involves all the members of a union. In respect of a particular employer's work force, the clause comes into effect when two or more workplaces are being balloted and not all union members in the same occupational group or grade are being balloted. Where the ballot is selective in this way, separate workplace ballots will have to be held. That will prevent the votes of one workplace from being swamped by those of another.

Clauses 3 to 5, the so-called disciplinary clauses, have attracted much attention. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State promised that I would tell the House about the representations that we received following the Green Paper. Of the employers and employers' organisations that commented on the proposals, 10 were against and six were in favour. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) mentioned the closed shop provisions. On that point 13 employers or employers' organisations were in favour and two were against.

Much has been made of the CBI and its views. I shall remind the House of what one of its officials said in a letter to *The Times*. He said:

[Mr. Cope]

"Amongst our membership there was a strong recognition that an individual should be free to honour his contract of employment without fear of coercion from any source."

As the House is aware, I was a member of the silent service—the Whips' Office—which is the only group of MPs who consistently listen.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Cope: I was a member of the silent service, which is why I want my say now. I was a member of that office from April 1979 until this summer. As a result, almost the last speech that I made in the House concerned industrial relations law. In what proved to be the last weeks of the Labour Government—February 1979—I introduced a ten-minute Bill to check the abuse of picketing. I am glad to say that, with the vote of one Labour Member, I won the vote, although the Bill did not get anywhere.

We all remember how violent mass picketing was used — some have tried to use it since — to stop people working during strikes. With the overwhelming support of the country, I hope that all hon. Members believe that individuals should not be intimidated into striking against their will.

These clauses are part of the same protection of an individual's right to choose whether to strike, to work on or to return to work during a strike. The decision to strike is of the greatest importance and it can have many individual and collective consequences. Some hon. Members have said that they regard this provision as being undemocratic and that it might make unions less inclined to have strike ballots or individuals less inclined to vote, but I doubt it. A strike ballot will remain important to unions and individuals alike. The clause will make unions ensure that they have their members' support at all times, not only in the particular circumstances of a ballot.

We have been told that the provision will make the law unbalanced, yet it remedies an imbalance. The law already provides unions with the right to induce a strike and remain immune from the legal consequences that would otherwise follow, but it should also provide the individual with the right not to strike and remain immune from the consequences that the union may inflict. A man or woman should have the right to strike, the right to work on and the right to stick by his or her contract of employment, insofar as it lies within our power to guarantee that right. That is what the clause does, and it is right to do it.

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Cope: I went to the TUC conference at Blackpool and listened to the searching debates about the movement's future. I cannot predict what that future will be, but I know who will decide it—the members of the unions themselves.

The Bill strengthens the rights and influence of ordinary union members. It does things that they and the public want to be done. It draws on the best practice of unions to give them all a greater spur to put things right. Unions should welcome the Bill, and I hope that the House will also welcome it.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 335, Noes 233.

Division No. 39] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*

McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at this day's sitting the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Employment Bill [Money]

Queen's recommendation having been signified — Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Employment Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable by the Secretary of State to or in respect of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members; and

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided. —*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The money resolution should not go through on the nod. We should point out that the £3 million that the Bill will cost could be put to much more important uses. For example— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not taking part in the debate on the money resolution kindly leave the Chamber quietly?

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection. I assure you that when roles are reversed I shall, as always, support you as you apply the Standing Orders of the House.

In June this year the estimated cost of outstanding repairs to schools in my constituency—repairs needed to make them wind and watertight —was just over £3 million. I have identified immediately an expenditure priority far superior to this mean and tatty little Bill, which attacks our organised work force. It attacks the most economically disadvantaged in our society—people who struggle from week to week to make ends meet and who organise themselves in trade unions so that they are just equal to the power of organised capital.

The Government always claim that trade unions cause days to be lost through strike action. The truth—the Government should know this because they have an army of civil servants ready to dig out the information —is that in any average year more days are lost through industrial injury than through strike action. Let me give the figures. In 1980 we lost just over 11 million days through industrial stoppages, but we lost 13·1 million days through industrial injury. In 1981 we lost 4 million days through industrial stoppages, and 10·9 million through industrial injury.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Gentleman making a frustrated Second Reading speech, or a speech on the money resolution?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The money resolution is fairly wide, but I hope that I shall hear a little more about money from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for indicating that you will listen, which is more than Conservative Members intend to do. Obviously I shall have to spell my point out in detail so that the 45 minutes allowed are taken up with my explanation.

I am talking about the alternatives on which the £3 million could be spent. On Second Reading the Government claimed that trade unions, by their industrial action, caused many lost days in industry. Before I was foolishly interrupted by an hon. Member, who I assume is part of the goose-stepping tendency of the Conservative party, I was saying that, in 1981, 4 million days were lost through strike action, but 10·9 million days were lost through industrial injury. In 1982, 5 million days were lost in strike action, and 10·8 million days were lost through industrial injury. In 1983, 3·7 million days were lost in industrial stoppages, and 9·5 million days were lost through industrial injury.

The clear priority for any Government with a decent set of priorities — not the priorities that featured in Germany before 1939, when there was a vicious attack on the trade union movement — is to increase expenditure on health and safety at work inspectors, not on a commissioner for trade union protection. Since 1979 the number of health and safety inspectors has plummeted. There are not enough personnel to carry out as many inspections in factories and in service industries as they should. That is why more people are losing life and limb in British manufacturing and service industries than is reasonable. That shows the rotten priorities of this rotten Government.

The £3 million would be better spent on a commission of inquiry into the City. Such an inquiry might be expensive——

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Throwing good money after bad.

Mr. Cryer: As the hon. Gentleman said, it would be throwing good money after bad. Conservative Members frequently say that trade unions have immunity; that they can take industrial action and are free from actions in tort. They claim that we need such legislation because of that immunity. I remind the House of what happened when the Government's friends from Lloyd's came here in 1980. Many hon. Members at the time—there are still some—were lining their pockets from Lloyd's insurance, and when their chums came up from Lloyd's and asked for complete immunity from civil action for the Council of Lloyd's their hypocritical reaction was not to say that immunities were serious matters for anybody, but to say, "We will pass the legislation", and all the Ministers went into the Lobby to vote for immunity for the Council of Lloyd's. It was claimed that the legislation was necessary so that Lloyd's could conduct its affairs properly, but since that Bill became an Act those greedy people in the City have been rocked by scandal after scandal. There is a fair case for spending the £3 million on an inquiry. The Tories could then look at the damage that they did five or six years ago to try to discover where they went wrong.

The commissioner for trade union rights will cost £1·2 million. Yes, there is a drop in the number of health and safety at work inspectors in both the specific and general categories, but £1·2 million will be spent on so-called commissioner for trade union rights. That commissioner will be the Government's puppet and will be used to attack the trade union movement. Why not spend the money on wages council inspectors, for example, to make sure that all those who donate so lavishly to the Tory party employ people at decent wage levels and to give the poorest earners in our society some protection? That would be a better priority for the Government.

Hon. Members will be keen to know that expenditure of £1·5 million is allowed for in the first year by the Bill. Disraeli described the Tory party as a party of organised hyprocrisy. Nothing demonstrates that better than this legislation, because when the Tories talk about secret postal ballots, they are not worried about democracy. The Tory party has never worried about democracy—witness its own example. Who elected the new chairman of the Tory party, a new Mr. Nobody? Nobody elected him. He was appointed by her who will be obeyed.

If Tory Members are so concerned about postal ballots, why did they not set the nation an example, as some Tory Members would have liked? The truth is—I know that that will come as a shocking revelation to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that postal ballots are designed to allow their chums, the handful of people who own this country's press, to get their dirty hands on the so-called democratic processes of the trade union movement. I mean the Rupert Murdochs of this world.

Conservative Members subscribe to some sort of supervisory legislation when it comes to their elections. None of them have put forward proposals to remove the legislation that covers radio and television and allocates a fair amount of time to all the candidates at a general election. That is a legal requirement and it is reasonably scrupulously carried out. I have not heard any Tory Member object to that procedure. However, when it comes to trade unionists, the Government want unscrupulous rogues such as Rupert Murdoch to be able to give double-page spreads for the candidates of their choice, but double-page spreads attacking trade unionism with a viciousness, inaccuracy and unscrupulousness that would have made Goebbels blush. That is the gutter out of which *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and the other Tory papers spread their filth when they get involved in trade union manipulations. All this is about getting those newspapers through the letter-boxes.

Instead of engaging, as we do, in debate and discussion here in Parliament and then making a judgment—that is a fair form of democracy — if the principle that the Government support in this rotten little measure were carried into effect with Parliament, we would not need to bother coming at all. That may not be too much of a blow to some hon. Members. We could simply have postal ballots on all the legislation. They could be sent through the post to our homes and *The Sun*, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* could be allowed to provide all the background information. The Library could be closed down. Why have access to factual information? What nonsense it is.

There would be some degree of veracity in the protestations about democracy from the Conservative Benches if, at the same time as they were talking about postal ballots, they introduced legislation to say that in every paper there should be an equal division of space between all the candidates. Indeed, one Tory Member suggested that there should be funds available to enable candidates to distribute election material. Who would finance that? It is not included in the £3 million allocated for this legislation.

There should be some legislation to make funds available to ensure that there is a commissioner to prevent newspapers from giving distorted and biased presentations of one candidate against another. If there were funds available to enable a commissioner to ensure that material was sent out in equal balance for all candidates in a trade union ballot, there might be a case for the Government's argument. However, that would still not equate with the democratic discussion and informed, objective examination of the merits of a candidate that occurs during a

[Mr. Cryer]

general election. The Tories do not want the rules that apply to radio and television, both BBC and ITV, to apply to the press. That would mean a balanced and fair press, and we do not have such a press. The present system works in the Tories' favour, and they want to see the massive degree of prejudice against Labour continue.

By and large, the money could be used for far better purposes. I hope that, in Committee, the Government will recognise that some amendment is needed on the lines that I have suggested so that more money can be spent on health and safety. At present a forensic lottery confronts so many workers when they receive injuries. Indeed, I have already pointed out to the Minister that thousands of workers receive such injuries each year.

The Minister could do a service to the nation by restoring the statistics of people injured for three days or more and therefore off work for that period. In 1984 those statistics, by virtue of the ending of the industrial injury benefit, were lost. We do not know whether, there is a cluster of injuries near—let us pluck something out of the air — nuclear power stations or civil engineering works. Until 1984 we automatically had such statistics. It is outrageous that those vital statistics are now denied the nation, thus preventing remedial action from being taken to stop the drain of life and limb that takes place, week in, week out, in our factories, shops, offices, railway premises and so forth.

I hope that the Minister will take note of my remarks —it is a vain hope. However, my speech demonstrates that there are more important priorities at hand and that we on the Labour Benches are pressing for them and will continue to do so.

10.33 pm

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): In some ways it is reassuring to find that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) did not lose his touch during his absence from the House. I was concerned that the European Parliament might have affected him, but I need not have worried.

The hon. Gentleman has advanced a number of alternative uses for the money that is the subject of the resolution, but we think that as the House has given a Second Reading to the Bill we should also vote the money to support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Employment Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable by the Secretary of State to or in respect of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members; and

(b) Any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided.

EMPLOYMENT BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved.

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Employment Bill, it is expedient to authorise the making of provision for the manner in which payments made in pursuance of arrangements under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 are to be treated for the purposes of the Income Tax Acts.—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Data Protection

10.34 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I beg to move,

That the draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Social Work) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

It will, I hope, be for the convenience of the House if we take also the other three orders, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

That the draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

That the draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

That the draft Data Protection (Miscellaneous Subject Access Exemptions) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): If the House agrees, so be it.

Mr. Renton: Before I come to the substance of the orders, it may be helpful to hon. Members if I say a few words about the background to the Data Protection Act 1984 and report on progress in its implementation.

The Act arose directly from our signature of the Council of Europe convention for the protection of individuals with regard to the automatic processing of personal data. Both data users, that is to say, those who hold and process personal data on computers, and data subjects, the individuals to whom the data relate, had a strong interest in seeing the enactment of domestic legislation in accordance with the convention. The data users were concerned that without legislation the United Kingdom would not be able to ratify the convention with the result that this country would be excluded from future international data flows, to the detriment of the business community here. To give an example, had the United Kingdom not decided to ratify the convention, multinational companies and other companies with international interests would not have been able to transfer personal data freely into the United Kingdom from other countries which had ratified; and if, as a result, certain personal data were no longer held in the United Kingdom, data subjects here would have had no right of access under United Kingdom law. Data subjects for their part were equally keen to have a statutory right of access to the data held about them, as the convention envisaged.

As some hon. Members will recall, the Data Protection Act was keenly debated in this House and in another place in the course of its parliamentary passage in 1983-84, and was subject to extensive discussion in Committee; there were no fewer than 25 Committee sittings. The legislation was duly enacted in July 1984 and an appointed day of 11 November 1985 was set. The newly created post of Data Protection Registrar was filled by Mr. Eric Howe, to whose work in implementing the Act I should like to pay warm tribute tonight. The registrar is independent of the Executive and reports directly to Parliament. His third report was presented to Parliament and published last July.

It was originally estimated that some 300,000 registrations of data users could be expected, and there has been concern in some quarters at what is seen as the serious problem of non-registration. I understand, however, that the position is not as unsatisfactory as has been made out. Research by the registrar now suggests that there are between 200,000 and 250,000 systems liable to registration, and so far the number of registrations stands at about 145,000.

I do not want to be complacent about this, and there is still obviously some way to go before we can be satisfied that the registration requirements are being properly met, but I would point out that our experience compares favourably with that of other countries. France, for example, after nine years of operation of its legislation has approximately 150,000 registrations from a pool similar in size to our own. A recent survey of registration in Austria, Norway and Sweden found that we had achieved a record number of registrations during our initial registration period as compared with these other countries.

The Government are conscious that the benefits conferred by the Act on data subjects are achieved to a large extent by requiring data users to take on additional responsibilities, including, in particular, registration and the grant of subject access, which have significant implications for them. That is inevitably a particular problem of small businesses. In an endeavour to relieve some of the burdens on such businesses, whose use of personal data bring them within the scope of the Act, the registrar has currently introduced and widely distributed a new simplified registration form, which is obtainable from Crown post offices. In just a month since the new form was made available, some 5,000 new applications for registration have been received. In addition, some 1,200 applications per month continue to be submitted using the old form. I am hopeful therefore, that the shortfall in expected registrations will before long be considerably reduced.

The registrar is investigating those whom he considers should have registered, but have not done so, and is ready to offer assistance and advice to those who are uncertain whether they are required to register. There is the ultimate sanction of prosecution for those who deliberately refuse to register, but I understand from the registrar that, in his view, the number of such prosecutions is likely to be small. There is certainly no intention of prosecuting people who are simply unaware of their liability to register.

The registrar is seeking to publicise the Act through advertisements in the media and professional journals. He has also published a series of guideline booklets, which explain the provisions of the Act in simple terms—not, I might add, an easy task. I understand that these booklets are in heavy demand. The registrar has also been active in promoting the publication of codes of practice relating to various sectors of data users, including, for example, the direct mail industry, travel agents, universities and polytechnics. Later this month, he is to undertake an advertising campaign to inform the general public about the new right of subject access.

Subject access under the Act becomes available from 11 November. That important date marks the final stage of implementation of the Act. With its provisions fully in place, we shall be in a position to ratify the European Convention on 1 December, and we have already deposited our instrument of ratification with the Council of Europe.

After that brief sketch of the background, I turn to the orders before us, which, if they are to proceed, require affirmative resolution of both Houses. In describing to the

[Mr. Renton]

House the provisions of the orders, I hope I may be forgiven if I do not use their full titles, but refer to them more shortly as the health order, the social work order, the financial services order and the exemptions order. That will save a little time, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) will agree.

All the orders modify in various ways the operation of the subject access provisions of the Act. Some hon. Members may wonder whether that is not a sort of backdoor method of limiting the right of access granted by the Act. I assure the House that that is by no means so. The Act recognises a number of exceptions to the subject access provisions, in relation, for example, to data held for the purposes of prevention or detection of crime, apprehension or prosecution of offenders, or assessment or collection of tax or duty. It also makes provision in relation to health and social work and financial services data for the Secretary of State, by order, to provide exemptions from subject access, or to modify the application of the subject access provisions in specified ways; and to prevent subject access to information which is protected from disclosure under other enactments. The areas covered by the four orders that we are considering are all, therefore, areas in which Parliament specifically envisaged that unfettered subject access would be neither practicable nor desirable.

I shall now say briefly what each of the orders is intended to achieve, beginning with the health order.

Section 29(1) of the Data Protection Act allows the Secretary of State to exempt from the subject access provisions personal data consisting of information on the physical or mental health of the data subject which is held by, or was recorded by or on behalf of, a health professional; or to modify the provisions in relation to such data.

The health order allows access to data relating to the physical or mental health of the data subject to be modified to enable a data user to withhold data that is likely to cause serious harm to the physical or mental health of the data subject, and data which would lead to the identification of another individual other than a health professional who has been involved in the care of the data subject. The general assumption is that data subjects will be provided in most cases with access to personal health information held about them on computers. Information will be withheld only on the advice of a health professional that the data subject could be seriously harmed by the information, or that the information would enable the data subject to identify another individual.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I should like to ask a specific question which I think is implicit in the health order about which the Minister is speaking. What is the position if I ask my local health authority to let me see my computerised health record and the computer user, the health board, then seeks advice from my general practitioner about whether it is safe to allow that information to be transmitted to me without causing serious harm and injury? If my general practitioner is dilatory beyond 40 days about supplying consent to the computer operator to provide that information, does it follow that I will be given after that 40-day period unfettered access to that information?

Mr. Renton: To find the answer to his question the hon. Gentleman should look not at the health order about which I am speaking, but at the next one, the social work order. I refer him to article 4(3) and (4) in which he will find the answer to his question about whether under the circumstances that he postulates he would have access to the computer data.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Perhaps my hon. Friend could explain the specific point about computer records disclosing the identity of someone else. For example, if an instrument was left inside me by some incompetent doctor — and I accept that doctors are seldom incompetent — as often happens in this sort of litigation, there would be a great clamour because I knew nothing about the instrument. Could that be grounds for refusing to disclose the data information? What about the general practitioner involved? Would there be any appeal against his refusal?

Mr. Renton: The fact that a scalpel has been left inside my hon. Friend must first be registered on a computer before the orders that we are debating can become relevant. Secondly, the intrinsic point in these orders is that the information would be withheld only if it were thought that, by virtue of being told that he had a scalpel inside him, my hon. Friend would be likely to suffer a heart attack. As I understand the orders, under these circumstances it would be relevant to withhold the information.

Perhaps I could refer again to the question asked by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and give him a little more information. It is clear under the orders, and particularly the social work order, that generally the health authority will not seek the views of the general practitioner, but only the views of its own consultants. Perhaps that gives added emphasis to the rather detailed question that the hon. Gentleman posed. Perhaps I could return to the first order. Its terms make it clear that only information that satisfies the criteria that I have mentioned—this goes back to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) — may be withheld, and data users will be otherwise obliged to supply as much information as can be supplied without causing serious harm to the data subject or enabling the identity of another individual to be disclosed or deduced. In those circumstances, where information is withheld the data subject will not be informed that information has been withheld since to do so could cause even more harm than would be caused by access to the information itself. Professional counselling may help to ensure that as little information as possible is withheld in line with the policy of the 1984 Act, which is concerned essentially with allowing, rather than withholding, access.

The second of these orders, the social work order, deals with data held for or acquired in the course of social work and modifies the subject access provisions in their operation in this area. Article 3 of the order specifies the data concerned broadly as those held or acquired for social work functions by Government Departments, local authorities and other specified bodies, including designated voluntary organisations of which the NSPCC and its Scottish equivalent are so far the only ones to have applied for designation.

The order does not apply to the subject's health data, to which the health order applies; that is to say to data held by, or consisting of information first recorded by, a health professional. The subject access provisions are modified to the extent that the requirement to supply information is disapplied when to do so would be likely to prejudice the carrying out of social work in that there was a real risk that serious harm would be caused to the physical or mental health or emotional condition of the data subject or any other person, or that the identity of another individual who had supplied the information would be disclosed or could be deduced, unless he had consented, or was himself a social work professional. The order makes it clear that as much as possible of the information should be disclosed as long as it does not prejudice the purpose for which it was obtained, which in general terms is to the benefit of the data subject.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Renton: With great respect to my hon. Friend, it will be for the convenience of the House if I move on. No doubt my hon. Friend will make his own contribution to the debate if he so wishes.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Renton: No, I have already said that I want to move on. I will move to the financial services order and I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his contribution later.

The third order is the financial services order. This is made under powers in section 30(2) of the 1984 Act, and designates certain functions conferred by or under a statute relating to, among other things, the regulation of financial services. Data held for the purpose of discharging these functions are exempt from the subject access provisions of the Act in cases where the performance of those functions would be jeopardised by their application.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, it was recognised when the Act was passed that special provision had to be made to restrict access of individuals to data concerning them held in connection with the regulation of financial services, which might, for example, include information about suspected malpractice. If an individual were to use his rights of access under the Act to find out what information about him was held by the regulators, he could conceivably attempt to cover his tracks and make the conclusive uncovering of his malpractice more difficult. We have had to strike a balance here between the rights of the individual and the need in some circumstances for confidentiality, and we have thought it right to recognise the special responsibilities of the regulatory bodies in this area for identifying and taking action against financial wrongdoing. The House may like to know that a provision was inserted in the Financial Services Act 1986 to make it clear that self-regulating organisations and recognised professional bodies could be designated under the Data-Protection Act in order that they might be exempted from subject access in respect of some of their data, as the present order provides.

The last of the four orders is the exemption order, made under powers in section 34(2) of the Act. This exempts from the subject access provisions of the Act any personal data consisting of information the disclosure of which is prohibited or restricted by the enactments and instruments listed in the schedule.

In each of those cases the Government consider that the statutory prohibition, or restriction on the disclosure of the information of which the data consist ought to prevail over the subject access provisions in the interests of data subjects or other individuals.

An example of where the interests of another individual ought properly to be taken into account would be adoption proceedings, where the interests of the natural parents are relevant as well as those of the adopted child.

The provisions listed in the order prohibit or restrict the disclosure of information relating to three broad areas—adoption records and reports used in adoption proceedings or kept in the possession of adoption societies and local authorities; statements and records of the special educational needs of children; and, in Scotland, information provided by reporters at children's hearings.

I should at this point refer to an issue which has been raised on this order by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The Committee has taken the view that there is a doubt about the vires of the second entry in part III of the schedule to the draft order, in that it refers to an Order-in-Council which I am informed is shortly to be laid before Parliament reforming the law in Northern Ireland concerning adoption, and which will bring that law into line with that in England under the Adoption Act 1976. It would obviously be inconvenient to have to lay another draft exemption order before the House after the Northern Ireland order has been made, which is why we sought to cover the point in this way.

I accept that the Committee's objection is arguable, although the point was carefully considered when the order was being drafted and the view was taken that, on balance, this drafting device was both intra vires and perfectly proper.

Nevertheless, as the Committee has expressed a doubt about it, I shall consider whether I should take a suitable opportunity of bringing forward another draft order to clear the point up when the Northern Ireland adoption order has been made.

In commending these orders to the House, I would say in conclusion that they have all been the subject of detailed and lengthy consultations between my Department and the other Departments in Whitehall primarily concerned with the subject matter; and they in turn have consulted widely among the relevant professional bodies and other groups outside Whitehall. The results of those consultations were carefully thought through before the orders were finalised and laid before the House. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Data Protection Registrar has also been consulted.

10.56 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The problem with the orders is that they compound what we consider to be the inadequacies of the Data Protection Act 1984; and that was the minimum that the Government needed to do to comply with the European convention that the Minister mentioned. It was far removed—nobody in their wildest dreams could accuse the Government of having this thought in their head—from any thoughts about a full-blown freedom of information Act designed to open doors and rip them from their hinges to let more daylight into our democracy.

We are a nation still consumed with secrecy. It is a national passion by those who govern. Who was it who said that something is secret because it is in a file marked "Secret"? That, in one sentence, is the whole issue.

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

We make and keep secret material affecting the everyday lives of individuals which should in no way be secret. Information is power and those with power—not just Government Departments, but the police, local authorities, health authorities and the rest — have amassed literally miles and miles of information about individuals.

If all that made it easier for us to sleep more safely in our beds, there might be some value in it, but it does not. It has to do with the still strongly held belief, especially under the Government, that Whitehall, and, in some areas, the town hall, know better than the rest of us and that we, poor dears, should not know what is being said about us behind our backs. These are not simply matters of passing interest; they can and do affect the judgments taken about people and make a real impact on their lives.

The Data Protection Act gave a general right to individuals to have a copy of information held on computer about him or her and a right to challenge information believed to be wrong and to have it corrected or erased. In essence, the orders contain that right and keep whole areas of computer records from individuals. We are not simply talking about factual records — someone's date of birth, address, height, or colour of eyes. The records covered by the orders are judgmental — people in the professions making judgments about the attitude, behaviour, and mental and physical condition of the individual concerned. The health and social work orders are examples of that.

I thought that it was generally agreed that part of the process of professionals effectively assisting the overcoming of problems was to share all available information. That work must be a partnership or it will not succeed. Even the contact of Members of Parliament with social workers is sufficient to show that changes in behaviour and attitude cannot be imposed by a professional; they are achieved in partnership between a client or patient and the professional concerned. If the information is not shared, if one party withholds information, there will not be trust and confidence, and progress will be the harder, if not impossible, to achieve. That must be especially true in the treatment of physical and mental health, yet the health order proposes to refuse access to information if its release

"would be likely to cause serious harm".

I accept that there is some need for consideration of that factor, but not in the blanket manner proposed in the order. It is suggested that a doctor or dentist whose patient is the subject of information should be asked to judge whether it should be released. That is not good enough. We must guard against the likelihood, however extreme or rare it might be, that in certain circumstances doctors and dentists will make misjudgments in the course of their work — Members of Parliament do that — and that sometimes they will take risks. Yet under the order they will be given the power to say yes or no to a request for the information to be released.

The orders will do nothing to encourage those involved to make more professional, thoughtful and objective judgments. At the end of the day they know, to put it bluntly, that under these orders they can cover their backs. That may not happen very often, but it is a real risk that the orders do not take into account.

The orders block another path. The European convention, which the Act ratified, gives the right to correct or erase wrong information, but under the orders that right goes out of the window. It is not simply that the individual cannot see the information; he cannot see it to check whether it is inaccurate and critically touching upon him in a clinical treatment or diagnosis. As a way out, surely it would be better for a doctor or dentist not responsible for the clinical care of the patient concerned to make the decision about the release of information. In that way, the decision would be one removed and, therefore, perhaps be less partial. I hope that the Minister will at least consider that.

The Minister will know that the Royal College of Nursing has raised other objections to the health order because, in the last analysis, it shuts out of the decision whether to release information to other health professionals such as nurses, health visitors and midwives. In June, a Department of Health and Social Security circular proposed that lead health professionals be consulted, yet when the order came before the House that suggestion had been dropped. I am told that in the same circular it was suggested that doctors should refer to the manual records when considering the computer records and deciding whether they could safely be released. Manual records are not covered by the Act, which is a serious omission, but they form part of the material on which a doctor makes a judgment on whether to release the information held on computer. I hope that the Minister will consider referring the matter to a doctor or dentist who is not responsible for the patient to whom the record refers, and that he will advise his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services that the lead health professionals should be consulted before a decision is taken.

For how long does the restriction of the withholding of information last? An application may be made under the order and the doctor may decide that it is not safe to allow the patient to see the information. for how long will that continue—one month, three months, six months or 12 months? Would it not be better, as the Royal College of Nursing suggested, when it is felt that serious harm would arise from immediate disclosure to set a time limit of six months and then another appliation can be made?

Similar arguments apply to the social work order. It is those who are involved in making the judgments,

"likely to prejudice the carrying out of social work"

by causing

"serious harm to . . . health or emotional condition",

who will decide whether that information can safely be released.

Again, I say to the Minister that that cannot be right. I can foresee a need to check or reassess some cases, however rare, but I am concerned that this provision again runs the risk of abuse and will err on the side of secrecy for its own sake. Would it not be better for a local government officer who is not directly concerned with the case to make the decision whether to release the information? The same applies to the voluntary agencies. At least it gives the promise of impartiality.

How can a social work officer who has been involved with an extremely difficult and intractable case make a clear and proper judgment on whether to release information on request? In the real world—I am sure the Minister is aware of this—it is asking too much of the worker.

Similar criticisms can be made of the miscellaneous subject access exemptions order, which relates to adoption and special education. No judgment is required. The order simply says that data are exempted from the provisions of the main Act

> "in the interests of protecting the subject of the data himself or some other individual."

I agree that we should consider this matter, but I am amazed that it can be proposed by a Government who crow about the virtues of the main Act that this should be drawn so widely. How can it be suggested that such a blanket provision is needed? It does not clearly define what grounds will be taken into account. There is no facility for the individual to challenge or seek to correct or erase wrong information, and once more the professional making judgmental comments is relieved of any responsibility to have those judgments tested for truth and accuracy.

Perhaps the Minister will tell me what guidance it is proposed to issue to those concerned with adoption and social work to help them in making these judgments. Is there not some way in which consideration can be given to a third party? Can we not find a simple and straightforward way of enabling the legal representative of the individual involved to see the information and to know the grounds on which it is to be withheld?

The Minister and the House will know that the Education Act 1986 gives parents, although not pupils, the right of access to school records. Does the order which concerns special education cancel that right?

On the face of it, the order concerning financial services is slightly alarming. It exempts material under 29 Acts and three orders—in the main the newly passed Financial Services Act 1986. It will come as no surprise to the House to hear that the Opposition were unhappy about the timid, pussyfoot approach of that Act to City scandal and finding a means to deter and combat it. The order does little to dispel those concerns. It worries me that it may, yet again, send the wrong signal to the City.

I understand that, under the orders, a doctor, a dentist, a local authority or a health authority can, when asked by someone whether information about them is held on computer and whether they can have a copy of it, reply that they are not obliged under the Data Protection Act 1984 to disclose such information. On the face of it, that is a factual statement, but it is, to say the least, extremely economical with the truth. The applicant is not told whether information about him or her is held on computer. The applicant can simply be told that the authorities will not—and do not have to—say whether information about him or her is held. That is most unsatisfactory.

I should like the Minister to give an assurance that such a cover-up form of words will not be used in regard to the orders and that the holder of information will say whether information is held and give reasons why it cannot be given if, indeed, it cannot. That at least has the merit of being a more adequate explanation. Some of us were slightly aghast when we thought we heard the Minister say that, in some cases, it would be more dangerous to say that than to provide the information. If that really is the Government's approach to the orders, we might as well go home.

Section 21 of the Data Protection Act gives a person who is denied knowledge of whether personal data are held on him or her and, when a copy of such information is refused, the right to seek a court order to obtain it. The orders make withholding information relating to social work, mental or physical illness, special education needs and adoption legal.

Will such refusals be open to challenge in the courts? I assume that they will, but that merely underlines what I have already said about the need for some informal third party assessment of whether information should be withheld in the interests of the person concerned. I believe that the courts will make even more difficult a situation that is likely to be difficult enough.

I am aware that there is a right of appeal to the registrar and that medical advisers and other professionals will be available to him. That can be helpful and certainly appears to be more user friendly than the courts, but there should be some less formal independent third party method of decision. I hope that the Minister will consider that and let me know his conclusions.

I shall not advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the orders, but they remain narrow, restrictive and contrary to the demands of a growing number of people for more, and more open, access to information, which is held manually or on computer by people in positions of authority, over important parts of our lives.

11.15 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Despite the statement of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that there will be no vote on the orders, I should have been delighted to vote for them. I believe that we are dancing the often organised late night minuet around the Official Secrets Act. In terms of the progress of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), I hope that the orders will be approved by the House. We are facing the traditional problem of Her Majesty's Governments, whichever party is in power, of secrecy and what it is worth in terms of the protection of our citizens.

For many years I was involved in the Council of Europe studying the problems of data protection. I was chairman of its parliamentary committee on the freedom of information. Therefore, I am concerned not only about the protection of our citizens but about how we can make available that material that should be made available to our citizens.

Having listened to the debate, and, with great respect, to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, I rather felt that nobody in his Department had read the work in Sweden or the United States on these matters. I got the impression that, like all good engineers, the wheel was being invented again. I should like an assurance from the Minister that sufficient consideration has been, and will be, given not only to those laws that have been passed in those other countries that share the desire that I am sure he shares for the maximum freedom of information, but that that will be reflected in orders affecting the Data Protection Act 1984.

I should like to put some questions to my hon. Friend. I do not expect answers tonight, but I should like answers in due course, at his convenience; unlike the questions, that I asked of a Minister in a recent debate, which I am still waiting on and which I am still pursuing.

The 1984 Act states that a register is public and available in all public libraries. I hope that a copy will be made available in the Library of the House of Commons.

The Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Social Work) Order 1987 refers to the serious harm to the

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

data subject or some other person, and I should like to know who will decide what is serious harm and for how long that serious harm will be considered to be in place.

The Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987 provides for access to data held by health professionals. The term "health professionals" should be spelt out in detail because it covers a multitude of virtues and sins. It needs to be stated exactly who health professionals are, what qualifications they have, what rights they have to retain information, and over what period of time.

In respect of the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987—I love that word "etc."; clearly the lawyers were paid by the inch, if not by the metre—it says who is likely to be prejudiced by the discharge of the functions, but who decides those matters? We do not want to see a great panoply of legal effects which only give prosperity to lawyers.

Mr. Ashby: And why not?

Mr. Warren: My hon. Friend asks why not. The problem with our laws at the moment is that they not only grow too fast, but that lawyers' fees grow exponentially with them. As an aside it is high time that the lawyers' fees were examined in detail, particularly why they charge so much for such limited services.

I now question the considerations that arise in the terms of the Data Protection (Miscellaneous Subject Access Exemptions) Order. I am concerned about the problems that can arise about disclosure without authority. In that connection I should like to know to whom the information would be disclosed, and what constraints would be put on the persons to whom it was disclosed not to pass on the information?

Although I regard the orders as a movement forward in what we all want to see—the protection of data—I hope that the issue will not be clouded by the greater requirement of more openness in government.

11.20 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Since elections always bring casualties, I begin by noting the absence of the remarkable former hon. Member for Oxford, East, Mr. Steve Norris. Had he been re-elected, I am sure that he would have been here. He assisted me as a sponsor of the Access to Personal Files Act 1987, as it eventually became, during the course of the private Member's Bill procedure. During that time he was a great help to me. He was a passionate advocate of freedom of information in all its various aspects. He became a great expert in the detail of matters exactly like this. I, for one, miss him greatly.

Having been through the rigours of trying to get my private Member's Bill through the Home Office, which involved various aspects straddling different Departments, I fully appreciate the difficulties facing the Minister. Indeed, the former Minister of State, Home Office did so well in handling my Bill that he was promoted to Chief Whip. I say seriously that I understand that there are technically difficult matters that are officially outwith the Minister's purlieu and they are difficult to cope with. It is against that background that I return to the question I asked during my intervention. It is a technically complicated question but it is an important one. I gave him the wrong scent by referring to general practitioners. The Minister will know that a draft DHSS circular that was issued in June this year, alongside the draft of the health order, suggested that a data user's obligation was only to consult the health professional, not to withhold information indefinitely until a health professional gave a final decision. Therefore, where the health professional failed to reply within 40 days, which the House will know is the normal time allowed for responding to subject access requests, the data user would, in my opinion, then be obliged—that is an important word—to give access to the health data in full. If that is the case, my reading of the order is wrong. However it is an important point. People other than ourselves read these debates and it is important for the Minister to clarify that. I hope that he will now do so.

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his indulgence on this complex matter. The straightforward answer to the specific question posed by the hon. Gentleman in his intervention is no. If the doctor is so dilatory that the 40-day period is exceeded, the data user is in breach of his obligations under section 21(6) of the Data Protection Act 1984. His recourse is the right to go to court or complain to the registrar. The health order and the other orders we are debating do not affect that right.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful for the clarification, as I am sure the House will be. I regret that, but at least the debate can now continue on the basis of an accurate interpretation of the order.

I wish to make three points during the course of this important debate. My general response to the orders is that there are good aspects to them that I recognise and welcome. I congratulate the Government on resisting pressure from some medical circles. I am glad that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security has seen fit to attend this important debate. She will know that there has been pressure from some in medical circles to seek total exemption for medical records. The Government were right to resist that pressure. At this year's British Medical Association conference motions of censure were tabled criticising the BMA council for having accepted the idea of modified access to health records rather than demanding total exemption. I am pleased to say that those motions were overwhelmingly rejected.

I welcome the fact that under the health and the social work orders the test for withholding informatiion has been changed to "serious harm". That is a stricter test than either of those proposed in the Department of Health and Social Security consultation paper. At that stage in the consultation process it was proposed that the test should be that the information would be likely to cause "actual harm" or "actual harm or distress". The test of "serious harm" now contained in the orders was the one that I proposed in the Access to Personal Files Act and I am glad that the Government have accepted that principle.

I welcome the fact that social workers' provisional judgments have not been exempted from access in the social work order. The proposal in the DHSS consultation paper would have exempted them, which would have meant that all the provisional judgments would have been withheld until after a decision based on them had been made, by which time it would have been too late. The 1983 DHSS circular on access to manual social work records which has been followed by many authorities allows provisional judgments to be exempted. The order will lead to a more positive line than that taken by many at the moment. That, too, is welcome. I hope that the social work regulations on manual records under the Access to Personal Files Act will follow the more positive line rather than that taken in the 1983 DHSS circular.

Finally, I welcome the fact that the protection for the identities of third parties will not prohibit the disclosure of the names of doctors, social workers or other professional staff involved with the data subject. This is a lesson that seems to have been learnt from the Access to Personal Files Act which protected the identities of contributors to records except for those acting in a professional capacity. The Data Protection Act itself does not make that distinction, and without the present provisions, computer users would be obliged to suppress the names of doctors and others who had treated the patient.

My main criticism of the orders is political rather than technical. It will come as no surprise to the Minister that I am disappointed that there is no access to manual records —on health in particular. The arguments that we put forward last year have been sustained and are even more important than they were then because of the overwhelming public support for such access. Over 140 national organisations, the majority of them with an interest in health records, backed the Access to Personal Files Act last year. Professional bodies — notably the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and the Health Visitors Association — also backed the Act. A recent opinion poll—if evidence were required—commissioned by the Data Protection Registrar found that more than eight out of 10 people thought that the Data Protection Act should apply to manual records. That is a substantial body of public opinion. The survey showed that 86 per cent. of people thought that medical records should "always" or "usually" be available. There is overwhelming public support for access to manual health records. The distinction between manual and computer records is completely arbitrary and should not be the basis for deciding whether we have a right to safeguard ourselves against mistakes or unfair decisions. Why should our right to protect ourselves depend upon whether the organisation which holds records on us can afford a computer?

If I understand the health and social work orders correctly, I am worried that people may have no way of knowing whether information about them has been deleted before they are given access. This June, the draft DHSS circular suggested that people would get a specially written report based on the computer printout, but would not necessarily get the printout itself. There is no objection to a special report, if it is in addition to the printout, not instead of it. Indeed, it would be extremely welcome. But it is not acceptable as an alternative, and denying individuals access to the original information will generate suspicion, even in cases where people have received full information. I believe that people should be told whether information about them has been withheld so that they can, if they wish, appeal against that decision. However, it appears that they will not be told.

If that is right, doctors and social workers will have an enormous amount of freedom to withhold information, even where the serious harm test does not apply. Of course, there is anxiety about telling people that information has been withheld, because of the risk of serious injury. Fear itself causes great distress. My solution in the Access to Personal Files Act was to allow a six-months delay rather than permanent withholding, which would allow the doctor to say, "Wait until your condition improves a little and then we will see whether we can discuss things with you." Deferred access could get over the problem created by the order.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) mentioned the fact that the prime responsibility for decisions on access should be taken only by doctors or dentists, according to my interpretation of the order, although at times it may be more appropriate for other professionals to take those decisions. The draft order that was circulated in June gave responsibility to the

> "health professional who is currently or was most recently responsible for the clinical care of the data subject in connection with the matters to which the information. . . relates."

The final order has deleted that and given prime responsibility to doctors and dentists. In rural areas and in constituencies such as mine, the categories of medical practitioner that are excluded — nurses, midwives and health visitors — are largely or solely responsible for a patient's care and are therefore accountable personally for the entries that they make on a person's record. Confining the right to disclose solely to medical practitioners would make the other health professionals inhibited about exactly what they recorded. If the order was passed unamended, information recorded by a midwife, nurse or health visitor could be passed on or withheld without their consent or even their knowledge. Such a narrow definition of "health professional" is not only unsound, it sets a worrying precedent.

I cite child abuse cases as a special worry in this area. Health visitors keep records from information obtained from parents and the child — often confidentially obtained from each other. They are generally not revealed, unless required in court cases. However, under the terms of the order, it will be possible to reveal those records outside court, perhaps without the health visitor's knowledge or consent. That raises potentially serious legal problems. I support the claim by the Royal College of Nursing that the order, insofar as it affects nurses, is very restrictive, produces complex access procedures and puts the medical and dental professions in a central position which is not entirely acceptable.

The fees that will be charged under these provisions may be prohibitive for many people, and I hope the Government will give careful consideration to that aspect. They have recently announced that the maximum fee for an application will be about £10. In fact, people may have to make multiple applications and thus have to pay several separate fees simpy to obtain the data held on them by a single computer user. May we have an assurance that steps will be taken to ensure that access is not restricted because of the fees that are charged, particularly to people on lower incomes?

I give a broad welcome to the orders, although I fear they will not achieve everything the Minister claimed for them. However, they can be regarded as a small step in the right direction, and, for what they are worth—with the single exception of the way they will impact on nurses, midwives and health visitors — I give them a cautious welcome.

11.36 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Hon. Members will have welcomed the comments of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) about our former colleague, Mr. Steve Norris. We miss him and, particularly on the Conservative Benches, look forward to having him back with us soon.

I wish to draw attention to the concern felt by the Royal College of Midwives about the implications for its profession of the Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order. This subject was mentioned by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Article 4 in effect restricts to medical and dental practitioners the ability to supply information. That at first sounds reasonable, but when one considers that it follows that a midwife will have no right of access to records held on a computer, that cannot be considered satisfactory. He or she will need the medical practitioner's consent for access to those records, and that medical practitioner could withhold them.

Midwives need access to records, which are an essential part of caring for the patient. Preventing them from having those records will make it difficult for them to keep their patients informed and involved in their own health care. They are not simply nursing assistants to doctors; they are qualified independent practitioners in their own right, and they often give total health care to their patients.

In such circumstances they are totally responsible; as independent contractors, they are booked by mothers for a complete period. The doctor gets involved, but they have total care of the client or patient. It is important, therefore, that those who are involved professionally in the care of the mother should have access to that mother's records so that they can give the best possible advice about what needs to be done.

The hon. Member for Erdington mentioned—and I am instructed on the subject—that consultations on the matter took place for a couple of years and that it was understood that the instrument would deal with this issue of access by midwives. But, suddenly, without further consultation, they have been excluded.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will table an early amending order providing that in article 4(6)*(a)* after the words "medical practitioner or dental practitioner" there shall be added the words "or practising midwife or midwives." I look forward to hearing that my hon. Friend agrees with this, and hope that we shall have an amendment soon.

11.39 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am most grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate and I shall be brief.

I chair the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and I want to draw the Minister's attention—he has mentioned it — to the unanimous report of that Committee. That Committee, in common with all Committees, reflects the strength of the political parties in the House.

Article 2 of the Data Protection (Miscellaneous Subject Access Exemptions) Order states:

> "There shall be exempted from the subject access provisions any personal data consisting of information the disclosure of which is prohibited or restricted by the enactments and instruments listed in the Schedule to this Order".

I know that the Minister is aware that the third part of the schedule relates to:

> "Any enactment contained in an Order in Council made under the Northern Ireland Act 1974*(b)* and making provisions corresponding to section 51 of the Adoption Act 1976."

The Joint Committee asked for a memorandum from the Minister's Department and that memorandum made clear that the draft Order-in-Council that the Department has in mind for this part of the schedule will:

> "almost certainly not be made by the time this draft Order (if approved by Parliament) is made, although it is hoped that it will be made shortly thereafter."

The question of ultra vires concerns whether the Minister has power to include in the schedule a reference to an order that in fact is not yet made. The powers that the Minister invokes to make the order do not, for example, include section 41 of the Data Protection Act 1984. It should be noted that enactment is defined in that section as including:

> "an enactment passed after this Act"

That section is referred to in the memorandum provided by the Minister's Department, but it is not a power that is listed in the order and it is not a power that the Minister has chosen to invoke in presenting the order to the House. The Minister depends upon section 34(2) for that purpose, but it does not allow any provision to be included for an enactment that has yet to be passed.

Delegated legislation represents an extremely wide area of power for Ministers. The House recognised that and set up the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments to act as a safeguard. Indeed the Joint Committee has reported specifically on this matter. I am sure that hon. Members from both sides of the House would look askance at an order that referred to an order that has yet to be made and has not yet been considered by any component body of the House.

The Minister suggested—it is clear that he regarded it as important enough to refer to it—that he might be looking at another draft order to clear up any doubt. That is a messy proposition because it means that people must deal with two orders, and it also means another 85p to clear up an order that is, in our view, defective. I hope that the Minister shares that view.

I believe that the wisest procedure is to withdraw this order, remedy any defect and then present the corrected order to the House. I am sure that that would gain approval.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am a member of the Joint Committee and this matter was referred to us by our legal adviser. What the Chairman has said is absolutely accurate. I believe that it is quite an extraordinary state of affairs that we should be faced with an order that is, as the Chairman has described, patently ultra vires. I should be interested to learn what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say, and I hope that he will remedy the matter at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for that intervention. The Minister will see that it is not my own view but the view of the Committee which reached a unanimous verdict. That Committee was established by the House to carry out the function of drawing attention to cases like this. We were legally advised; we did not produce this conclusion without the most serious advice. We think that the order is not well laid out and that that article is ultra vires. With the Committee's report ringing in his ears I hope that the Minister will take proper account of these remarks.

11.44 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Apart from the point that I raised in the intervention, my concern arises on the Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987, article 2, where the definition of a health professional raises some odd matters. The schedule deals with the statutory derivation, where applicable, and includes the Medical Act 1983, the Dentists' Act 1984 the Opticians Act 1958, the Pharmacy Act 1954 and the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960, among others. It then deals with another series of categories which do not have any statutory derivation. Nowhere is there any recognition of those who practise complementary or alternative medicine and who, by any stretch of the imagination, have to be regarded as health professionals.

Are we not living in a real world where people today, tomorrow and yesterday make use of chiropractic, acupuncture and other facilities provided by people who are not necessarily doctors or persons covered by the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act? These are the facts of life which are not even remotely recognised under the definition of health professionals. Many thousands throughout the country and many hon. Members receive the assistance of persons who are not, under the terms of the order, described as health professionals but who on a common sense basis are health professionals.

I ask the Minister to consider that question and to give me an answer. If these people who are administering chiropractic, acupuncture, osteopathy and so on are providing advice and assistance to the general public, why are they excluded from the definition of health professionals?

I do not think I need make the case any more. Will the Minister be good enough to consider this question? The order is about the protection of the public. That means patients. There is a reference to people who are not statutorily recognised like clinical psychologists, art therapists, music therapists or

> "Scientist employed by such an authority or Board as a head of department".

Why does the order not include chiropractors, acupuncturists or osteopaths who are providing a sensible service for the benefit of the public?

11.48 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I shall introduce my Data Protection (Amendment) Bill under the ten-minute procedure next week. That will be a substantial improvement on the Government's approach which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) rightly described as narrow and restrictive. Ironically the Data Protection Act has proved not only unwieldy to business but has also given widespread exemptions, particularly in the public sector, denying individuals access to their own records. There should be fewer exemptions and wider and simpler rights of access for individuals to computer records held on them. That is for next week.

I want to raise several points about the order dealing with financial services. First, why has it taken the Government so long to produce the order? How can Parliament be expected to inspect in such a short time the implications of probably over 200 functions relating to 30 Acts? How can Parliament be satisfied that the order does not take away data subject rights? Why cannot the order at least expire in, say, one year's time and then be reintroduced? That would give us some time to see how it works in practice.

Secondly, section 28 of the Data Protection Act allows subject access exemption for the purpose of the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders and the assessment or collection of any tax or duty. That is a pretty substantial exemption. Consequently, the order must cover other exemptions of personal data held for different purposes. Some of those purposes may be sensible; but why should all such personal data be exempt so that the subject cannot gain access to them? It seems unnecessary.

Everyone would favour the aim of ensuring that only honest financial operators are in positions of trust. I do not believe, however, that wide exemptions are the best way to achieve that aim. The Government have put no test into the order of whether subject access would prejudice or cause serious harm to the function being carried out by the financial regulatory body. It merely states that personal data concerned, however vaguely, with that function may be exempt. How can the accuracy of personal data be checked if the data subject has no access? There should be safeguards, particularly if accusations are made that inaccurate personal data have been put on file maliciously.

The Minister said that the data registrar had been consulted, but he did not say what the registrar said. He may well have been critical, and I think that hon. Members should know whether he was, and, if so, what his criticisms were.

In the case of the health and social work order, there is again a shortage of time in which to implement complex measures. Local authorities and health authorities have only about 10 days for the purpose, although the Government have had two years to produce the orders.

Hon. Members have referred to the provision in regulation 4(5) of the order about the most appropriate health professional. Let me quote from a letter sent to my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) by Mr. Bernard J. B. Kat, who was on the inter-professional working group on access to personal health information. He writes:

> "We see no good reason why the rights of access introduced by the Data Protection Act should not extend to health records but we need the opportunity to bring about that change in practice."

He also goes into the definition of a health professional in regulation 4(6), particularly the narrow definition in part 4(6) referring to a medical or dental practitioner. He says:

> "The health professions are generally in favour of people having access to their health records. However, some members of the medical profession, particularly hospital-based consultants, seem very determined to limit people's access to health records . . . Our fear is that the substitution of 'medical and dental practitioners' for 'health professionals' as the decision makers in the Order will have a significant and detrimental effect on the patients' access to their records."

He says:

> "presumably it was done to satisfy the section[illegible] interests of certain hospital-based medical consultants."

The letter concludes:

> "It would be very regrettable if this order were to set a precedent of making access difficult rather than easy."

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

Those are serious allegations by a person who gave advice to the Government, and the Minister must explain why that advice was disregarded.

What happens when the medical and social work personal data reside together? There could be difficulties about who has the final say, particularly if the parties disagree. There are two possibilities in such circumstances. One is where the social work department consults the health professional. The department may say that it does not agree with the health professional's advice on the matter and may decide to release the personal data. In that case the data user, the social work department, will have the last say, but that could be a recipe for future conflict between the various professions that have to work together, and the data holder might not in future share his information with the social worker.

That is how consultation would work, but the other way in which it could work when there is disagreement is for the health professional to say, "You will not supply the information that constitutes the data." That would be not consultation but refusal of permission from the medical professional. Who will have the last word in the event of disagreement? The Minister must be clearer about that.

The consultation process will not be uniform because a health professional in Leyton may give a different decision from a health professional in Ilford about a similar case. One may grant subject access and the other may refuse to grant it. That could have serious implications. I am worried that insurance companies may force subject access and that it will become well known that medical data that will cause serious harm to the data subject will be exempt. By inference, personal data that will not cause serious harm will be available to the data subject. An insurance company may use this and say to the data subject, "Before we give you a policy, apply to your doctor for subject access and show us the results."

By definition, "serious harm" people will be poor risks and the insurance companies will have no interest in them. As "serious harm" depends on consultation with the health professional, and as that can be erratic and varied from area to area, some poor risks will be unjustifiably categorised and unfairly labelled as poor risks. I hope that the Minister will be able to respond to my points in the House or by letter.

11.58 pm

Mr. Renton: I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to this short, stimulating and interesting debate. In particular, I thank the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who I regret is not in the Chamber at the moment, and the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). Although the hon. Member for Leyton has eaten into most of the time in which I had hoped to answer the questions posed in the debate, he is none the less one of the aficionados in this subject. He always speaks with great seriousness and expertise on the subject, and I am delighted that he was able to make a contribution. I certainly support the remarks made about Steve Norris, and the same must be said about Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk. They are two former hon. Members whom we miss in the House. They were great experts on personal data and data protection.

I was very disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) from the Opposition Front Bench. It was very shortsighted. If, heaven forfend, the hon. Gentleman was ever on the Government Front Bench occupying the position that I have tonight, I believe that he would be moving the data protection modification orders in precisely the same terms and in the same detail as I did tonight. In the Data Protection Act 1984 it is recognised that there are certain areas—health records are the main area—where totally unfettered access of the individual to his computer data cannot be given, largely for the individual's sake.

To encapsulate the broad objective of the legislation, it is to provide the maximum degree of access with the minimum safeguards necessary in the public interest and in the interests of the individual. That is the spirit behind the orders.

The hon. Member for Erdington and the hon. Member for Leyton raised points about the health order. In response to them I can state that the doctor or dentist's opinion is not legally the last word. If the data subject disagrees with the withholding of access, he has the right under section 21(8) of the 1984 Act to go to court and challenge the decision or to go to the Data Protection Registrar. In response to the question raised by the hon. Member for Erdington about what guidance is to be given to social workers, I can state that guidance has already been given as follows: withholding information should be exceptional, the local authority should identify someone in senior management to decide whether information should be withheld, and the authority's lawyers should normally be consulted.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) for stating very warmly that the legislation is a movement forward. If I cannot answer all his points tonight, I shall try to answer them later or ask my colleagues at the DHSS to answer, if their expertise is appropriate.

We are well aware of developments on the Continent in relation to data protection, and the Data Protection Registrar has travelled widely. The register of data users and the purposes for which they hold information has been published and is available in main public libraries. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye also asked about the constraints on the disclosure of that data. The point is that the orders deal with access by the data subject, not disclosure to third parties. The Data Protection Act 1984 deals with disclosure by requiring data users to register in general terms people to whom they disclose data.

Mr. Warren: Will it be possible for that information to be made available in the House?

Mr. Renton: I must get on, and my hon. Friend must forgive me.

I appreciate the importance of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I have already said that I shall consider making a new order dealing with a Northern Ireland adoption order when that order has been made. I understand the point made by the Joint Committee, and I dealt with that at some length in my opening remarks. I cannot accept that the order is defective, as the entry in question will not have effect unless and until the Northern Ireland adoption order is made.

Finally, I want to confirm how strongly we feel that the Data Protection Act 1984 is an important piece of legislation in terms of the responsibilities that it places on data users who use the automatic processing of personal information, and the protection that it gives to individuals against misuse or unauthorised disclosure of information stored about them on data systems. It will, of course, take time for the system established by the Act to become fully operative. The implementation of the Act has not been without its problems, but I believe that those are being overcome and that good progress is being made in meeting the objectives of the legislation——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Social Work) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

DATA PROTECTION

Resolved,

That the draft Data Protection (Subject Access Modification) (Health) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

That the draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.

That the draft Data Protection (Miscellaneous Subject Access Exemptions) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved. — *[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Mr. John Blackburn, Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mr. Andrew Faulds, Mr. Geraint Howells, Mr. David Hunt, Mr. Charles Irving, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. Michael Martin, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Mr. Stanley Orme, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Barry Porter, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Robert Rhodes James, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. John Wakeham, Joan Walley and Mr. Kenneth Warren, be members of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services).—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

PETITION

Rating Reform

12.5 am

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I wish to present a petition from Mr. Bill Greig of 182 Gilmerton Dykes drive, Edinburgh, Mr. Jimmy Lawrie of 25 Ferniehill place, Edinburgh, and members of the Scottish Old Age Pensioners Association, Gilmerton branch, in south Edinburgh, rightly objecting to the Government's disgraceful poll tax. They are seeking the immediate repeal of this lamentable legislation, which will penalise many senior citizens who are not among the narrow category of people who are exempt in sections 8(8) and (9) of the 1987 Act. Prisoners will not have to pay the poll tax, but pensioners will. The poll tax is unfair, undemocratic and unworkable. My constituents sincerely request that the Government act immediately to repeal this measure. They have my full support.

To lie upon the Table.

Woolley and Redbrook Collieries

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

12.5 am

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): The announcement recently by British Coal of the closure of Woolley and Redbrook collieries is a cause for great concern, not only in my constituency but in those bordering mine — notably, Barnsley, West and Penistone, Barnsley, East and the Wakefield constituencies. The area is one of high unemployment and declining industry which can ill-afford the job losses and loss of job opportunity which the closures will inevitably bring.

The closures are further evidence of British Coal's complete antagonism towards the industry. Since 1985 there has been closure after closure of collieries with extensive reserves; closures which are made on economic grounds only, simply to save money and reduce the costs of British Coal — short-term measures rather than a planned future.

The industry is suffering because of the conditions placed on it by the Government — the imposition of break-even and individual colliery self-sufficiency targets, which have resulted in British Coal cutting costs in as many short-term ways as it can think of, rather than looking at ways to make the industry profitable on a long-term basis. The closure of Woolley and Redbrook collieries are two such short-term measures which will lose jobs and waste millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money which has only just been invested in both collieries.

Targets have been imposed on the industry, not to reduce costs for the industry in general but to break up the industry with a view to making a decision on privatisation in the future. However, to do that the Government have to break the National Union of Mineworkers; hence the disciplinary code and the chairman's recent statement that he wants to get rid of union activists, and the refusal to negotiate nationally on any issue.

The Government also have to remove the safety standards of the industry, which are a bulwark against the dangerous practices which British Coal wants to import from America. More importantly, the industry has to be made an attractive proposition — collieries which are profitable will be sold off while the older ones, which have higher production costs, will simply be closed down. That is to be the fate of Woolley and Redbrook collieries despite investment in them over the past few years of hundreds of millions of pounds.

It is the desire of British Coal to achieve self-sufficiency of individual units, which is the main reason for the economic closures — short-term measures rather than planning the best possible use of one of the nation's assets. Cost-cutting through manpower reductions has left many collieries, including Woolley and Redbrook, with insufficient manpower to produce coal properly. Since the end of the miners' strike in 1985, 20,000 men have been moved out of the coal industry in Yorkshire alone. The work forces at both Woolley and Redbrook collieries have co-operated with management on the recent merger of management services at those collieries and a rundown in manpower of several hundreds. Despite that, the board has announced closure without allowing either colliery to show its potential, even though Redbrook recently achieved productivity levels that left it without replacement face room.

British Coal and the Government are not interested in whether the collieries can produce coal efficiently or cheaply, they are simply to be closed to reduce the overheads of the industry generally. British Coal is forced to cut costs further and further to compete with cheap imported coal from exploited labour in South Africa and child labour in South America. Our own industry is to be wasted to pave the way for some people to line their pockets when the industry is sold. There is no point competing in the market place when the competition is so grossly unfair. A report shortly to be considered by the European Parliament shows the subsidies given to our European competitors.

The coal industry is carrying the costs of the capital investment introduced under "Plan for Coal" in 1974, but which has been reneged upon by the Conservative Government since 1979—partly as a reaction to what happened to the previous Conservative Administration and partly because of previous miners' strikes. Woolley and Redbrook are both casualties of the Government's rejection of "Plan for Coal". Both received heavy investment with the crippling capital charges with which the industry has been burdened. The industry needs those capital charges to be restructured or written off because of the failure of "Plan for Coal". That subsidy is not favouring coal against other energy industries, and comparisons can be drawn with the hidden costs of the decommissioning of nuclear power stations and nuclear waste disposal.

Let us consider the subsidy to the Central Electricity Generating Board last year, when the cost of supplying coal to it was reduced by £3 a tonne. The latest target set for the coal industry is to produce coal at £1·50 per gigajoule. A gigajoule is a unit of energy, and it is equivalent to 227 kilowatt hours. A kilowatt hour is sold by the electricity supply industry at 5·7p per therm, so 227 kilowatt hours multiplied by that figure gives a total of about £15. Therefore, the coal industry is supplying coal at £1·50 per gigajoule, but the electricity boards are selling it at 10 times that amount. Why is there such a differential between the cost of coal per gigajoule produced by British Coal and the level at which the electricity supply industry sells that energy in kilowatt hours?

The targets set for Woolley and Redbrook collieries and the rest of the industry have been made worse, if not impossible, by the changed accountancy praactices of British Coal, resulting in capital charges being imposed on individual collieries. Those charges relate to capital invested over the past decade under "Plan for Coal", which at that time forecast a market of 150 million tonnes. The reality is that the market is 90 million tonnes and falling, yet the industry is still required to carry those crippling capital charges.

At Woolley and, in particular, Redbrook, millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is to be wasted. Are those costs to be transferred? Will other collieries in the area have to carry the burden of capital investment wasted at Woolley and Redbrook? What will happen to the coal washery plant at the Woolley complex? About £106 million is involved in that unit. Redbrook colliery has only recently had its refurbishment completed. An investigation into the investment in those collieries should be undertaken, but British Coal is attempting to prevent any investigation that would come under the review procedure. The revised redundancy proposals, which have once again been increased to encourage men to leave the industry, will not be available to the men at Woolley and Redbrook unless they agree to accept redundancy before Christmas.

British Coal is blackmailing men into accepting the closure of a unit by threatening to withdraw redundancy payments, thus preventing the review procedure from operating properly because it cannot be completed before Christmas. British Coal is circumventing the review body that it agreed to after the recent miners' strike. Why cannot British Coal allow the review procedure to go ahead and then, but only then, if the decision is the same—nobody doubts that it will be, because the independent review body has not prevented the closure of one colliery yet—allow the men to accept redundancy or apply for transfers? Woolley and Redbrook collieries are to be closed because of the Government's short-term, short-sighted strategy for the coal industry, which is to reduce costs as quickly as possible. It will result in a loss of jobs and a loss of job opportunities in my constituency. The closures are short-term panic measures that have been forced on an industry that needs to be given proper political direction, with a policy to increase production, reduce imports and reduce opencast coal. Redbrook and Woolley collieries should be allowed to remain open to demonstrate their potential, instead of being wasted as part of the Government's headlong rush towards the destruction of the industry.

12.17 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) on obtaining this debate. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), are present in the Chamber. While Redbrook is in my constituency, Woolley colliery and its washery are in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield. Some 95 per cent. of the men who will be affected by these closures live in the Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency.

It is ironic that about 10 or 12 years ago I had a hand in planning the Woolley-Redbrook complex. As deputy head of manpower for the Barnsley area it was my job to bring the unions together to take part in the meetings and to deal with the problems of the reorganisation of the Barnsley area, which cost £450 million. Redbrook cost £29·5 million, Woolley cost about £10 million for drivages, and the washery cost £106 million.

It was then envisaged that manpower would be reduced from 17,000 to 13,000 and an understanding was struck with the area deputy director that the reorganisation would take the Barnsley area into the 21st century as a strong and viable industry. The trade unions and men co-operated, even though it meant a vast reduction in manpower and a vast reorganisation.

However, that figure of 13,000 men has now been reduced to 7,000, so something has gone tragically wrong. The paint is hardly dry at Redbrook and the contractors have only just moved out. Why is all of the expenditure that was planned some time ago to be wasted? What is the future of Redbrook as an organisational unit if it closes? Will it be leased to private enterprise?

Underground, drivages have been made into a large area of coal reserves. This brand new colliery, with its shafts widened and deepened and new shafts drilled is to be closed. Further, there are massive reserves just to the east of Woolley colliery.

What will be the capital cost of this reorganisation? The coal preparation plant that was built and planned for 12 collieries will now feed into three—Park Mill, Denby Grange and a new plant on which £30 million has been spent, Calder, which becomes part of the Denby Grange complex—if Woolley and Redbrook close. It is feared that the £106 million of investment in the coal preparation plant, which was planned and built for 12 collieries, will be the next item to be lost. Is the capital cost to be borne by the three remaining collieries that feed the plant? If so, even with a new colliery—the production figures came out for the first time last week—the remaining collieries will immediately be uneconomic.

It is clear that British Coal and the Government have continually moved the goal posts. What was once economic has therefore proved uneconomic. It is no good the Government saying that the matter is not one for them. They should be ashamed of themselves if they think that. It should be a Government concern. The Secretary of State for Education and Science disbanded the Burnham committee and put another in its place, saying that he has the biggest say in what goes on because so much Government and taxpayers' money goes into education. Government and taxpayers' money has gone into the Barnsley area, and the Government should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves if they shy away from having a say in what happens.

As the situation is so serious, the Minister should discuss with his colleagues whether the Barnsley area should be given development area status. We hope that the worst does not happen, but the Government should not wait until it does. The trade unions will put forward an alternative strategy such as they did for Darfield main, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East, where it worked.

We are asking for a review and, for heaven's sake, let the men off the hook regarding the £5,000, which is worrying them sick. They are in a dicey position. They must apparently accept the decision before Christmas or lose £5,000.

12.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State — it must be very unusual for a Secretary of State to be here at this time of night—have heard with interest what the hon. Members for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) have said. I notice that the hon. Members for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchcliffe) are also in their places. I recognise their obvious sincerity in bringing before the House the future of the Woolley/Redbrook colliery.

There is absolutely no question about the colliery review procedure not going through. The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central said that there was some question about it, but there is none. The procedure will be gone through with full rigour. He will know that the future of individual collieries is a matter for the British Coal corporation, in consultation with the appropriate mining unions.

It has not been acknowledged fully that the Woolley/Redbrook combined mine has lost more than £92 million in the past five years, despite efforts to achieve an

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

operating performance which would have secured the future of the unit. In November 1985, in line with British Coal's strategy of maximising the production of low cost coal and the income from coal sales, Redbrook and Woolley were identified as requiring improved performance both at the coal face and in surface facilities if they were to survive and have a future. In an attempt to reduce overheads at Woolley, the colliery was merged with North Gawber in January 1986, although—and this also has not been acknowledged fully — due to the lack of agreement by the unions, that happened seven months after the proposal was first made.

Despite measures to reduce costs and a policy of concentrating production in the more efficient seams, both Woolley and Redbrook continued to make heavy losses. In August 1986 it was first proposed that Woolley and Redbrook should be merged to streamline administration and reduce overheads. Some eight months later — months in which results continued to worsen — the unions finally agreed to the merger. It seems that the delay in implementing the merger proposals, which included a run-down in manpower, can only have damaged the prospects for the unit. In July 1987 results were still not showing the hoped for signs of improvement. Development work at the Redbrook end of the unit suffered from industrial relations problems, so-called ragouts, of which again no mention has been made, and——

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Says who?

Mr. Spicer: That is perhaps the view of the hon. Gentleman, but it is worth reminding not only Opposition Members but union members outside the House that those ragouts and industrial relations problems eventually come home to roost, and here we have an example.

Mr. Patchett: What is the Minister's interpretation of a ragout?

Mr. Spicer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is able to answer that question for himself. A ragout is a well-known expression that——

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Never heard it before in 29 years.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman has never heard it before. In that case, I am about to educate him. He has been in the industry 29 years and he has never heard the expression. It is part and parcel, unfortunately, of the industry today that there are one-day call-outs and walk-outs, often at very little notice, for often irrational reasons — and this case is a perfect example — that do the industry no good at all, to say the very least. In this seam, not only is it true that there were bad industrial relations but, as I am sure hon. Members who have studied this know, there was adverse geology. Seams were abandoned with local agreement. The whole future of the unit had to be reviewed and, unfortunately, the combination of poor operating performance, disappointing development work and a relatively high level of disputes, whether the hon. Gentleman agrees with that or not, together with increasingly adverse geology and a decline in the demand for coking coal, have resulted in an output per manshift so far this year of 2·93 tonnes, one of the lowest in the area. Production costs are even worse—Redbrook coal costs £2·34 per gigajoule, which is over one and a half times the industry target. Area management has, therefore, concluded that the unit should be closed on economic grounds. In reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central, that proposal was put to the unions at the reconvened colliery review meetings on 16 October. Agreement was not reached. It is now open for the three unions involved to take the matter to a national appeal. I understand that the NUM has appealed against the closure.

Both ends of the merged unit are very old. Woolley dates back to 1869 and the original Redbrook shafts to 1850. Reserves have been extensively worked — for instance, Woolley has mined a total of 11 seams. It is hardly surprising that the best coal has been worked out. In addition, working, as the colliery does, under the heavily built-up area of Barnsley, a number of seams have been and will continue to incur heavy subsidence costs. Redbrook has the highest costs in the area. This combination of factors has resulted in losses for the merged unit of just under £12 million for the first half of the year.

Mr. Cummings: The Minister mentioned the NUM and the three unions involved. What is the BACM attitude to closure?

Mr. Spicer: All I am saying at the moment is that, on the colliery review procedure, the NUM has appealed against the closure. I am not aware of the position of the other unions. The NUM has appealed and, therefore, no doubt the procedure will go into effect. The point was made by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central that the review procedure was not being conducted properly, and that is an absolute travesty of the facts.

Mr. Illsley: I said that the review procedure was not beng implemented properly. I intended to point out the fact that British Coal would defeat the procedure by telling men that redundancy would not be available to them unless they agreed to accept it by Christmas. The men will, therefore, be bought off. They will apply for redundancy before the review procedure is allowed to run its full course.

Mr. Spicer: I am glad to be able to answer that point. The special redundancy terms that British Coal is offering — the £5,000 addition to the basic redundancy terms, which are already generous—will be available until next March. I do not know where he got the idea——

Mr. Illsley *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman has put his point of view. I understood that 220 people had already applied. —*[Interruption.]* It is a purely voluntary matter. They, unlike the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central and some of the unions, may take the view that that pit has become uneconomic. That is the view of British Coal. British Coal is going through the review procedure that is laid down and the unions have every right to appeal against that. There is now a well-established procedure for arguing that point. It is perfectly right that the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central should publicise that fact in the House of Commons. No doubt he has done the cause a good service. However, the review procedure is a matter between British Coal and the unions. British Coal believes that it is an uneconomic pit. It had been made even more uneconomic by industrial disputes and the problems that have existed in industrial relations.—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Barnsley, East disagrees with the facts perhaps he should check them himself to see exactly what industrial disputes there have been. For example, when the question of mergers between the various pits occurred there were tremendous delays in implementing those mergers. In fact, the mergers were finally acknowledged to be the best way of trying to solve the problems of the pits. I agree that it has not worked. Part of the problem is that the combination of factors has resulted in the losses from the merged units being just under £12 million for the first half of the year. Every tonne of coal produced from the pit is losing almost £30.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone raised the question of the possible loss of investment at Woolley-Redbrook. Investment decisions are a matter for the management of British Coal. I cannot and should not be involved in day-to-day decisions. But I understand that the investment in the Woolley-Redbrook complex and the new washery were approved in 1978 under the then Labour Government.

The project regretfully reflects the optimistic assumptions of Labour's "Plan for Coal", which envisaged a coal market of 150 million tonnes in 1985. In fact, only 105 million tonnes were sold in 1985, and 114 million tonnes in 1986, the first full year after the strike. Investment which is based on unrealistic assumptions is unlikely to pay the dividends expected, whether in the coal industry or elsewhere.

I say unashamedly that this Administration attaches great importance to realistic investment decisions, as I know does British Coal. While it is not for the Government to take decisions on particular investment, we do have a duty to assure ourselves and the House that British Coal adopts the best possible procedures and practices in its investment appraisal. In 1983 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission examined, among other things, the corporation's investment procedures and made recommendations which British Coal accepted. The further Monopolies and Mergers Commission reference of British Coal, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced recently, is likely to include investment appraisal in its investigation.

The colliery review procedures are being conducted. The procedures laid down are being carried out. It is ultimately a matter for British Coal as to whether the pit is finally closed. No doubt it will read carefully the report of the debate that has taken place tonight, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central on having raised the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

1. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures are proposed by Her Majesty's Government to ensure that industrial and toxic pollution of the North sea is ended.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The Government are determined to ensure that pollution of the North sea is as low as practicable. I therefore look forward to chairing the second international conference on the protection of the North sea later this month and to discussing with ministerial colleagues from the other North sea states further measures to protect the North sea. The United Kingdom is committed to ensuring a successful outcome to the conference, but this will depend on all the North sea countries being prepared to take the necessary action.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that, against the background of the operations of ships such as Vulcanus II in the North sea, more control is required of the pollution in the North sea? I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for referring to the North sea conference, because that presents him with an opportunity of achieving some progress in the matter. Will he consider setting up a United Nations regional sea programme, the like of which obtains in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, to prevent this mindless, nautical vandalism from continuing in the future?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the incineration of toxic waste. He might be interested to know that the United Kingdom produces 2 per cent. of the total incinerated in the North sea, whereas more than half of it originates from Germany. Perhaps he is pointing the finger at the wrong country.

Secondly, in relation to conferences about population of the seas, I would welcome being able to take part in a conference on the pollutants in the Baltic, the Mediterranean or many other seas that are far worse than the North sea.

Mr. Forman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that we welcome the initiatives that his Department is taking in this matter? Will he tell us a little more about the progress that has been made in clearing up estuarine pollution, particularly in the Humber and other such estuaries?

Mr. Ridley: Certainly. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He might be interested to know that about £200 million has been spent on cleaning up the Thames, about £130 million on cleaning up the Tyne, among the east coast estuaries, and similarly on other rivers. The result is that 43 per cent. of the inputs of heavy metals from rivers now comes from the Rhine, 28 per cent. from West Germany, and a smaller proportion than from those two areas from the United Kingdom.

Ms. Quin: What specific proposals will the Secretary of State present to the Council of Europe Environment Ministers at the end of this month? Does he accept that if he does not take an initiative in this matter the United Kingdom will continue to be seen as an arch polluter of the North sea and not seriously interested in the problem?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady clearly has not been listening to my answers. She might like to know, further, that only 1 to 3 per cent. of heavy metal inputs from sewage dumping comes from the United Kingdom, so she has grossly misrepresented the position of the United Kingdom, which is one of the cleaner countries in relation to the North sea. I have a full programme of trying to get the other countries to come into line with us on cleaning up the North sea. I shall not, of course, reveal full details of our position for the conference, but I hope that it will be successful.

Sir John Farr: My right hon. Friend, in his Green Paper, said that the National Rivers Authority would be responsible for cleaning up coastal waters. When does he expect to set up the NRA, and will he confirm that he will give it real powers, so that the condition of some of our coastal waters, and the whole of the North sea, will be transformed for the better?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the NRA, which has been generally welcomed. I believe that it will make an additional contribution to cleaning up the rivers, which are a major source of pollution to the seas around our coasts. We shall not have authority to set up the NRA until Parliament has passed the necessary legislation, but I shall see what I can do to begin to assemble those parts of it that it would be proper to do in advance.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Minister is being a little disingenuous and is misleading the House. Is it not a fact that on 24 November, at the North sea conference, the Conservative Government will be in the dock again as one of the worst polluters of the North sea; that, as well as putting liquid industrial waste into the North sea, we dumped 2·2 million tonnes of solid industrial waste last year; that we are the only country still dumping sewage sludge into the North sea—25 per cent. of our sewage sludge is so dumped — and that the Government's refusal to act in any significant way on sulphur emissions is also polluting the North sea? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this Government show a reckless disregard for the environment, and that nitrates in rivers are also getting into the North sea and polluting it?

Mr. Ridley: I know that it is acutely disappointing for the Labour party to have to admit that it cannot knock the United Kingdom with impunity, but I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the solid waste that we put into the North sea is put in by the collieries on the Durham coast. It is not toxic, nor is it polluting. If those solid wastes were not to be allowed to be put into the sea off Durham, there would be several colliery closures, which would not be exactly what the Labour party seeks.

The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that there is no harm in dumping sewage sludge into the sea. Many countries do it. The harm is done when there is heavy metal content in that sludge. Our contribution has decreased to only 1 to 3 per cent. of heavy metal being deposited in the North sea. Therefore, on that ground, the hon. Gentleman is wrong, too. He may not have realised that a large programme has been instituted — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions. Why should I not answer them? I know that he does not like the answers.

The hon. Gentleman might have forgotten that a major programme of desulphurisation of power stations, both existing and future, has been instituted, which is a bigger contribution than many have made towards desulphurisation.

Rates

2. **Mr. Devlin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of people in England currently paying the full domestic rate; and what number are eligible to vote in local council elections.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): On the basis of the latest figures, there are about 12·6 million paying domestic rates in full in England compared with 35·8 million eligible to vote in local council elections.

Mr. Devlin: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that if one tried to put this iniquitious system before the House today it would fail? On that basis, does he agree that the time has come to press forward with the community charge as soon as possible?

Mr. Howard: Yes. It is precisely because no other proposal offers the advantages in accountability that the community charge offers, and because accountability is the last thing that the hon. Gentlemans' friends in local government want, that they are so desperate in their opposition to our proposal.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that the Minister is not trying to mislead the House by the answer that he gave. Households including many people pay domestic rates. At the moment, how many people contribute to domestic rates by virtue of being households? That is the first question.

My second question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness to everyone, there should be only one question.

Mr. Howard: The bills go to one person in the house, and 12·6 million people receive them.

Mr. Heddle: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that of the 18 million ratepayers who should pay rates one third do not pay them in full or in part? Will he further confirm that that does nothing for local democracy and that it is necessary, in order to strengthen local democracy, to introduce a fairer, more broadly based system as soon as possible and to build in all possible safeguards to ensure that the poorest section of the community does not suffer?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend. The new system will be fairer than the present system, and it is becoming increasingly recognised as such.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that the 12 million spouses of the direct ratepayers to whom he referred will not take kindly his remark that they are not contributing to the rates? That was a very unfair point. Does he accept that, for Opposition Members, universal franchise is not negotiable—as implied in the question and his answer to it—either nationally or locally? The ability to vote must never be related to the ability to pay.

Mr. Howard: I can understand the hon. Gentleman's hesitation in coming to the Dispatch Box. Last month he said that he did not want to be sent naked into the debating chamber. However, he is sitting here today and he is not a pretty sight. Conservative Members hope that his hon. Friends will clothe him as soon as possible.

A recent study for the Audit Commission showed that spouses and others who do not receive the bills are three times less likely to know even that local rates have increased, still less what their level is. That is the truth of accountability.

Local Authority Expenditure

3. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for encouraging local councils to curb overspending.

Mr. Howard: Under the present rate support grant system, grant pressures and rate and precept limitation will continue to encourage local authorities to restrain spending. The community charge will bring the full pressure of local accountability to bear on spending decisions.

Mr. Harris: In order to improve efficiency, will my hon. and learned Friend encourage local authorities, on a voluntary basis, to implement the contracting provisions of the Local Government Bill now before the House before it becomes law?

Mr. Howard: Yes. The Audit Commission has identified more than £400 million of savings a year that can be achieved in the short term without waiting for the provisions of the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister realise that, far from overspending, local authorities are at present unable to meet the needs of their local communities and the demands of the ratepayers who elect them? Is it not time that the Government changed direction and allowed local authorities to meet the needs of the community rather than continually having to cut back?

Mr. Howard: The savings identified by the Audit Commission offer those local authorities a ready means of meeting their electors' needs.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the best ways of curbing over-spending would be to introduce the community charge speedily to make local authorities accountable once again to those who provide much of the money that they spend?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is why we are pressing on with our proposals.

Dr. Cunningham: What does the Minister have to say to the Conservative councillors controlling the London borough of Barnet, which includes the Prime Minister's constituency, who have rejected the Government's proposals to introduce a poll tax? Is not one of the fundamental reasons why increasing numbers of Conservative councillors are rejecting these proposals that, among other things, the Government intend to take powers that will allow them retrospectively to alter council's budgets and levels of income? What can be the purpose of standing for democratic election at local level if Ministers have the power retrospectively to change the finances, budgets and planning of every local authority in the country?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is not right about the attitude of Conservative councillors to our community charge proposals. On the subject of community charge capping, the fact of the matter is that, regrettably, even when the community charge is in force, some councils—I hope very few—controlled by the Labour party may still engage in irresponsible behaviour and spending. It would be an abdication of responsibility for the Government not to have a reserve capping power at their disposal.

Football

4. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to discuss with the football authorities additional measures to combat hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

22. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is scheduled next to meet the football authorities to discuss issues affecting the sport.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I last met them on 19 October. As a result, I shall shortly be meeting, with the Football League, those clubs which have not achieved the minimum 50 per cent. ground capacity level agreed with the authorities in February and have not produced clear police advice that the level which has been achieved is the optimal at present to deter hooliganism.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the behaviour of footballers on the field can also influence the fans on the terraces, and that the intended prosecution of three players in Scotland should be a salutary reminder to all footballers that they must behave more responsibly, or accept the consequences?

Mr. Moynihan: I cannot comment on the specific case in point, because the matter is to be brought before the procurator fiscal, but generally I strongly deprecate indiscipline and violence on any field of play. Governing bodies in sport have a duty to take tough disciplinary action. No sportsman is above the law, and it is quite right that behaviour at a sporting event should not be immune to the law, either on or off the field of play.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the exemplary behaviour of Welsh teams in European competitions, including the European Champions cup and other European cups, has the Minister spoken to officials of the Football League and deplored the decision not to postpone the games this Saturday in which Welsh international players are involved, although a similar postponement is being allowed for those games in which English players are taking part?

Mr. Moynihan: I have a great deal of sympathy for the Welsh players' request to postpone matches, but the decision is entirely a matter for the Football League. I hope, however, that even at this late stage it will reconsider its decision.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for not having called him next. Mr. Pendry.

Mr. Pendry: In view of the recent bouts of football hooliganism in many European countries, notably the Netherlands and the Soviet Union, will the Minister assist the Football Association in bringing to the notice of UEFA the, by contrast, much-improved scene at home, so that English football teams can speedily return to European club competitions?

Mr. Moynihan: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree, we still have a long way to go, but important steps have been taken. International co-operation to deter hooliganism is essential. That was my main purpose in attending the German-English friendly, where close international police liaison and a comprehensive package of crowd control measures inside the ground were in place. Further liaison through the Trevi group is being achieved by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. David Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the members-only scheme at Luton Town football club has been an unqualified success? In the 1985-86 season there were 102 arrests and four stabbings, and 97 people were dealt with by St. John Ambulance. In the following season there were no arrests, and there have been no arrests this year either. Does my hon. Friend also agree that until the Football Association and the Football League are prepared to introduce a 100 per cent. membership scheme there will be hooliganism both inside and outside football grounds?

Mr. Moynihan: I applaud Luton's approach. There is compelling police evidence that the circumstances that made it 100 per cent. right for Luton do not apply to every other club, but clear determination and putting an effective package of measures in place can be successful in starting to tackle hooliganism. I particularly congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the example that they have shown.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the curbing of football hooliganism is not simply a matter for the football authorities? The responsible board of Shrewsbury Town football club hosted a match against Middlesbrough, during which 80 fans were arrested and 20 policemen were taken to hospital, and it expects the legal authorities to play their part in combating hooliganism. Will my hon. Friend persuade his Government colleagues to back support for the Magistrates' Association so that meaningful sentences can be passed against those convicted of crimes of violence?

Mr. Moynihan: I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend's point. I shall certainly take up the specific points that he raised with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I have no doubt whatsoever that he will pay close attention to them.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister agree that one of the main ways to curb football hooliganism is to provide facilities to ensure that it can be a family sport? If he is not prepared to do so, will he say why? We should not encourage the sort of hooliganism that we have just witnessed from Tory Members. Does the Minister agree that, in the interests of promoting football as a family sport, we should provide money to the Football Grounds Improvement Trust so that it can give improvement grant-aid of 50 per cent. towards expenditure for work on family enclosures at clubs such as Port Vale FC? Does he agree that these grants should be resumed as one way of curbing hooliganism?

Mr. Moynihan: Important benefits can undoubtedly be derived from family and community schemes. As that was the thrust of the point that the hon. Lady was making, I agree that family schemes make an important contribution.

Mr. John Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that the schemes introduced by York City FC and Scarborough FC are progressing well? Together with the considerable improvements that have been made in ground safety measures and crowd segregation by the police, those schemes ensure that the majority of supporters can watch football in peace and safety. As to the incidents in Scarborough this summer, is it not abundantly clear that even with 100 per cent. participation in membership schemes, those who misbehave and conduct themselves in a violent manner must be banned from grounds? Is it not the role of the courts to ensure that that occurs?

Mr. Moynihan: As my hon. Friend knows, exclusion orders are being used this season. Thus, the latter part of his question is answered.

As to the former part, I am concerned that Scarborough FC has not achieved a 50 per cent. ground capacity membership scheme or provided adequate police evidence that the current level of the membership scheme is optimal. For that reason, I and the Football League have called it in.

Mr. Denis Howell *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members seem to be becoming a little excited.

Mr. Howell: I offer the Minister all-party support for his attack on the discrimination against the selection of Welsh footballers this week. As to the question about further proposals, as I understand it, the Minister is advocating random breath-testing inside football grounds. How much will this cost, who will pay the bill, what is the lawful authority of any steward seeking to breathalyse a supporter, and how practical will it be when 1,000 spectators a minute will be entering the more important grounds 10 minutes before the kick-off?

Mr. Moynihan: There is no doubt that drink-related incidents of hooliganism are commonplace. Therefore, the Football League has agreed with the police to inquire into the possibility of stewards inside the ground — therein lies the lawful authority — having breathlysers to test those suspected of excessive drinking. A number of clubs have said that they are willing to enter into such a scheme. It is essential that every possible measure is tried and tested to deter the hooligan.

Rent Arrears

5. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the level of council rent arrears in England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): The latest available comprehensive figures on rent arrears owed to local authorities, taken from the subsidy claim forms, show that at 1 April 1986 accumulated arrears in England totalled over £211 million, or over 5·7 per cent. of the total rent collectable. A list of arrears owing to individual local authorities was placed in the Library on 10 December 1986.

Mr. Mitchell: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her first appearance at the Dispatch Box. Does she agree that the collection of rent arrears owes nothing to local party politics, but everything to efficiency and management? Does she agree that the failure to make these collections is a scandalous misuse of valuable resources?

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Arrears of this size place a totally unnecessary burden on ratepayers and on the vast majority of careful and responsible tenants who pay their rents on time. Councils which let arrears build up are certainly not helping the people whom they allow to get into debt. They are certainly wasting millions of pounds that could be spent on repairs and upkeep for the benefit of all their tenants.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister not agree that very often arrears arise in families with extremely low incomes and that this is the cause of some of the arrears? Does she also agree that it is better to allow those arrears to accumulate than to dispossess families of their houses and put them on the street?

Mrs. Roe: I do not accept that high rent levels lead to arrears because tenants cannot afford to pay. Local authorities have discretion to set rents to reflect the location, size and amenities of their dwellings, although it is true that we continually seek to persuade local authorities to make rents high enough to ensure that sufficient funds are available for repair and maintenance. The housing benefit system exists to help tenants who are in real need.

Mr. Hayward: Can my hon. Friend confirm that two of the worst offenders are Southwark and Lambeth councils? Will she tell us whether she has considered using any form of attachment of earnings system or recommending such systems to councils to enable them to retrieve some of these massive arrears that councils have run up?

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend is quite right. The two local authorities that he mentioned are two of the worst offenders. Of course, we cannot do the local authorities' jobs for them. They are the landlords and it is their duty to collect their rents. We are more than ready to help any local housing authority that wants seriously to improve the quality of its housing management. I remind the House of our priority estates project and estate action programmes, which together will work on almost 300 of the worst estates in Britain. A specific objective of those will be to get better management, including, of course, the reduction of rent arrears.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister tell the House to what extent the changes and cuts in housing benefit have influenced the total rent arrears? Is she aware of the massive repossession of houses by building societies, particularly since the cuts in supplementary benefit paid to people to help with their mortgage interest repayments?

From 1 April that will be aggravated by the changes recently announced by her colleague. Will she now defend Britain's tenants and householders?

Mrs. Roe: There is no evidence to support the view that delays or difficulties in the housing benefit system can account for the extraordinary differences that exist between the performances of apparently similar councils in collecting rents. For example, in April 1986 Walsall reported rent arrears of over 12·5 per cent. of its total roll. At the same point Wigan had kept the arrears down to 2 per cent. The Audit Commission agrees that the only possible explanation is different levels of management competence.

Mr. Favell: Can my hon. Friend tell the House what proportion of council house tenants now receive housing benefit? Is it true to say that with housing benefit at its present level there is no earthly reason why any council house tenant should get into arrears with his rent?

Mrs. Roe: I am unable to give my hon. Friend the figure for which he asks, but I can assure him that housing benefit is available for those on low incomes who need that help.

Nuclear Waste

6. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of NIREX to discuss the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Ridley: I have had discussions with the chairman of NIREX from time to time. We last met on 22 October.

Mr. Ross: Will the Secretary of State condemn the irresponsible activity of companies such as Consolidated Environmental Technologies, which, for commercial purposes, purport to speak authoritatively on behalf of NIREX about the dumping of nuclear waste? Will he confirm that there is no intention to dump nuclear waste off Dundee or Tayside? What action does the Secretary of State intend to take against these unscrupulous companies and their activities?

Mr. Ridley: I understand that Consolidated Environmental Technologies has, on its own account, been looking at sites in the North sea where it might suggest how to work out the techniques for deep disposal under the seabed. None of the work has been done for NIREX. At this stage I am not in a position either to rule in or rule out any particular site in the United Kingdom, because NIREX is doing its studies. Until it comes forward with some suggestions, I cannot tell the House what those might be.

Mr. Kilfedder: Since understandable anger has been generated as a result of NIREX's proposal to consider dumping nuclear waste in the seabed off Sellafield, will the Minister ensure that NIREX realises the anger felt on both sides of the Irish sea and realises that people should not be put at risk or the sea polluted?

Mr. Ridley: I must say to the hon. Gentleman that it was not NIREX that suggested that plan, but the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). He visited Sellafield, and I quote from a newspaper—the only source I have—that states:

> "Labour has decided to back British Nuclear Fuels' plans to store nuclear waste under the sea off its Sellafield reprocessing plant as the only solution to the waste problem."

I must tell the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) that NIREX is more cautious and, possibly, more expert than the hon. Member for Bootle and has not yet made any proposals of any sort.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us when he expects NIREX to be able to announce the results of its current survey? Is he aware of the widespread anger and concern in Scotland, where many sites have been rumoured as possible areas for dumping intermediate nuclear waste, not least at Durn Hill near Portsoy on the edge of my constituency? Is it true that there will be a statement next week, and can he guarantee that the House will have a full opportunity to debate such issues?

Mr. Ridley: NIREX will be issuing a discussion document that on 12 November in which it will put forward the strategies it is working up and will invite public comment on its proposals. I must repeat that neither in that document nor at this time has any suggestion been made about any location that is favoured or ruled out. We are discussing techniques and methods for carrying out the work that must be undertaken in due course.

Mr. Jack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the main points of public concern about the nuclear industry is the disposal of waste? The concept of concentrating the disposal of that waste on such sites as Sellafield would do much to assuage public concern on this matter.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that everybody realises that, whatever the future of the nuclear programme — I believe that it has an extremely good future—there is waste now that must be disposed of. Having ruled out shallow sites, such waste must, as I said in May this year, go to deep sites. It is right to give NIREX the opportunity to do all the studies it needs to ensure that the best solution is found for the ultimate disposal of waste. I shall not prejudge what it might say, but hon. Members will be able to comment when they see the consultative document from NIREX.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the Minister not accept that there are no proposals by BNFL or anyone else to dump any nuclear waste under the sea and that the Labour party does not support any proposals to dump waste in the North sea? The only thing that the Labour party has supported is the possible exploration of sites for the disposal of low-level and intermediate waste. Will the Minister undertake that NIREX and the Government will not use special development orders again, as they did for the last four sites that the Government had NIREX investigate, as that alienates the local community? Does he not accept that a public inquiry is necessary and that that should take place at BNFL if its investigations reach a furher stage than at present?

Mr. Ridley: I must explain to the hon. Gentleman that I was not being critical of him earlier, but was merely welcoming his sensible recognition that, the waste must be disposed of and that as I announced in May, it is correct to look for deep sites. I welcome his support for the principle. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I cannot bring myself to suggest that particular sites should be used, although he has kindly suggested that that site should be in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). However, that was jumping the gun. That was the only suggestion that I made. We must await any proposal from NIREX before considering how we can take it further.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

7. **Mr. Morgan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the number of people who have to live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Ridley: The proposals in our recent White Paper are aimed at increasing the amount of rented accommodation available. Meanwhile, we shall continue to encourage all those concerned to make better use of the existing housing stock.

Mr. Morgan: What reaction would the right hon. Gentleman expect from the homeless to the outturn figures given by the Chancellor yesterday, which showed an £80 million fall in housing expenditure this year compared with last year? When does he expect to announce the raising or scrapping of the 20 per cent. maximum on the use of council house receipts?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman may not have got it quite right from yesterday's announcements. He will be pleased to hear that I have announced an extra £45 million of capital allocations during the current year for local authorities to tackle homelessness and other housing needs. I also announced an increase of £384 million over this year's figure for capital investment in housing for 1988-89. Those are sizeable increases in the provision that is being made to deal with the shortage of homes to rent. Coupled with our proposals in the Housing Bill soon to come before the House—which hopes to bring into use many of the empty private sector properties—that is a major contribution to increased provision.

Sir George Young: Following the excellent speech at the Conservative party conference by the Minister for Housing and Planning, when will the Government come to a conclusion on the possible extension of the transferable discount scheme as a means of tackling homelessness in London?

Mr. Ridley: We are looking at that possibility, but I am a little confused about the extent of the bed-and-breakfast system in London at the present time. We have just heard that 631 out of 1,600 rooms booked for bed-and-breakfast by Camden borough council turned out to be unoccupied when inspected. That shows that of the £24 million which Camden is paying annually, some £9 million is apparently being spent on empty rooms for non-existant bed-and-breakfast places. We have a right to demand that this be administered more accurately and that the figures be given correctly.

Mr. Soley: Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to have a word with the Home Secretary about the houses that he is prepared to demolish, which have been empty for up to nine years and which could be used for some of these people. As the right hon. Gentleman is now accepting that there is a problem in the rented sector—and empty houses cause this problem—will he confess that 1 million homes have been lost from the rented sector since 1979, over half of which have been in the private sector? Why is it that Conservative Governments, both in 1957 and now, have presided over the worst ever loss to the rented sector? Is that not an explanation of why so many people are suffering the misery of bed-and-breakfast and homelessness?

Mr. Ridley: With 550,000 empty private properties and 113,000 empty council properties, the first recourse must be to find ways of bringing those properties into the market so that people can occupy them. That is an infinitely preferable solution to the hon. Gentleman's solution the other day, when he said that he would look at ways of relaxing planning consents on the green belt. I think that we have a better answer than he does.

Storm Damage

8. **Mrs. Fyfe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the cost to local authorities of the recent storms and floods.

Mr. Ridley: I do not yet have sufficiently reliable information to provide the estimate requested.

Mrs. Fyfe: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman recalls another great storm in 1968 which hit Glasgow and the west of Scotland, when 250,000 houses were serverely damaged and 21 people were killed. Does he recall that at that time the Labour Government gave the local authorities concerned 75 per cent. of the cost of storm damage? Will he emulate the example of the 1968 Labour Government?

Mr. Ridley: Over a 1p rate for counties. That is precisely what we have done.

Mr. Moate: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reaction from my own county of Kent to the Government's assistance has been somewhat less than ecstatic? If we rightly expect local authorities to respond immediately with urgency and efficiency to emergencies, should they not be more certain of the arrangements that are in place? Should we not ensure that the maximum that any county can contribute is the 1p rate and no more?

Mr. Ridley: For many years local authorities have been well aware of the proposed Bellwin scheme to be used in cases of emergency. It is perfectly right that we should have expected them to prepare their budgets with that possibility in mind. There has been some misunderstanding about where storm expenditure will fall. It is likely that much of what does not fall within the Bellwin scheme will qualify for additional capital allocations if the work can be properly capitalised. It will either be covered by the capital allocations, which I mentioned in my statement the other week, or it will fall within the Bellwin scheme. That is not generally recognised.

Mr. Molyneaux: In view of the wide variation in powers and status of local authorities in the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, will the Government ensure that there is a degree of flexibility in the administration of compensation schemes?

Mr. Ridley: At this time it is difficult to tell precisely what costs are incurred under each of the various headings. There was damage which immediately arose from the emergency, there was damage which was insurable and which falls to capital account, and there may be a small element of cost which was insurable, but which was revenue and therefore cannot fall to the capital account. The vast bulk of the expenditure falls either in the first or second category and is therefore covered. I give the right hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he wants: we shall try to interpret the matter as flexibly as we can. I realise that it has been a major occurrence for local authorities. We are trying to be as helpful as we can.

Mr. Rowe: I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware that my county of Kent, for example, is covered with many massive fallen trees and that it will take thousands of man hours to remove them. He may also be aware that the Trust for Conservation Volunteers, as far as I can make out, is working out a leisurely five-year scheme towards helping in the replanting of trees. Will he try to make sure that some major effort is now made to organise volunteers to help farmers and others to remove the fallen trees that are littering their land? Will he consider a nuclear arrangement for calling in volunteers in future emergencies?

Mr. Ridley: I have every sympathy for those in the south-east counties who suffered mammoth damage, particularly due to fallen trees, during the great storm. Arrangements for dealing with trees in commercial forests or on farmland are for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, although I have tried to help in cases of damaged trees of amenity value in parks and gardens of all sorts by getting the Countryside Commission to give discretionary assistance to clear up the damage and replace the trees. On the main private sector and commercial interests, my hon. Friend should address his question to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Dr. Cunningham: Like his original statement on storm damage, is not the Secretary of State's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) far from candid? It is absolutely untrue for the Secretary of State to continue to claim, as he has done again today, that he will refund 75 per cent. of the costs to local authorities. Penalties did not exist in 1968. How will he explain to the Conservative-controlled East Sussex county council, which faces a bill of £12 million at least, that it will get only about £1·5 million from him? It will have a bill in excess of £10 million and, as a consequence, will lose between £6 million and £7 million in grant, which will be clawed back by the Treasury. Is not the reality of the con trick that the Treasury is likely to end up making a profit out of the scheme?

Mr. Ridley: No, somebody is conning the hon. Gentleman. The large bulk of the expenditure to which he referred falls to capital account. A number of authorities insure their capital stock, so they can claim insurance money and put right the damage on capital account at the expense of the insurance company. Those that are not insured will have to borrow. It must be right that the money that they have saved through not paying insurance premiums should, to some extent, be matched by the cost of borrowing. I have already made it clear that the capital allocations will be made available when we have a better idea of the scale of the damage.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that not only east Sussex but Suffolk is concerned about the consequences of spending the proceeds of a 1p rate? Although I entirely endorse the requirement for authorities to spend a 1p rate, may I ask my right hon. Friend to consider those cases where, through spending that money, an authority and therefore the ratepayers are penalised, and his Department or the Treasury gain? Will he undertake sympathetically to consider all such cases?

Mr. Ridley: We considered that point both before and after my statement. If an authority has put aside a sum of money in its budget as a contingency, it obviously has also allowed for the grant consequences of that decision. Authorities knew that that was the position, because they were aware of the Bellwin rules that made that entirely clear from the beginning. What authorities have not realised, and I hope that they do now, is that the vast majority of the expenditure that they have incurred will fall either to the Bellwin scheme or to the capital account, and will therefore be covered either way.

Rating Reform

9. **Mr. Wray** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to his consultation document "The Community Charge" published in December 1986.

Mr. Howard: The booklet on the community charge was not a consultation document. We received over 1,200 responses to the consultation paper published in January 1986. Twice as many respondents supported the abolition of domestic rates as wanted to keep them; and the community charge received more support than any other replacement for the rates.

Since the consultation period ended we have not kept detailed records of the letters received. Our proposals have, however, received widespread support.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that this particular scheme was brought about because of the crippling revaluations in Scotland and the forced increases in rates because of cuts in Government grants? Does he further agree that the scheme is fraudulent and dishonest and that a quarter of the population will suffer — mainly the unemployed and the elderly? Does he accept that the scheme is not fair because it is not based on the ability to pay? The Government have paid no heed to the organisations, ratepayers and churches that oppose the scheme, and it should be scrapped immediately.

Mr. Howard: The proposals merit none of the epithets applied to them by the hon. Gentleman. We shall make full provision, by way of rebates, for those who need help to pay the community charge. We shall listen more carefully and more responsively to Opposition Members when we know their proposals. However, I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman on one point—it is true that keeping the existing system would involve a revaluation of domestic properties that would lead to as great an upheaval in England as there was in Scotland in 1985.

Mr. Squire: Could my hon. and learned Friend help me? Last week the Government announced that an estimated 16·7 million people would pay more under the new system than they pay now. However, in addition to the 17 million plus who pay no rates and will be estimated to pay community charge, more than 2 million existing ratepayers, especially in inner London, will pay more. Can my hon. and learned Friend tell me how to reconcile those figures?

Mr. Howard: I am not sure that I entirely follow my hon. Friend's figures. In an answer that I gave last week

I said that households that would gain from the community charge involved 9·9 million people and that households that would lose overall involved about 7 million people. That seems to be a sensible way of looking at the effect of the proposals.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that the community charge in inner London will be at least £600 per head? Is he aware that whatever he cares to call it, in reality it is a poll tax that will force many people not to register to vote and that those people will be among the poorest? Is the fact that the poll tax will cause many poor people and their children not to register to vote an intentional, or unintentional, effect of the scheme?

Mr. Howard: No, there is no effect in terms of the electoral register. A survey published last week indicated that electoral registration was not being affected at all by the proposal, nor is it the case that the community charge will be at the level to which the hon. Lady referred. The figure to which she referred indicates the level at which the community charge would be if councils continued to spend at their present levels. I am confident that the effect of the charge will be to moderate council spending in inner London as elsewhere.

Rates

10. **Mr. Gill** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when was the date of the last revaluation of domestic and business properties for the purposes of fixing rateable values.

Mr. Howard: 1973.

Mr. Gill: Will my hon. and learned Friend accept that the failure by successive Governments to implement regular revaluations has brought the rating system into disrepute? Does he further agree that this is part of a deliberate and stealthy policy by the Civil Service to discredit local government? Finally, will he confirm that under Government proposals for a community charge local authorities will be dependent upon central Government for up to 75 per cent. of their funding?

Mr. Howard: The original decision to postpone the revaluation was taken by the Labour Government in 1978. It was sensible not to proceed with a revaluation pending deliberations as to what proposals we intended to put into place. The failings and defects of the present system go far beyond anything that a revaluation, either then or now, could be expected to remedy.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister mentioned the consequences of a revaluation in answer to a previous question. Does he remember the Secretary of State's predecessor telling the House that the consequences of revaluation would be that 1 million households would end up paying 80 per cent. more? He himself said this week that if a revaluation was done on capital values, 2·5 million would pay 50 per cent. more. In reality, under the poll tax 2·7 million households will end up paying more than 80 per cent. extra in local taxes.

Mr. Howard: The effect of the community charge proposals will be to replace a desperately unfair system, in which very often the poor pay more and not merely the same as the rich, with a fair, accountable system of local government finance in which every adult will contribute the same amount, subject to rebates for those who need help.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the concern of industry, particularly manufacturing industry, at the revaluation of commercial property and the possible resulting leap in the rate burden in certain areas which will be added on to costs? Furthermore, can my hon. and learned Friend assure the House that the uniform business rate will be pitched as low as possible to reflect the fact that businesses pay directly for many of the services that they receive from local government?

Mr. Howard: The uniform business rate will be pitched at a level that will reflect the continuation of the contribution of business to the cost of local government at broadly its present level. Of course, business will benefit substantially from the statutory guarantee which we intend to put into place that the business rate will not increase in any year by more than the rate of inflation. As to revaluation, may I assure my hon. Friend that I expect the manufacturing sector of industry to benefit particularly from the revaluation that is under way.

Rating Reform

11. **Ms. Armstrong** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will make to assist people on low pay living in *(a)* Derwentside district and *(b)* Wear Valley district following the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Howard: There will be community charge rebates of up to 80 per cent. for people on low incomes and compensation within income-related benefit rates towards the 20 per cent. minimum contribution.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the Minister aware that the estimates for Durham county, and especially for Wear Valley, show that 70 per cent. of the people who live there will pay over 20 per cent. more than the current rate that is levied? Is he further aware that people in areas such as mine, which have suffered enormously from de-industrialisation, have taken low-paid jobs to try to ensure a future for their communities? Will he allow those people to live with dignity by ensuring that they have a future, despite their poverty?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Lady's figures are based on assumptions for local government spending which need not be valid, and I hope that local authorities will take account of the level of community charge in assessing their future spending. I ask the hon. Lady to take note of the estimates that have been made, especially those in a recent independent study, of the effects of revaluation on low-priced terraced houses in the north, which would suffer badly in a revaluation of domestic properties.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that during the past 24 hours it has been reported fairly widely that the former chairman of the Tory party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), has got a job as a non-executive director——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me stop the hon. Gentleman there. He must know that I have absolutely no responsibility for that.

Mr. Skinner: You have.

Mr. Speaker: Absolutely not.

Mr. Skinner: Hear me out, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: This may be helping the hon. Gentleman's friends who are waiting to sign the ballot book, but he must make the point of order relevant to me.

Mr. Skinner: You are the custodian of the Register of Members' Interests. It is becoming apparent that, by getting such jobs, people can avoid the real responsibility and conflict of interest that may occur. In this case, people not only vote for measures but take part in the preparation of Acts of Parliament which transfer money to the private sector and subsequently line their pockets by putting their hands in the till at British Telecom.

I want you, Mr. Speaker, to have another look at the way in which the Register is compiled. Let us have a separate compartment for those people who make money after they have voted in their capacity as Ministers or in some other capacity. The public believe that this stinks.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should make his representations to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. It has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If one were to pursue that line, I wonder whether it would be appropriate to list those Members—largely, if not totally, from the Labour party—who are here under trade union sponsorship and who participate in debates in which trade union interests are concerned.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have tabled two questions and have discovered a blocking answer dating from 12 November 1984. I wish to raise with you a section from "Erskine May". The questions relate to the amount of moneys paid to several companies for the storage of foodstuffs in Yorkshire, Humberside and the north-west.

In the past, it has been the practice of successive Administrations to refuse to answer. Apparently, hon. Members can ask a question in a new Parliament only to find out whether the Minister is answering questions on that subject. "Erskine May", on page 342, puts it like this:

> "Where, however, a Minister has refused to take the action or give the information asked for in a particular question, he may be asked the same question again after an interval of three months; and where successive administrations have consistently refused to answer certain classes of questions, Ministers may be asked once a session whether they will now answer such questions."

"Erskine May" continues by giving some examples of the type of question involved. They include:

> "discussions between Ministers or between Ministers and their official advisers or the proceedings of Cabinet or Cabinet committees; security matters including the operation of the security services, operational defence matters including the location of particular units; and details of arms sales to particular countries."

"Erskine May" points out that, in addition, questions on the secret services and security are not allowed.

It seems quite outlandish to suppose that the amounts of money that are paid for the storage of food that is not used can line up with the security services and operational defence matters. It is not likely that we shall throw corn or butter at a presumed enemy. As at least one of the storage companies has paid money to the Conservative party, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider whether this category of answer should be widened. The doctrine that is laid down in "Erskine May" should not be wide open so that the relatively humdrum question of storing food is treated as a matter of major importance. I would ask you to deliberate on this serious matter and to rule that Ministers are obliged to answer questions so that we can see how much the taxpayer, is paying, often to firms that have financed the Tory party, for storing food in our country.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it follow directly from the previous point of order?

Mr. Forth: Yes. Should not the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) be advised to seek out an hon. Member who has had the privilege of serving in the European Parliament in Strasbourg? If he were able to find such a person, with two political jobs, who travelled frequently to Strasbourg and who had the opportunity of questioning the European Commission there, might not that hon. Member be able to ask the question that the hon. Member for Bradford, South wishes to ask, with much more ease than he could in this House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has raised an important matter. I should like to look into it. I shall then communicate with him.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you, Mr. Speaker, help us before next week's debate on the subject of the research assistant of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no knowledge of any debate next week. It has not been announced, and I know nothing about it.

Mr. Benn: I am not trying to be difficult, Mr. Speaker, but you said that there would have to be a debate on the matter. My point does not necessarily hinge on the debate, but it is relevant to it.

I understand that for some time, and unknown to the House, an unofficial security committee of Members of all parties has been meeting to consider vetting, which, apparently, has been going on for some time without the House being informed. I should be grateful if, before the debate — or, indeed, in any case — you could make a statement to the House about that committee—who set it up, what authority it has and what recommendations it has made. In my experience, there has never been a committee of the House whose existence, membership and operations have been unknown to the House. I am not suggesting that you can give an answer today, but the matter is highly relevant to the discussion of my hon. Friend's case.

Mr. Speaker: It is no secret that an advisory committee on security has existed in the House for many years—indeed, I served on it long before I became even a Deputy Speaker. The committee is of long standing. I have no knowledge of any debate on this matter next week.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, what you have just said is new to the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Well, it is. I learnt of this committee quite unofficially, only in the past few days. Its existence has a direct bearing on one of the most controversial issues that the House will have to discuss. If there is an advisory committee, who set it up, on whose authority was it set up, who are its members, what does it do and what recommendations has it made? Will arrangements be made, either by you, Sir, or through the Leader of the House, for that information to be at our disposal when we debate these matters in detail?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can help the right hon. Member and the House. This committee has been in existence since at least 1975. Its membership at that time was reported in *Hansard*, so I think the fact that it exists is not unknown.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are we not right in thinking that this is the advisory committee of which the former right hon. Member for Wakefield, our colleague Walter Harrison, was a prominent member? I understood from Walter Harrison that the committee was concerned with the security of the building and certainly did not carry a remit to vet research assistants. Many of us would have been astonished if Walter Harrison had been given the job of vetting research assistants. To be fair to Walter Harrison, I am sure that he did nothing of the kind. Are we sure that this is the same committee to which you have referred, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: This committee does not vet anybody. It is an advisory committee to advise the Speaker on security.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raised this matter indirectly with you the other day. It concerns the order of Question Time.

Often a question on the Order Paper is not raised, and those Members who want to ask supplementary questions on a matter do not become aware until the last possible moment that it will not be raised. Would it not be an idea if hon. Members who are not in a position to ask the question in their name on the Order Paper give notice of their intention to your Secretary on that day so that at the beginning of Question Time you can announce to the House which questions will not be called? This will enable hon. Members who want to ask questions on that matter perhaps to find another question on the Order Paper to which they can attach their supplementaries.

Mr. Speaker: That is a good suggestion, but it did not arise today. However, the Chair does not always know in advance whether an hon. Member can be present at Question Time. There have been occasions when, for travel or other reasons, an hon. Member is not able to be present. The whole House accepts that it is of great convenience if an hon. Member who knows that he cannot be present in the Chamber notifies the Chair so that his question is not called.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. Who are the chairman and members of the advisory committee on security? Perhaps we ought to know, but we do not.

Mr. Speaker: It is an advisory committee which advises the Speaker. I shall reflect on how much I can say about it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely, with the greatest of respect, this is very much a House of Commons matter. Although you stated that the committee was apparently set up in 1975, we certainly do not know its terms of reference and whether it is vetting research assistants and the rest. Surely we are entitled to know who is the chairman and on what basis that nomination was made and that appointment was duly agreed to. We should be in a position to go to the Table Office now and seek the information about the members of the committee, how often they meet and whether we can make representations to the committee.

When the matter of the research assistant of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was raised, I suggested, on a point of order, that there should be some kind of appeal. If the decision that the research assistant, Mr. Bennett, should not be employed here was made on the basis of a recommendation by the committee to which you have just referred, Sir, will there be any right of appeal against the committee's recommendation?

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that this committee does not vet anyone. It is advisory to the Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make representations, I suggest that he does so through his Deputy Chief Whip.

Mr. Benn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With the greatest respect, I appreciate that putting these points to you without notice creates difficulty, but I had no idea until you replied—and I do not believe that any hon. Member did—that you had a committee. It is your committee that we are asking about: who are its members, who appoints them, and so on? When you say that an hon. Member must make representations to you through our Deputy Chief Whip, you are, with the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, making this not a House of Commons matter but a party matter—which it is not.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look carefully at the points that I and other hon. Members have made, and to make or put out a statement so that when we debate the matter next week we know the position. No one suggests that these people actually vet; what we suspect is that they endorse the vetting by the security services. That is the point at issue. We want to know who they are, what they do, who appointed them and what reports they have made so that they are accountable to the House, as you are yourself, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall reflect on the matter. I think that the whole House would judge it right, proper and wise that there should be due regard for the security of this building and of its members.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Kevin Barron
Mr. Andrew Mitchell
Mr. John Heddle

Orders of the Day

Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill amends paragraph 8 of schedule 31 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Part XVI of that Act contains the provisions under which urban development corporations are established and operate. I know that hon. Members will be familiar with urban development corporations. UDCs are given the task of regenerating their designated areas. Their main functions are to assemble, reclaim and service land to provide infrastructure and to promote development. They can bring a single-minded and co-ordinated approach to the problems of their areas, backed by Exchequer funds.

The beneficial effects of such an approach are apparent in London docklands and on Merseyside, where the first two UDCs were set up in 1981. The proposal to set up a UDC in London docklands was scrutinised by an all-party Select Committee, which said that its members

> "were forcefully struck by the extent of the calamity in docklands and the vastness of the task facing anybody seeking to regenerate the area."

The London docklands development corporation took on that vast task, which was an enormous challenge. After only six years, the docks have become a focus for growth. Private sector investment in excess of £2·2 billion has been committed; 12,000 homes have been completed or are under construction; 2·5 million sq ft of non-residential floor space have been completed and 7·5 million sq ft are under construction. The docklands light railway and the London city airport have been built, and 15 miles of new roads provided. More than £10 million have been given to social and community projects. All that, and more, has been achieved on the back of £350 million of Government grant, supplemented by expenditure out of receipts from land sales.

The Merseyside development corporation faced a different, but equally daunting, task and it has responded with major, imaginative projects, most notably the restoration of the Albert dock warehouses, which has converted the area around it into a hive of activity.

Over 200 acres of derelict land have been reclaimed for housing and commecial development and a further 200 acres of land and water have been reclaimed for recreation and public open space.

The five new UDCs set up during this year have only just embarked upon their tasks. But already the response to them has been most encouraging. The areas are already starting to buzz.

I now refer to the role of this modest Bill in those developments. The background is that schedule 31——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): At some stage, will the Minister give us the up-to-date position on job progress in the present two UDCs? Will he tell us the net gain or loss of jobs over the six-year period, as well as progress on housing, with the relative number of houses and distribution between the public and private sectors?

Mr. Trippier: I shall be happy to deal in detail with those matters in my winding-up speech. The hon. Gentleman may recall that when we previously debated the matter before the House rose for the summer recess, I referred in particular to the importance of training with regard to encouraging local labour to take advantage of the jobs that would be made available. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that the jobs are not only in the construction industry. Jobs are now being provided, and will continue to be provided, in the development that is being undertaken. of course, it is a major initiative that we are taking with the London Docklands development corporation, with the Manpower Services Commission and, in regard to the construction industry, with the construction industry training board. I shall refer to that again in greater detail, as well as housing, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

I said that I would refer to the role of this modest Bill in those developments. The background is that schedule 31 to the 1980 Act covers the financial arrangements of UDCs. Paragraph 3 of schedule 31 enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to pay grants to UDCs. Paragraph 4 provides that UDCs may borrow money either temporarily or longer term. Paragraph 5 enables the Treasury to guarantee the repayment of loans raised from a person or a body other than the Secretary of State. Paragraph 8 of schedule 31 imposes an aggregate financial limit on those grants, borrowing and the guarantees given to them.

The 1980 Act set that aggregate limit at £200 million, with a provision that it could be raised up to a limit of £400 million, by order. An order was duly approved in 1984, raising the limit to £400 million.

Section 12 of the New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act 1985 amended paragraph 8 by inserting two new limits. It set the statutory limit at £600 million, with a similar power to raise it by order to £800 million. An order raising the limit to £800 million came into effect in July. Therefore, any further increase in the limit will require primary legislation.

When we debated the 1987 order, I told the House that on spending plans for the current financial year the aggregate by the end of the year would get to within £3 million or £4 million of £600 million. Since then my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been able to increase the planned spending of UDCs by £7 million in the current financial year, which he could not have done without that order.

I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced yesterday that the resources available to UDCs next year will be increased substantially. Overall, the spending counting against the limit in paragraph 8 should be rather more than £200 million, in 1988-89, taking aggregate spending through the £800 million limit before the end of that year. Although the limit would not actually be breached until towards the end of the next financial year, the Supply Estimates covering that spending will be laid before the House in the spring. The House could not be asked to vote that Supply, if it exceeded statutory limits. Therefore, it is necessary to amend paragraph 8.

[Mr. Trippier]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might simply have set a higher overall limit, but he has decided instead to revise the way in which the limit is set. It is cumbersome and time-consuming if regular recourse to legislation is required for what are essentially technical adjustments.The limit currently operates primarily on all grants and long-term loans received since the UDCs were established. We are talking about a collection of bodies in different places and with different needs. No two are the same. Their aggregate expenditure since 1980 is of less interest and relevance than what they have spent, and what they intend to spend, individually.

UDCs are already subject to two separate and significant spending controls. The first is the general public expenditure system, by which an overall external financing limit is set annually. That covers both grants and borrowing. The second is the annual supply process by which the grant-in-aid paid to each UDC is annually voted by Parliament. Supply estimates are provided in some detail. This provides for regular scrutiny of expenditure, and provides Parliament with the opportunity to examine the operation of UDCs through the Select Committee system.

These two systems of control seem adequate and more relevant than that provided by paragraph 8.

Mr. Simon Hughes: What is the difference between urban development corporations and local authorities? Local authorities receive grant from central funds, and every year Parliament has to decide whether to approve the grant to the various authorities of different types. Local authorities have the same public expenditure accountability as UDCs, yet the Government propose to take away any regular parliamentary approval and scrutiny of grants to UDCs while at the same time retaining it absolutely for local authorities. Why is there this preference for quangos over local government?

Mr. Trippier: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is right. Every year Parliament has to agree the Supply Estimates which cover expenditure via the Department of the Environment on, for example, rate support grant and housing investment programmes. The so-called urban block held by the Department of the Environment covers UDCs, urban development grants and so on, all of which are annually voted. The significant difference is that the Bill governs the problem that we may have with loans, and I shall turn to that in a moment.

As I said, UDCs are already subject to separate and significant spending controls. The two systems to which I referred seem adequate and more relevent than that provided by paragraph 8.

The next question is: what is the most relevant measure of borrowing? At present, paragraph 8 includes all borrowing which is not temporary, ignoring any repayments. This does not seem the most appropriate measure. A more relevant measure is the outstanding principal on any loans. It is consistent also to count any sums paid to honour guarantees provided by the Treasury. In effect, that would be borrowing which could not be repaid. Therefore, the limit in the Bill is confined to outstanding borrowing and Treasury guarantees paid.

Having established a sensible definition of what should count against the financial limit, the next issue is the level at which that limit should be set. When the 1980 Act was passed, it was anticipated that borrowing could be a significant source of finance. In the event, UDCs have borrowed very little. This is because it would be prudent for a UDC to borrow only if it could anticipate an adequate return. If there is likely to be such a return, then, in general, UDCs have found that the private sector will undertake the spending.

There are, however, certain cases in which a UDC will want to borrow. First, it has powers to lend to others and will need to borrow to finance that lending. Secondly, it may want to undertake, or contribute to, an investment with an adequate return which does not appeal to the private sector. Thirdly, it may want to invest in a project where it is more appropriate for the public sector to take the lead.

The Bill sets a statutory limit of £30 million. That is modest, but it provides some room for manoeuvre. With the seven UDCs we have at present, it implies average borrowing of about £4 million. That is more than the first two UDCs have undertaken — so far they have each borrowed about £1 million — but it is small alongside intended programmes.

We want to provide some leeway — for example, in case significant projects are identified which would best be financed from borrowing. Therefore, the Bill provides for the level of borrowing to be raised to as much as £100 million without further primary legislation. Any increase above £30 million would still require the approval of this House.

This is a sensible measure. It retains a proper degree of parliamentary control over UDCs without requiring regular recourse to primary legislation. I hope that it will have the support of all parties. We had a debate less than four months ago on the order raising the limit to £800 million. In that debate the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) told us:

> "the Opposition usually does not vote against increases in money that might bring some benefit to areas."—[*Official Report*, 15 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 1232.]

The hon. Member then went on to suggest that the increase in that order — from £600 million to £800 million—was inadequate because there were now seven UDCs. I am certain that the Opposition will welcome the removal of the limit. In fact, the hon. Gentleman was labouring under a misapprehension because, as I hope is clear from my lengthy explanation of this Bill, paragraph 8 of the 1980 Act is not a power to spend money. It simply imposes an overall limit. Under the 1980 Act, that limit can only be raised in stages. Because the Bill proposes that no statutory limit should be placed on total grant-in-aid paid to UDCs, it frees Parliament to vote to each UDC, each year, the resources that it feels are appropriate.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement yesterday helps to answer the hon. Member for Bootle's criticism, by making considerably more funds available for this important task of urban regeneration. An amendment to paragraph 8 of the schedule 31 is necessary if UDCs are to continue that important task. The Bill introduces a sensible streamlining of that paragraph, retaining for Parliament the right to vote on significant expansions in borrowing by UDCs but removing from the existing total statutory limit the grant-in-aid that has been voted to all UDCs over the years.

I commend the Bill to the House.

4.2 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The first two urban development corporations were created by the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), in September 1979. He said that he envisaged that urban development corporations would be modelled on the well-established and, in many ways, successful new towns.

I have said before in this Chamber that the new towns are a social achievement of which the Labour party can be justifiably proud. They were created after the war by the newly elected Labour Administration—in particular by the then Minister, Mr. Lewis Silkin. That gives me an opportunity to place on record how much I miss Mr. John Silkin who, tragically, died earlier this year. On matters relating to new towns, as well as to political matters in general, he was most helpful to me, particularly when I first became a Member of the House. He will be missed in debates such as this by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The urban development corporations were given enormous powers — planning, land assembly and disposal for private sector development, industrial and commercial development and promotion, environmental improvement, housing and the provision of infrastructure —to enable them to achieve the regeneration of two areas: the London docklands and the Merseyside dock area.

Five additional urban development corporations have been set up since then. In general, the new UDCs have hardly begun their work. The recruitment of staff is just about completed, and those connected with the UDCs are already excited about the possibilities. However, it will be impossible for some years to judge how successful or otherwise they will be.

To enable the UDCs to satisfy the objectives that I have just quoted, the original UDCs have to complete the regeneration of the defined areas by attracting a great deal of cash from private investment. That applies also to the five new UDCs. In a press notice, the Secretary of State declared that each UDC could spend between £100 million and £150 million over a period of six to seven years. The notice continued:

> "The bulk of expenditure will go on the reclamation of derelict or disused land, and to the provision of access roads and the infrastructure, to pave the way for subsequent development by the private sector for industry or housing."

I shall deal with that aspect in relation to the London Docklands development corporation and the Merseyside docklands corporation a little later, because the comparative success of the two corporations is of much interest.

Through a series of orders and legislation, the aggregate sum of cash available to UDCs—mainly for grants and long-term borrowing—was raised from £100 million to £800 million during the last few years. According to changes in a number of economic variables, it will be necessary from time to time to modify the latter figure. I understand that the purpose of the Bill is to allow for revisions to the statutory ceiling by exempting grants from the financial limits that are contained in the regulations.

I shall say no more about the technical financial aspects, because the Minister has, fortunately, put them on record and it is unnecessary for me to repeat them. However, will the Minister say whether the revision of the statutory ceiling will always be upwards?

Another factor that will undoubtedly affect the financial limits will be the creation by the Secretary of State of a series of mini UDCs. They were mentioned in the Conservative party's manifesto for the June 1987 election. The Tory party believes that local authorities—Labour local authorities in particular—are an obstacle to inner-city regeneration. I do not intend to go into the merits or otherwise of the mini UDCs, but we cannot consider the financial limits for all UDCs without considering the possibility of the introduction of new UDCs.

The Secretary of State made a speech on 3 June 1987 that, from our point of view, was highly contentious. It demonstrated clearly the Government's negative attitude to local government and, in particular, to democratically elected Labour authorities. Their contempt for local authorities is expressed both in speeches and in legislation by the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and others that leads to controversy about the nature, role and judgment of the success or failure of the UDCs. It is a subject for another debate, but it is worth stating that this Government's continuing attack on local government is weakening the democratic process. It is not just local government that is at risk; democracy itself is at risk.

As an illustration, the Minister for Local Government, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who unfortunately is not on the Treasury Bench at the moment, is reported in an editorial in *The Guardian* on 30 October 1987 as saying:

> "In some high spending areas the local council has virtually no opposition councillors. It may take many years in those areas for the pressures of the ballot box to take effect. In these circumstances we have a duty to ensure that local people are protected from wild extravagance."

That says a great deal about the Government's attitude to the electorate. If the political party that controls a local authority is other than the Tory party, the people who elected their local representatives have to be protected against those whom they themselves chose through the ballot box. That is absurd; it is nonsense. What does the Minister mean by

> "the pressures of the ballot box to take effect"?

Surely the pressures of the ballot box decide who is to lead a local authority.

There are many people in the north and in Scotland, south Wales and other parts of the country who would like to be protected from the wild extravagance of this Government. The Opposition do not like it, but we accept the democratically determined wishes of the people of this land. Why cannot this Government do the same with regard to local government by keeping their ever-meddling fingers out of local government matters? Why will not the Government accept that local people know what they want and that they are able to express it through the ballot box?

I see that the Secretary of State for the Environment is in his place. This afternoon many accusations have been made against Labour-controlled local authorities. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the Secretary of State wishes to intervene. If he does, I shall give way to him. In an article today in *The Guardian*, David Hencke clearly demonstrates the inefficiency in the Secretary of State's Department. He says:

> "Sir Gordon Downey, the Comptroller and Auditor General, has refused to approve the Department of the Environment's annual accounts for the second year running"

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

because it does not know where £210 million-worth of urban development grant has gone. It is incredible that £210 million can be lost. What would the Secretary of State say to a Labour-controlled local authority in a similar position? We would probably be hearing demands from Tory Members for gaol sentences or for the police to be sent in.

The other matter that I cannot understand—I accept that it is not the Secretary of State's responsibility, but we are talking about the regeneration of inner cities—concerns the article written by David Hencke. Commenting on figures released yesterday by the Department of Employment, he said:

> "More than half the £7 million for inner cities was not spent."

With regard to the high levels of unemployment and deprivation in inner cities, it is incredible that the Government have cash to spend on them yet half the £7 million that was allocated was never touched. I hope that the Minister will comment on that point later. The Secretary of State seems reluctant to come to the Dispatch Box and explain it to us.

UDCs and mini UDCs are further examples of the Government's continuing assault on local government. On mini UDCs, the Conservative manifesto said:

> "These will operate on a smaller scale in areas where there is clear economic potential, but where local authorities are failing to tackle the problem."

It is true that local authorities do not always tackle these obvious problems. This is not a matter of understanding or of will, but a direct result of the Government's decision to cut the amount of cash that local authorities have available to carry out the many projects that they wish to complete and to provide the services needed by the community.

More than £21 billion has been cut from the rate support grant since 1979. As a percentage of local authority budgets, the RSG has fallen from 61 per cent. to 46 per cent.

The fact that there are problems that cannot be tackled through cash shortage forces Opposition Members to welcome the additional cash that is being channelled through the UDCs into our inner-city areas. To a degree, it demonstrates that the Government recognise that all is not well in many of our inner-city areas, although their response is pretty feeble. Many Opposition Members believe that this increased cash has more to do with changing voting behaviour than with economic regeneration. The available cash is not being dispersed through local authorities or partnerships between local authorities and UDCs, thus leading to strong feelings about the nature of UDCs. I suspect that many different opinions will be voiced by hon. Members about the nature and usefulness of UDCs.

UDCs arouse strong passions because they are unelected bodies and can bypass and ignore the long and short-term strategic decisions of local authorities.

While cash is welcome, it must be put into the context of RSG cuts and the rate-capping penalties that have been introduced in recent years. In the near future the Government will attempt to introduce a poll tax, which, according to public opinion polls, is rejected by a large majority of British people, especially by those in Scotland, where it was tested in the general election. If the Government enact that legislation, it will be because of Rambo Tory Whips uttering threats of muscle to force some unwilling Tory Members through the Lobbies. Many Tory Members are well aware that many of their constituents are against the poll tax.

Even if £1 billion of Government cash is made available to the UDCs, it is small change compared with what has been taken away from local authorities. It is not new cash; it is simply returning a small amount of what local authorities should have had in the past to carry out economic regeneration projects.

Two of the UDCs will be in the north-east. One will be responsible for developing land on the Wear and Tyne riversides. However, in Sunderland one quango is being replaced by another. Was it not the Government's avowed aim to rid the United Kingdom of quangos? Washington development corporation is being wound up in March 1988. It has a good record of job promotion, and it, the local authority, myself and others made representations to the Secretary of State to keep it in existence for the foreseeable future. However, it is not to be. Completed building and other development work must be sold off to add further to the coffers of the Treasury.

The Washington development corporation is located in the borough of Sunderland. The loss of the WDC and its replacement by an urban development corporation can be likened to taking cash out of one pocket and putting it into another. New cash is, therefore, hardly flowing into the borough of Sunderland. As the Minister is aware, my constituency is one of the three that are conterminous with the borough of Sunderland. This robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul mentality is unacceptable.

UDCs are undemocratic bodies because the people who serve on them are appointed by the Secretary of State. Anyone who has caused him or his Department problems in the past will stand little chance of being appointed. Anyone who is appointed but does not conform in the future has little chance of staying on the board. Leading councillors from the areas concerned have been brought on to the boards, thus providing a conduit from the board to the local authority. However, the local authority representatives cannot vote down a proposition even if they know that it conflicts directly with council strategies and objectives. By definition, no one is elected to the UDC board, nor are local authorities able to elect who they want on or who they want taken off the board.

That limited representation has merit only when the UDC is created in an area where a single council is responsible for the area to be developed by the UDC. It is not always the case that a single authority is involved, and where more than one is it can lead to some local authorities having privileged access to information and decision-making processes. This is particularly important, because the UDC is given powers of planning and economic development—taken from local authorities—that can lead to conflict with the policy of the local authority. The UDCs should operate within the strategic goals of the local authority. That does not imply or mean that a local authority will have a veto over what the UDC can do, but it limits its activities to those that fit in with the objectives of the local authority.

I can envisage tremendous problems in the creation of the new mini UDCs. In his speech on 3 June 1987, the Secretary of State defined mini UDCs as bodies applying the UDC model to areas of land in larger cities and towns where progress has been slow because of the activities of a given local authority. Those mini UDCs will have a budget of between £10 million and £15 million, which will be used to attract private capital. In his speech the Secretary of State said:

> "We have not yet decided the selection of areas and further studies will have to be made."

If the Secretary of State has selected those areas, perhaps he will now say so.

The Secretary of State then said something that greatly concerns Opposition Members and, I am sure, many Conservative Members as well:

> "We hope local people will bring to our attention areas of dereliction which they think can benefit from this approach."

What does the Secretary of State mean by "local people"? There was no mention of local authorities in this part of his speech, and if he intends to bypass local authorities it will lead to nothing less than tremendous tension.

It is not clear from the Secretary of State's speech whether he will create more than one mini UDC in a given council area. The financing of UDCs reveals some astonishing anomalies.

In an article in the *Municipal Journal* of 6 February 1987 Mr. Cliff Davis-Colman quotes from an interview with Liverpool's chief executive, Michael Reddington, who said:

> "'The money that the Development Corporation has is for capital works. If we were to get their money, it would near enough double our spending allocation. They get £30m a year to administer 27 acres, whereas we get £37m—if you take away partnership monies—for housing, social services and everything else for the remaining 236,973 acres'."

We agree with the election-night statement by the Prime Minister that something must be done about inner cities. The Labour party is also aware of the problem, but would tackle it in a different way and would not create a proliferation of undemocratic unaccountable, urban development corporations.

It is recognised even by senior people on the LDDC board that the root of the board's problem is that it does not have the relationship with local people that local authorities have. However, it is important to examine in the LDDC the achievements as well as the weaknesses. It is essential that the achievements are neither glossed over nor given inadequate recognition. It is also important to have in the back of one's mind the fact that it is in the interests of the Government and their supporters to exaggerate the position so that their policy of UDC proliferation in Labour areas can be justified.

Employment is important, and the large pool of men and women on the dole is a most important indicator. It appears that job creation results have been mixed. The Department of Employment claims that about 8,000 jobs have been created. This was through a mix of new jobs and a large number, perhaps as many as 5,000, through factory relocation. If a balance sheet were drawn up to show new job creation and job losses in the same period, it would just about balance.

Part of the problem is the ever-increasing land values. That has led to some companies leaving the docklands because it is in their interests to take the cash from property speculators. In addition, the economic policies of the Government have led to job losses. Perhaps the factor that most annoys people in the docklands is the price of housing. It was expected that there would be a housing mix — houses for sale and houses for rent. It was also expected that some of the houses would be priced at a level that would make them accessible to the vast majority of people living in the area.

Mr. Trippier: May I take the hon. Gentleman back to the issue of employment? The Labour Government were in power for more than two thirds of the time between 1964 and 1979 and the decline in employment on the east side of London, particularly in the docklands area, proceeded apace. What on earth did the Labour Government do at that time to arrest that decline? That is the question that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends must address.

Mr. Boyes: If one compares the level of unemployment during that period with the present level of unemployment, one sees that, despite the Government's horrific advertising campaign for the 1979 election, unemployment now, tragically, is three to four time greater than it was under the Labour Government.

At present the vast majority of houses and flats—at least 75 to 80 per cent.—being built are for sale, but the biggest problem is price. Anyone reading the houses for sale advertisements in the press will immediately see that the price of houses and flats is beyond the reach of all but a minority. One-bedroom flats cost over £50,000 and in some cases the price is as high as £150,000 and rising. This naturally causes resentment among local people.

Although it is vital to get the mix right in terms of tenure, price and location, it is important to recognise that the mix will include some expensive houses. We accept that that is necessary. However, we know that many people are waiting for affordable housing, and housing that people who live in the docklands area can buy ought to be built. If our inner cities are to be regenerated, we must attract the wealth producers. We must attract people, many of them very young, who work in computing, in the media and in the production of videos.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): At long last.

Mr. Boyes: I and my colleagues have said that many times. I do not mind starting the sentence again as it seems to say something on which we are in agreement. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish the paragraph, he may find that there are other things on which we agree.

As I say, we must attract to the inner cities the people who work in computing, in the media, in the production of videos and in other newly flourishing industries. We must attract people who are making huge salaries, and to do that we need to provide the type of housing that such people demand. We have had to learn this lesson in the north, but we did not need a UDC to bring it to our attention. We had to learn that, if we wanted to attract industry, housing had to be available for the executives and the skilled workers. That is part of the process of creating stable jobs and wealth, both of which are essential in the inner-city areas.

We must also recognise the contribution made by the architects, builders and designers who have transformed old buildings and have been responsible for imaginative and sometimes spectacular productions. There are many examples of such exciting and interesting architecture. I may now be wandering along a path of controversy—although this is a non-political area.

By definition, the LDDC has had to work with those providing finance. This is an essential task for the newly created UDCs. The public and private sectors must work closely together in the interests of our communities. However, if the mechanism for this has to be a UDC, it

[Mr. Boyes]

is essential that all involved are sensitive to the aims, needs and aspirations of local people. If that objective is ignored, the problems created will be at least as great as those to be solved. The economic problems cannot be solved independently of the social and other related problems.

The Government are critical of Labour-controlled authorities for not working closely with the private sector. The LDDC has had much success in this field. There are lessons to be learned, but the very location of the docklands has made this an easier task than it is for other areas. For example, Labour-controlled authorities in the north-east find it very difficult to attract private capital for development and new industry.

The new urban development corporations will not have an easy ride. Martin Laing, who I suspect may be a friend of the Government and who is chairman of John Laing plc and chairman of the national contractors' group of the Building Employers Confederation, said in a letter to *The Times* on 6 October:

> "The success of London Docklands, which is a uniquely favoured area next to one of the world's major financial centres, should not lead the Government into believing or expecting that £1 of public expenditure will produce the same £4 to £6 of private investment in less favoured areas— certainly not in the early stages, and probably never in some of the more deprived areas in the North."

Mr. Trippier: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves that matter, it is essential for me to remind the House that even in areas of the north—perhaps not in the north-east but in the north-west and especially in Salford with the conversion of the Salford quays and the dramatic transformation of the infrastructure and the development there—the leverage is as high as 1:6. That is higher than the average for the whole of the urban bloc. I am not making a political point, but that leverage shows what can be done in a very difficult area in the north-west.

Mr. Boyes: Clearly the tenor of my speech is that we must attract private capital to the north and that we want a partnership with private capital because that is the way to regenerate our inner cities. I welcome the fact that other areas have been successful in attracting private capital.

Speaking as an elected representative from the north-east and as someone who has been a councillor and a local government officer, I am well aware of the difficulties that we experience in the north. Indeed, I have before me the letter from Martin Laing, the chairman of John Laing plc, who wrote to *The Times* forcefully expressing his opinion that we should not expect the ratios in the north to be the same as those that have been obtained, for example, in the London area. I believe that the Minister should look carefully and favourably on the north when he is allocating grants because of our difficulties——

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I am sure that my hon. Friend acknowledges that we want to bring industry to the north-east. It must be made clear to the Government Benches that not one Labour local authority in the north-east—if there is one, I ask the Minister to name it—has turned down an industry that has wanted to come to the north-east. Many industries have done so and we will welcome many more. Indeed, we have gone out of our way to welcome them. It would be wrong to assume that Labour local authorities in the north-east have not and are not working flat out to get industries to the region.

Mr. Boyes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point in support of the argument. I hope that she is fortunate this evening to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, so that she can develop the argument that she has just summarised.

With respect to the LDDC, I do not believe that it is right either to praise or to bury it. It is necessary to work with it. Incidentally, that appears to be the positive attitude taken by local authorities in other areas. Councils would have preferred the cash to be made available to them, but, because that has not happened, they will take whatever advantage they can of the present situation to improve their locality. We shall see some interesting developments with the creation of jobs in industry, commerce and tourism. Where the UDC and the local authority work closely together the results will be even better. However, Ministers will crawl in through the back door claiming, "We did it." But the Government will not fool the canny folk of the north-east, any more than the people of other areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm what he has just implied? Will he confirm that the Labour party's strong advice to its colleagues who run my borough council, Southwark, is to work at office and member level on a full-time basis with the LDDC? Over the past six years it has not done so and has lost golden opportunities. Will the Opposition Front Bench tell that council to get on with the job even if, in common with me, they would not have created the LDDC in the first place?

Mr. Boyes: I strongly object to Government interference with democratically elected local authorities and I certainly will not send any message of the type suggested by the hon. Member. There is not one rule for the Government and one rule for us to break. When we are next in government, I hope that we will allow local authorities to get on with the job and carry out whatever policies they think are appropriate to their areas. That is the tenor of my speech.

I wish to raise one or two specific questions with the Minister. It appears that the Government determine that the key indicators of the success or otherwise of a UDC is the ratio of private capital attraction to public investment. According to the LDDC, the leverage ratio is 8:1. It claims that committed private sector investment exceeds £2 billion. However, according to Hazel Duffy, writing in the *Financial Times* on 13 May, the experts say that, taking all public costs into account, the ratio is nearer 4:1. Judged by any consideration, that is still a good result. However, Hazel Duffy quoted Mr. Wyndham Thomas, a LDDC board member, who said:

> "Given the substantial powers, the tidal flow of public money and above all the location, we could not possibly have failed".

I do not believe that one would get such a quote from a board member of any of the northern UDCs.

The Merseyside development corporation is the only one with which we can make a comparison of UDC achievements. Here the situation is different. The latest figures that I have show that £140 million of Government money has pulled in less than £20 million of private capital —a ratio of 1:7. That is a mirror image of the results claimed by the LDDC. What are the Minister's expectations for his more recent creations? Will he increase public sector investment if, in any of the new UDC areas, the leverage ratios are similar to that achieved on

Merseyside? Will he take the opposite course and see such a ratio as a sign of failure and cut off access to Government cash? Has the Minister defined leverage rates that must be achieved?

Earlier I mentioned new towns. My understanding of the funding arrangements—prior to the announcement of the closure date when things get sticky—was that new towns were funded by long-term loans whereas UDCs are funded quite differently—annually, as part of public expenditure. That makes them more dependent on Whitehall. In a press notice on 14 September 1979, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said:

> "The UDCs can be modelled on the New Town Development Corporations".

He then gave a list of functions to be carried out by the UDCs and said:

> "They will need to be provided with resources adequate for their task".

Why does not the Minister introduce legislation, if required, to fund UDCs in the same way as new towns? If he will not do so, will he explain the nature of the problem preventing him from doing so?

In view of the fact that the Minister is seeking approval this evening to raise aggregate limits without parliamentary approval, I should be glad if he would inform the House how much cash each UDC will have access to in the next five years and, particularly, how much is available for each UDC this year. In addition, will he inform the House what criteria are used to determine the amount of cash to which a UDC has access in its first operational year? My understanding of the way UDCs must operate is that, each autumn, they submit to the Department of the Environment a corporate plan — a three-year rolling programme. When a project is proposed, the Secretary of State determines, before freeing the cash, whether the project is good value. How does he determine that? What is his definition of good value?

There may be further questions that I wish to raise towards the end of the debate if I am able to catch your eye again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) will be able to raise those questions on my behalf if he has the opportunity to speak.

In conclusion, I wish to make the Labour party's position on UDCs clear. We shall work with them until the next general election, although recognising the nature of them and the real reason for their creation. That strategy is no reflection on the people, the officials and board members of the UDCs, because the chairmen that I have met are setting about their tasks with enthusiasm and a desire to get things rolling.

After the next general election, the Labour Government will make a review of all development corporations. We shall decide our policy towards them according to predetermined criteria. In the meantime, we aim to give maximum support to those already set up and support their efforts to improve the environment, attract industry and create jobs.

Our inner cities have tremendous problems and only Labour in Parliament and Labour-controlled local authorities have the policies and the will to succeed in regenerating our inner cities and bringing them back to the standards desired by the people who live in those areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I must remind the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) that he will need the unanimous leave of the House to speak again in this debate.

4.39 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I warmly welcome the Bill and, above all, the increased funding provision for urban development corporations. I congratulate the Under-Secretary of State on the able way in which he introduced the Bill. I appreciate the close interest that he takes in the Trafford Park development corporation. He knows the back streets of Trafford Park, not only by day but by night, from his former training as a Royal Marines reserve officer.

It is noteworthy and sad that fewer than half a dozen Labour Members, including the Front Bench, are in their places on this occasion. For a party that claims to be concerned about our industrial areas, that is a disgrace. It was equally disappointing to listen to the attitude of the Labour party to this whole question as enunciated by their Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). He adopted a lukewarm attitude when he said that all the UDCs would be under threat should a Labour Government ever return to power. He said that they would pick up the roots to see whether they were worth keeping or whether they should be got rid of. That does not lend to stability and confidence for the future. Fortunately, there seems to be very little prospect that that will materialise given that, if the Labour party persists in its present course, it will have no chance whatever of coming to power.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Churchill: I shall give way shortly.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to perpetuate the attitude of "us" and "them" as between the rights of local authorities, as the Labour party conceives them, and the UDCs, which, above all, exist to cut a swathe through the red tape and bureaucracy that exists in many local authority areas. That seems to be the only way of getting on with the job and attracting business and industry to an area. The hon. Gentleman should come to Trafford Park and see the sort of co-operation that exists across party boundaries between the Labour local authority in Salford and the Labour-dominated local authority in Trafford which are warmly enthusiastic and determined to see the Trafford Park-Salford development corporation succeed. But, clearly, the Labour party in this House seems to be adopting a lukewarm attitude.

Mr. Boyes: I shall be extremely pleased to visit the Trafford Park UDC and to talk to management, people and councillors in the area. The hon. Gentleman seems to be basing his whole argument on the fact that the Labour party will review the UDCs. But surely that is what his own Government have been doing over the last eight years with regard to new town development corporations. Indeed, since I have come into the House, they have been under review twice. Once we managed to get a stay of execution, and now the Washington new town development corporation is being wound up altogether. Surely it is natural and normal for any Government to review its quangos from time to time.

Mr. Churchill: I am very glad that some new town policies have been looked at once again. In the area that

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I represent—a large industrial chunk of the west side of Manchester—the new town policy pursued over many years by successive Governments has been an unmitigated disaster. It has drained into greenfield sites desperately needed resources that are required for the regeneration of industry in the traditional industrial areas as well as housing resources needed to maintain the quality and standard of the housing stock in the traditional urban areas. That has been an extremely damaging policy and in my view is in no way comparable with the UDC strategy which is already bearing significant fruit in those areas where it has been established.

Mr. Simon Hughes: At the time when the UDC in Trafford Park was created, how many people lived within that area? In terms of planning strategy, there may be a substantial difference between areas in which no one is living and areas in which a lot of people live. I do not know the answer, and it would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman could tell us.

Mr. Churchill: Virtually no people are currently resident in Trafford Park. There used to be a considerable community, but the houses were bulldozed during the last decade and the population moved.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington used figures in relation to the London Docklands development corporation and said that the very special circumstances of London docklands resulted in a gearing ratio of 4:1 or 5:1 of private capital compared with Government investment. The view of the chairman of the Trafford Park development corporation and his board members is that Trafford Park will achieve an even higher ratio, even though it does not have the advantage of a large financial services area, as is the case with London docklands. Indeed, we are aiming at a 7:1 gearing ratio, which would effectively mean that the £160 million committed by Government will make this a £1 billion project. That is tremendous and I welcome it enormously.

I thank the Government for their imaginative initiative. They are the first Government in the post-war era to tackle the regeneration of British industry in its traditional heartlands. I especially thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the attention and understanding with which he considered the representations made to him by the major manuacturers in Trafford Park over a two-year period, backed up by the Trafford district council and my own representations. At the end of the day, he decided on Trafford Park as the site for one of the UDCs. We greatly appreciate the close personal interest that he continues to take in the launching and success of this venture.

The Trafford Park UDC is the key to the future prosperity of Trafford Park, which remains the major centre of industrial manufacturing in western Europe. It has been many years since Trafford Park employed 80,000 people, as it did at the height of war-time production. That figure came down drastically, with the arrival of peace after the war, to around the 50,000 mark. But even today there are 650 firms in Trafford Park of every size, including some of the largest in the country. The added stimulus that will be provided by the UDC will enable this area to be regenerated on a scale never before contemplated. It will enable us to look towards the 21st century with every confidence.

This positive attitude by the Conservative Government is in stark contrast to the attitude of successive Labour Governments when, in spite of pleadings by the local authority, local industries and myself as the Member of Parliament, we got no sympathy whatever. Indeed, the reverse was the case. There was positive discrimination against Trafford Park as one of the established industrial areas.

I cite but one example. When Kelloggs — which makes and distributes the country's cereals in Trafford Park—applied in the mid-1970s for industrial planning permission, the then Labour Government denied the company an industrial development certificate, and said: "This is already an industrial area. You have to go somewhere else." When the management of Kelloggs asked, "Where do you want us to go?", the reply was, "We think that Huyton would be a rather good place." I wonder whose constituency that was.

Although thousands of jobs were lost under the Labour Government during the late 1960s, there was absolutely no move to bring about the regeneration of industry in that traditional area. Indeed, all efforts to bring back industry were geared towards new towns. Big inducements were given to manufacturers to go to green field sites while traditional industrial areas were allowed to decline and decay. Over the past 17 years, I have seen the constant erosion of employment in that area. The clear prospect that is offered by the development corporation means that we shall be able to bring back about 16,000 new jobs. That will return employment levels in Trafford Park to around the 40,000 mark, where they were more than 20 years ago. On behalf of my constituents, I cannot welcome that move too strongly.

Of the new generation of urban development corporations, the one in Trafford Park has been the first to get off the ground. Our chairman, Mr. Peter Hadfield, was appointed within 24 hours of the development corporation being established by the House in February of this year. Plans are already well advanced, land acquisition is moving ahead rapidly, and the corporation is about to move into the development phase. That is exciting.

One of the factors for the early success of the development corporation has been the tremendous support that it has received across political boundaries from Trafford and Salford local authorities. I pay tribute to their constructive and supportive attitude.

The Trafford Park development corporation is up and running. We appreciate the excellent support that it is getting from the Department of the Environment, at both Civil Service and Government level. Inevitably, one of the key elements in the success of such a venture rests in the ability of the development corporation to acquire a lot of land at an early stage before prices escalate as a result of development corporation-generated improvements. Any delay in the flow of funds to support the early acquisition of land would undoubtedly, in the longer term, involve false economy. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the very fact that, although the Trafford Park development corporation applied for about £12·5 million funding in the current year, thus far it has been accorded only £9·5 million. We can put the extra £3 million that we requested to excellent use, should my hon. Friend be able to furnish us with it.

Although, in the first few months, we are inevitably only in the planning phase, we receive many inquiries from firms which are eager to move into the area. We intend to make a success of Trafford Park and to rebuild employment levels to those which obtained 20 or more years ago. There will be jobs not in warehousing but in industrial manufacturing and high tech. I hope that the concept of development corporations will be used more widely to regenerate the industrial heartland of the United Kingdom.

4.53 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I welcome, as I am sure other hon. Members do, the opportunity to discuss the Government's strategy on inner cities, particularly with reference to the proposal to extend the role and financing of urban development corporations.

In regard to the Minister's proposed changes in financial provisions for UDCs, I wonder whether we shall have as many occasions in the next few years—we have not had many in the past six years—specifically to discuss urban development corporation policy. I also wonder whether the refurbishment of loan funds, when it tops the £30 million mark, may not occur at some considerable time in the future. That would rob us of the specific opportunity—I know that we shall compete with others in discussing Estimates—to discuss urban development policy.

One of the principal reasons why people, particularly those in built-up areas in which UDCs have been imposed, feel strongly is that they have no opportunity to hold appointed board members to account. That places an additional obligation upon the hon. Members who represent such areas to raise their constituents' problems in relation to urban policy and the urban development corporation institution whenever they can.

It would be silly to proceed without understanding each other's approach to UDCs. They are not necessarily controversial when they are imposed on areas of simple industrial dereliction. As the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said, the Trafford Park area is not residential; it is simply derelict and definitely needs to be cleared up.

The considerations that apply to such areas do not apply to areas with settled populations, as is the case with the London dockland development area. I do not know whether they apply to other areas which have recently been designated, such as Teesside, Tyne and Wear, the black country, the west midlands, and the Cardiff port. It seems that, where there are substantial residential populations, a rather different approach is needed. We do not necessarily have to rule out the possibility of a development corporation, but the approach and the efforts that are made to obtain the consent of the local authority in the relevant area are bound to be crucial.

I remind the House of the way in which we proceeded in the past, not with the green field site new town corporations after 1945, because they were green field sites—there was no real problem about people in the areas—but in the third generation of new towns. We were dealing with massive developments such as Warrington, where we established a new town in the north-west, and the expansion of Northampton and Peterborough. The new town corporation was set up only at the end of a substantial period of negotiation with the relevant local authority, which won its consent and led to a genuine partnership between the existing local authority and the new corporation that was set up to undertake the additional development work, which it could do better than the local authority could. That was consent.

How much consent has the Minister received so far in regard to ~~his~~ proposals to local authorities in Tyne and Wear, Teesside, the black country, the west midlands generally, and so on? It makes a great difference, for the obvious reason that, if there is a population and a local authority is alienated, it is extremely difficult to get the necessary interlock between a local authority's planning functions and the development corporation which is adjacent to it or in the middle of it. They must work together if there is to be success.

It is a great pity that so much of the Government's approach begins with a feeling of hostility and antagonism towards local authorities. Of course there will be some friction and clashing, but we must have more faith in our fellow countrymen and in local government institutions. We must believe that they are capable, particularly with a good deal of ministerial effort and persuasion, of being brought into the general wish to redevelop their areas in their own interests. It is not terribly difficult to persuade people to do that.

My basic approach to UDCs is that they should go ahead only with the consent of the local authorities. If there is no real co-operation from them, it will be very difficult to achieve any success. The Government should consider that problem in the light of our experience in the largest of all urban development corporations, the London Docklands development corporation.

A great deal of development has taken place in docklands. Anyone who saw the area in 1979 and looks at it again today could not fail to recognise that there has been an enormous amount of activity. I consider that much of that activity would have happened with or without the LDDC. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I have strong reasons for believing that; there was an enormous amount happening after 1977 with the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978, the 100 per cent. derelict land grant, and the inner-city partnerships which we established in Manchester, Salford and the dockland areas in Newcastle, Gateshead and other areas. We provided special and separate budgets for those areas and for the development of the statutory docklands joint development committee. I know better than most people that there was an enormous amount going on. I am not denying that progress has been substantial in the past eight years. However, the issue is not simply about development, but about development for whom and for what purpose.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the difficulties of the joint development committee was that it was not able to get access to land? The land was owned by the public utilities, the Port of London Authority and the gas board and was not made available. Nor was the committee able to get Government money. The LDDC had compulsory purchase powers. It had the land and was given the money.

Mr. Shore: There is something in that, but the joint development committee was given a considerable budget. The London dock was bought by Tower Hamlets council in 1977 for about £3 million—for 100 acres. It was going ahead. It had the land and the resources.

The greatest problem for people living in the LDDC area is that they do not feel that these developments have

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any direct benefits for them. That can be broken down into many headings, but I choose two. One is jobs. Most of the jobs have been imported—people have come with their jobs when firms have moved there. The greater part of Fleet street moved to docklands; people came with their jobs. One would hope that when replacement jobs arise there will be greater opportunities for the people who live in the area.

The great movement of jobs, particularly to the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, has been in office developments and warehouses. There has been no obvious increase in employment among the people of the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Southwark—perhaps we shall hear more about that later—and there is not much evidence of it in the borough of Newham. That is not surprising. There is high unemployment in those boroughs — in Tower Hamlets and Southwark it is well over 20 per cent.— and they have existed next to the City of London for many years, but unless great efforts are made to integrate the education and training of the people living in those boroughs with the job prospects available in the City, and now in the extension of the City into the docklands, they will not be recruited — they will simply miss out. Therefore, a great effort must be made if success is to be achieved in recruiting local labour and reducing unemployment in the docklands boroughs.

The second and most seriously worrying feature of docklands is the failure of the LDDC to deal with the problem of housing and homelessness in the London boroughs. That is not a specious point. The LDDC has 12,000 homes either completed or under construction. Although rather more are under construction than completed, it is nevertheless a substantial number. Yet while that has been happening in docklands, since the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 set up the LDDC, the housing problems in the three most affected boroughs — Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham — have become considerably worse. The number of homeless people has increased, the number on the waiting list has grown and the general condition of housing has deteriorated.

Who has benefited by the new houses in those areas? At the beginning, the LDDC made an effort to adopt a policy of what it called affordable housing. It deliberately tailored the price of houses to what it thought were the purses of those who lived in the area. But the boroughs are not rich and, on the whole, the people living in them have below, or even well below, average income for the London area as a whole. They could not afford the houses. As the years have gone by, house prices have zoomed higher in docklands and its neighbouring boroughs than in any other part of London. Anyone who lives in London knows what has happened to house prices in London generally during the past few years. The advertisement columns of *The Observer* and its supplement and of *The Sunday Times* and its supplement show that a new one-bedroom pied a terre in docklands costs about £70,000 to £80,000——

Mr. Boyes: That is cheap.

Mr. Shore: That is for a one-bedroom pied a terre. I know of a three-bedroom family house on the Isle of Dogs that was sold recently for £120,000. Such prices have no possible relevance to those living in Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Newham. Indeed, it is cruel for them, because they are among the worst-housed people in London and, when the docklands area at last became free when the port of London moved down to the river mouth, they thought that it was a remarkable and long-awaited opportunity to have decent housing at rents or prices that they could afford. That was a natural ambition for people who lived, as their parents had before them, in squalid housing conditions.

I do not wish to weary the House, but I must give it just a snatch of the housing position in Tower Hamlets. The whole of the docklands area that the council acquired in 1977-78 had to be handed over to the LDDC. The whole of that housing land was transferred, at the stroke of a pen, by a vesting order in 1981. All hope was then lost that houses with gardens could at last be built, rather than the masses of flats, often high rise, in the borough.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House. He would surely give credence to the fact that of the 12,000 homes that have been built on LDDC land, more than 60 per cent. have been priced at less than £40,000.

Mr. Simon Hughes: That is not true.

Mr. Bevan: It is true and it can be substantiated. Of those houses, 40 per cent. have been bought by residents of the three docklands boroughs concerned. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will concede those statistics.

Mr. Shore: I am always impressed by statistics, but there are statistics and statistics. I do not believe that these given by the hon. Gentleman are necessarily a complete picture of the sale of houses in docklands. Certainly they do not reflect the position in Tower Hamlets. It is possible that the position in Newham was easier to begin with because it had more housing land and a greater tradition of owner-occupation than other docklands boroughs. I would not accept the hon. Gentleman's figures without first seriously examining them.

Tower Hamlets has 62,000 flats and houses, of which 6,700 are officially classified as unfit for human habitation, 3,600 lack an absolutely basic amenity such as an indoor loo, bathroom or shower and 20,000 need renovation because they are damp, lack central heating or have other defects. In addition, 10,000 people are on the housing waiting list and, to add to the misery, 1,200 families are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is an unbelievable position. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) could relate problems of a similar magnitude in their boroughs.

If money for the boroughs to continue their housing programmes had been sustained on the same scale as money is made available to the LDDC, there would be far less reason for complaint. However, the people in those boroughs know that their housing money has been reduced to about one third of its level a few years ago and that all the new housing developments are taking place in the docklands where only a tiny percentage of people can afford to buy the houses. What kind of friction does anyone expect to arise in such circumstances? There is bitterness and a strong feeling of being deprived and cheated.

Our total housing investment programme allocation for the past year was less than the local authority must pay to house its 1,000 homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It receives HIP funds of £17 million, but spends £22 million on bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Yet even with that appalling problem, the borough has not been able to build a single new home during the past three years. Therefore, what sort of reception does the LDDC expect in that borough? It is an absolute disgrace.

I feel strongly that there should and must be new thinking in the Department of the Environment. It cannot possibly be said that the only way to renew, revive and restore an inner-city area is to establish a high living colony — a kind of cantonment — on the edge of an urban area and leave the remainder to wallow in misery and squalor. That is not the way to revive our cities.

The Government would do well not merely to consider the policies they are pursuing towards adjacent local authorities but to examine again the LDDC parent legislation to see what changes are needed to make it possible for homes to be built in the boroughs in the docklands area to rent at prices that the people can afford and to see whether they can find ways of bringing the LDDC into a much more equal and open relationship with the boroughs in which it is placed. I hope that the Minister will turn his mind to that.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech.

My constituency is Walthamstow. I have found that many people do not know exactly where Walthamstow is. I recommend that they get on the Victoria line northbound and stay on the train until it stops and they will find themselves in Walthamstow. It is an area with a very interesting history. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as having a population of 82. In the 16th century it had six fisheries on the River Lea. It also employed a royal forester with an annual salary of £72 which for those days was very generous; he was also permitted to take 20 loads of dead wood and a buck and a doe annually.

In the last century Walthamstow was developed. The Warner estate now covers about 25 per cent. of my constituency. It grew rapidly with the coming of the railways. Large areas which had provided vegetables for the London market and which had grown grass to feed bullocks, also for the London market, went under bricks and mortar.

Walthamstow is part of the London borough of Waltham Forest. To the north I have the constituency of Chingford and to the south the constituency of Leyton. To the east is Epping Forest—alas, no more with deer. The odd fox and the odd rabbit are all that it can boast. To the west are reservoirs in the Lea valley. In those reservoirs I am happy to say that we still have coarse and trout fishing which prove popular for the people of north-east London.

Walthamstow has an interesting political history as well. It used to be two constituencies, East and West. Since the war Walthamstow, West has always been a Labour-held seat. Indeed, from 1950 to 1955 it was Clem Attlee's seat. Walthamstow, East was normally a Tory-held seat. In 1967 Walthamstow, West went Conservative in a by-election. East went Conservative in a by-election in 1969. They both went back to Labour in 1970. In 1970 Walthamstow, West returned Eric Deakins. In 1974 Walthamstow, East and West were amalgamated to form one constituency and Eric Deakins then represented the constituency until June of this year.

I know that it is customary to say a few words of appreciation about one's predecessor. Fortunately, in this case I am happy to do so and I do not have to do it through gritted teeth. I met Eric Deakins on several occasions. I always thought that he was an extremely pleasant man. More than that, he worked assiduously for his constituents. I have also heard from people who knew him in the House how pleasant and popular he was. I am very glad to take this opportunity to pay that tribute to him.

Walthamstow is an area which is becoming increasingly prosperous for various reasons. The wholescale development of east and north-east London, London docklands, the M11, the M25 and Stansted airport are all factors.

Another is that housing in Walthamstow is still comparatively cheap. I am looking for a flat there myself. The firm of mortgage brokers that I am using tells me that at present it is getting more inquiries from people wanting to live in Walthamstow than anywhere else in London. That is not surprising when one considers that we have the Victoria line and overground railway lines into Liverpool street. Communications are excellent.

However, a spoke was put in the wheel of burgeoning prosperity in my constituency by my local council. The London borough of Waltham Forest returned a Labour-controlled council last year. Throughout the year there were rumours of an enormous rates increase. As the prospective Tory candidate, I simply could not believe that such a thing would happen, but it did. Three months before the general election, the Labour council in the London borough of Waltham Forest put up the rates by 62 per cent. There was a popular explosion, with enormous demonstrations at Walthamstow town hall. Over 5,000 people attended to demonstrate, month after month after month. It was not surprising that in those circumstances the people of Walthamstow decided not to return a Labour Member.

There are, of course, more problems than just the rates. There is the effect that high rates have on businesses. My largest local employer, which employs 600 to 700 people, has to increase its turnover by £1·5 million a year to generate enough increased profit merely to pay the increase in its rates bill. My local hospital, Whipps Cross, now has to find over £200,000 a year extra to pay its enormous rates bill. So the council is not doing its bit to help with the regeneration of Waltham Forest. In fact, that name is a misnomer. It implies leafy suburbs. That may be so in Chingford but not in the rest of the borough. The council has made many errors and the people call it to account.

I want to turn to planning, another factor in inner-city regeneration which too many councils seem to use as a weapon against those who want to bring in private enterprise. The way that so many councils administer planning law is a national disgrace. In far too many cases, when someone puts in an application it sits on a teetering heap for weeks. It is supposed to be determined within two months but it seldom is. It may be taken to appeal but one will find that with written representations that can take six months. A public inquiry can take up to a year.

All the time, the areas of dereliction in inner cities are waiting undeveloped. Some of them have been undeveloped for decades. That is why I welcome the urban development corporations. They can clear up all the

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derelict areas which for far too long have been the subject of the misguided efforts of local authorities. They can cut through all the red tape. They can once more bring to these areas a prosperity which has been sadly lacking. I hope to see public finance and private endeavour in a powerful partnership for the future which will bring prosperity to all the people.

5.25 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We welcome the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) to the House. I shared a platform with him recently and heard him make a maiden speech, as it were, outside this House. He appreciates the balance of interests represented by his constituency between the city and the suburbs. Older hon. Members — or those who are younger in age, but older in service — will wish to associate themselves with the tribute that he paid to his predecessor, Eric Deakins, who was a warmly appreciated colleague. Eric did an assiduous job on many issues, including overseas matters. Although his defeat was not in one sense surprising—as the hon. Gentleman explained — it was much regretted. We hope that the hon. Gentleman will live up to the high standards of his predecessor. I am sure that he intends to try to do so.

I see that the hon. Gentleman's majority was about as small as Eric's, so life will be lived fairly sharply on a knife edge for the remaining four years. It is interesting to note that the massive rate rise implemented by Waltham Forest council was a major factor in the hon. Gentleman's success, yet his party now proposes to abolish the mechanism which led to his election, and reduce local authorities' power to do such politically dangerous things. I warn him, gently and kindly, that external forces may not provide such help in the future, so may he profit while he can.

I am uneasy about the Bill for two reasons. The Bill represents a break with tradition which is wrong, and treats corporations differently from local authorities. It deals with two aspects of the financing of urban development corporations, of which there are two up and running — London and Merseyside — and four in the pipeline, about which we are hearing more and more. The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), for example, spoke about Trafford Park. The Bill proposes a new limit for loans and removes the limits on the powers of UDCs to obtain grants. The Minister said that the Bill deals substantially with loans, but it also deals substantially with grants. I find it unacceptable that, when the Bill is enacted, UDCs will be treated differently in this respect from local government.

Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which my colleagues and Labour Members opposed — I was not an hon. Member at that time — the Government must lay an order before the House if they need to raise the financial limit. We then debate that order and decide whether to raise the limit. We have had two such debates — the last one was in July — and, in both cases, the orders were approved. We also raised the limit in the New Towns and Urban Corporations Act 1985, but none of these debates has led to a change in the system. This Bill changes the system. UDCs may obtain Government grants from the common allocation of moneys without parliamentary approval, no matter what the limit.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was right when he said that we shall have less constitutional opportunity to debate the financing of UDCs because the Government will be able to increase the grant power without consulting the House. Although we will have a general power of debate in the annual Supply Estimates debates and other general allocation debates, there will be no specific development corporation debates. However, we must debate and approve the rate support grant orders every year. This is an unacceptable difference of treatment.

That is why I was surprised that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) did not put on record the Labour party's opposition to the Bill. Labour colleagues in my area oppose the idea that local government must come cap in hand to Government and have their finances debated in the House, yet the Government give a quango the power to obtain money as and when it wants, without obtaining any parliamentary approval. It is paradoxical that the Labour party here will not declare its opposition to the Bill. I declare my opposition to it, and, if it is not amended, I and my colleagues will vote against its Third Reading — [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] The weekly parliamentary meeting started at 5.30 pm, so that is exactly where they are. I hope that the Labour party will therefore join me in trying to amend the Bill.

Why have the Government changed their attitude? Why did we originally have limits on grants if limits are not needed now? Did the Government make a mistake? Did they have second thoughts or did pressure come from somewhere? The Minister did not adequately explain the Government's change of policy. Why have they changed their policy since July 1987? We had no idea during that debate that the Bill would be introduced, and there was nothing about it in the Queen's Speech or the Conservative party manifesto. Do the Government agree that the scrutiny exercised by the House is an important part of monitoring the activities of urban development corporations? Whatever view of UDCs we might have, it is an important exercise. There is no other way to monitor them. They are quangos appointed by the Secretary of State. They meet in secret, except for rare occasions. The Bill will remove some fundamental constitutional rights.

The Bill would increase the limit in relation to loans from £30 million to £100 million. In relative terms, that increase is much greater than the previous upgradings. Borrowing will have to increase more than three times before a further order, in relation to that part of the financing of urban development corporations, must be placed before Parliament.

Unless the Government suddenly agree to provide much more money, we are unlikely to have frequent debates on the matter. My fear — this is the general political point—is that the Government are opening the door for more direct funding of undemocratic authorities. To be fair, they have been doing it since the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced the new urban policy in 1979. We now are to have mini urban development corporations, and housing action trusts which are unaccountable, non-partnership agencies.

I do not dispute the fact that the Government have a role to play and that they take an interest in the matter, but the best mechanism to help urban areas would be to set up partnership agencies to work with local government. There have been some good examples of that. I should be interested to hear from the Minister whether the initiatives taken in Sheffield, Birmingham and elsewhere, together with the the enterprise boards, do not confirm that the partnership model in practice is much more acceptable than these proposals.

Mr. Trippier: That might have been in the Liberal party's manifesto; it could even have been in the SDP manifesto. We might have thought it was a good idea to put it in our manifesto, but we did not. We said in our manifesto that we would have more urban development corporations. We were open with the electorate about what we wanted, and we were elected on that platform. As a result, we will create more mini urban development corporations which will mean more money — another major reason for introducing this legislation.

Mr. Hughes: I am not against more money being made available — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] No one is against more money being made available for urban regeneration. It is certainly needed, and it is not before time. We all accept that the Government have the constitutional authority to do it, even though they went to the country and lost popular support as a percentage of the total vote. We should not forget that they have been to the country twice and their popular support has decreased each time.

Mr. Bevan: What about the Liberal party?

Mr. Hughes: Our support increased once and declined once, whereas the Conservative party's support decreased twice.

We accept that the Government have the authority to do it, but we oppose the idea that the money should come through this direct mechanism.

The Minister will remember my next point cropping up during Question Time. I would have more confidence in the proposals if the Government had better control over their own finances. The Minister will have seen the reports in today's press that the Comptroller and Auditor General has not granted a certificate to the Department of the Environment. He refuses to approve its annual accounts for the second year running because of its failure to sort out a backlog of nearly £210 million of unchecked urban development grants. The problem has been caused by the failure of external auditors, some of them private firms —so much for the privatisation activities of the DOE.

The report also states:

> "The National Audit Office confirmed yesterday that the problem was not the fault of the local authorities."

It could not have been the fault of some authorities, because the Government have abolished them, but it is clear that the ones that the Government have not yet abolished cannot be blamed either. The Government's management of their finances is not persuasive and gives us cause for great concern.

We must also debate whether the Government have sorted out their policy on urban areas. I shall quote one of the Minister's speeches. On Monday 5 October 1987, the *Financial Times* reported:

> "Mr. David Trippier, junior minister at the Environment Department with special responsibility for inner cities, has admitted privately that the Government has not yet devised a successful formula for attracting the private sector to invest in the inner cities."

Mr. Trippier: I did not dream that I would be given an opportunity to deny as strenuously as I can, not only to the House but to the world, that I said any such thing. The hon. Gentleman will see that the report is by someone called Hazel Duffy. She was not there; I said no such thing; and I am glad of the opportunity to deny it. I have said many times that the Government's policy is clear and has been stated in the manifesto.

Mr. Hughes: As I was not there, I must accept what the Minister says, but I will have to hunt for the bankers, contractors and other representatives of the private sector who were at Templeton college, Oxford, to discover what the Minister said — unless he wishes to send me a transcript of his speech.

Even if the Minister does not admit it, I suggest that the report is true. Many of his colleagues are saying the same thing, and I could produce a sheaf of quotations to prove my point. The other day, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) was quoted as saying that the Government should be wary of allowing their radical inner-city package to seem like an all-out attack on local democracy. That is from someone who, until recently, was at the centre of government. *The Times* of 17 August states:

> "Inadequate local consultation, under-funding and too much Whitehall control are blunting the Government's campaign to revive inner cities, senior executives of several large companies have told *The Times*."

The Guardian of the same date has the headline:

> "Thatcher wrong on inner cities, Bow Group say."

That is a Conservative party group. Another article in *The Guardian* states:

> "There is little prospect of uniting five Whitehall departments in the inner city drive — Environment, Industry, Education, Employment and the Home Office."

We still do not know which Department will lead, which Minister will be in charge and whether or not the Government have a policy which allows us, within European law, to give priority to people in the inner cities. All those matters must be resolved. I look forward to the Minister's reply, because until now it has been all cloud and mist and all Government executive action.

I hope that the Government will realise that, although the regeneration of the inner cities is important and welcome, they must tell us how they will do it and not rely on the hit-and-miss examples that we have seen so far. I have talked, as has the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, to the executives of the LDDC board and to other people in London, and they admit that, at the beginning, the corporation was given the job of regeneration, but without any guidelines being laid down. Quite literally, it had to learn as it went along. That is not a satisfactory experience because it plays with people's lives.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I was surprised by the hon. Gentleman's comment that the policy is hit and miss. It does not look like that on Merseyside, where the Government have spent more than £180 million on the urban development corporation. That work has been highly successful, but the vast majority of the funds have been spent on the Liverpool side, with only £4 million being spent on the Birkenhead side. That looks like a precise policy. My constituents want me to raise the fact that, while one side of the river riots and gets a great deal of money, the other side does not. How does that fit in with the Prime Minister's policy that violence does not pay

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under this Government? How does it fit in with the comment that the Government's policy is hit and miss? The policy is precise in Merseyside. It discriminates against the Wirral while favouring Liverpool.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important and interesting point. It is right to ask the Minister what the Government are going to do. The hon. Gentleman has shown the arbitrary nature of the policy. In his area, the policy concentrates on Liverpool because the then Secretary of State for the Environment took a specific interest in Liverpool and decided to go there and do something. Policy has been left to arbitrary choice. There is no equality about it. This Secretary of State has chosen another four UDCs.

Policy has often targeted specific areas and outside London, areas have been targeted that do not have many people. I inquired about this point of the hon. Member for Davyhulme. It would be helpful if, at some stage, the Minister could tell us the accurate figures for resident population in UDC areas, but I understand that, except in London, development corporation areas have not contained any parts with a substantial population. A different strategy must be applied to areas that have people.

Mr. Trippier: Yes; the black country.

Mr. Hughes: I am sorry; I do not have the figures. I am inquiring after them, quite honestly.

I hope that the intervention by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) will prompt the Government to have a strategy rather than a series of hit-and-miss policies. As the hon. Gentleman said, those policies have hit Liverpool but missed his constituency of Birkenhead. That is poor planning, because often the substantial problems are the same on each side of the river.

I wish to make some brief final points about my own area. From my experience, some funny and unsatisfactory things are going on in London as a result of the Government's strategy. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), who has now left his place, was wrong about the balance of owner-occupation and rented housing. The figures were given in the *Official Report* in March and April 1987.

On my side of the river, only 25 per cent. of the properties that have been built in the previous six years on LDDC sites are affordable. "Affordable" means costing less than £40,000, for which one can get one bedroom at most. Indeed, often that will buy only a studio flat. An increasing percentage of those properties are for sale for sums in excess of £100,000. It is scandalous to allow people to have a second home costing such a price when many people have no first home. We must be honest about the results. Yes, people have been willing to buy and many have bought properties. However, that is becoming much more difficult and, increasingly, such development is not in the interests of the local community.

The figures for jobs are even more telling. These are official figures from answers given by the Government. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) tabled a written question that received the revealing answer that in London between 1981 and 1987 there was a net loss of new jobs within docklands if transferred jobs that were brought in are discounted. In fact, there has been a net loss of 517 jobs in docklands boroughs during the past six years. It will take a long time to correct that.

Constituencies such as mine have 30 per cent. adult male unemployment. Indeed, my constituency has either the fastest or almost the fastest growing unemployment rate of any constituency in Britain. There is no proof that the docklands development is really working. Indeed, those figures prove that it is not working in the best interests of the local community. Such areas are poor and deprived, and people object to these policies. The Government are going down a route that allows private forces to dominate, without partnership, the democratic locally elected authorities. The Government are not taking account of what has happened during the past six years, and that will lead to further mistakes.

Urban development must be for all, not for the few. It must be for common profit and welfare, not for speculative profit and minimum local welfare. The Government have national responsibility for the next four years. I hope that they will try to change their policy, because at the moment it is selectively beneficial, and that is not acceptable.

5.45 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): It is always a privilege to be able to compliment a new hon. Member on a maiden speech, but it is doubly so when that hon. Member made his maiden speech without reference to any notes or without reading a single word. My hon Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) made a speech that was in the best traditions of this House—it was not controversial, and it complimented his predecessor. That showed that my hon. Friend will speak here and will represent Walthamstow for many years.

I should also like to compliment the Minister on introducing this measure so soon after the July debate. You may ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why I wish to speak in the debate when my constituency of Langbaurgh does not have one foot of UDC in it. I suspect that is because the Ministry does not have a clue where Langbaurgh is. I have come to that conclusion because if any Ministers had visited my constituency in a ministerial capacity during the past five years they would have recognised the dereliction there. They would have read the statistics on local unemployment and would have seen the need to include some of the area in the UDC on Teeside.

As far as I can see, the Ministry has decided to provide adequately for the birds and fishes on the north side of the Tees but to provide less well for the human beings as far south of the Tees as my constituency. I hope that the boundaries will be reconsidered soon. I remind my hon. Friend that when the boundaries were first decided I made immediate representations because not one foot of Langbaurgh was included. I was told that the Ministry would take an early opportunity to redress the position. If the Government have taken this early opportunity to redress the position on money, it would not have hurt them too much to slip in a couple of million pounds extra and to give a little of that to my constituency to help with its areas of dereliction.

Langbaurgh suffers because the basis of its prosperity came to an end before the type of nanny state that underwrites corporations today. The iron industry, which extracted its wealth from my area, ran out of iron. Therefore, the area became derelict. That happened before we had such bodies as new town corporations or urban development corporations. Today, we are locked between the urban development corporation in the north, into which money is being pumped, and the rural development corporation in the south which is also having money pumped into it. We are the narrow sandwich in the middle that is never visited or seen by Ministers. We have old mining areas and small villages. Often the village is L-shaped with the mine at its apex. We could do with some help from the Government for the dereliction that needs to be cleared and for the regeneration of jobs.

It is not quite the Government's fault that in about 1980-81 ICI and British Steel offloaded 22,000 out of 47,000 workers in the area. That was the measure of the unemployment caused by two major employers which we have been seeking to tackle. One reason why we have been less successful on Teesside is that local authorities are manifestly poor, both in their elected membership and, in many instances, in their officers.

Miss Mowlam *rose*——

Mr. Holt: There are, of course, always notable exceptions.

I thought that hon. Members would want to find out why these problems do not occur in the south of England. Why are there not these problems where there are Conservative-controlled councils? Why are these problems in the northern region? An examination of the composition of local authorities explains it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), who has now gone after making his maiden speech—I do not blame him; he has probably gone for a well earned drink—mentioned planning. Planning in Langbaurgh is run by a planning committee, the former chairman of which was formerly a bus cleaner. I cannot imagine what skill, knowledge and expertise in cleaning a bus—I make no apology——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have taken a flexible and tolerant attitude to the scope of the debate, but the hon. Member is getting very wide of the financial limits on urban development corporations.

Mr. Holt: I accept your stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to some extent. But the urban development corporations are all about planning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member, on reflection, should accept my stricture.

Mr. Holt: I accept your stricture wholeheartedly, Sir. The UDCs are about planning. Planning is carried out by a local authority. The chairman of the Langbaurgh planning authority was a bus cleaner. That is the calibre of the people whom industrialists and business men have to meet and talk to, with a view to moving their businesses into the area.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my hon. Friend agree that, to promote the future well-being of local government and local democracy, it would be a good idea if planning committees and others interested in regeneration—the subject of this debate—encouraged as many of their work force from all levels of industry, both shop floor and management, to take part full-time in the affairs of their authorities?

Mr. Holt: I want greater participation. There has been a great deal of discussion about having television cameras in the House. If television cameras were permanently inside some of the town halls in the north of England, especially in Langbaurgh and Middlesbrough, the squalls for local democracy and the way in which local democracy is handled might be seen differently by many people.

Mr. Frank Field: The hon. Gentleman suggested that bus drivers, cleaners and others would not be as suitable chairmen as other people. Are we not looking for the qualities that people bring to the chairmanships of committees? A cleaner of buses may bring a fairer mind to the task of being chairman of a planning committee than would a person linked with estate agents.

Mr. Holt: I accept that a person can be trained for that purpose. The hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) said earlier that Labour-controlled councils had gone out of their way to bring people to the north-east, and so have I. If the industrialists and people of standing who are meeting leaders of local authorities in the north find that those people are unable to string two sentences together, they will not go to the area. They will go to those local authorities where they are better received — in the midlands and the south of England. That is one reason why there is a problem in getting industrialists to go to the north of England.

Miss Mowlam: I am served by the same district council of Langbaurgh and can say without any doubt that, in the short time in which I have been an hon. Member, I have had nothing but help, experience and knowledge from the elected members of that council. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman talks about people as "poor" elected members he is not referring to the Labour members. Perhaps he should talk to some of the Conservative members who have been elected before he makes such statements.

The hon. Gentleman asked why local authorities in the north are perceived as having greater problems than those in the south. He prefaced his comments with a statement about the extent of job losses on Teesside since 1979—45,000, to be exact. He then asked why the local authority has problems with housing, education and social services. If the hon. Gentleman had linked those two statements, he would have understood exactly why local authorities in the north face those problems. The hon. Gentleman should think hard before he makes such comments about one of the elected members on Langbaurgh council who has experience and knowledge of the area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be wise for the House to have regard to my earlier comments and to return to the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill.

Mr. Holt: I began by saying that it was important for the House and my hon. Friend the Minister to recognise where Langbaurgh is. Already since becoming a Member the hon. Member for Redcar has written an article for "The House Magazine", trying to put on the map where her constituency is. That is hardly a good reflection on her predecessor, who held the seat for 23 years. The constituency was fully inside the UDC area. Little was known about that constituency until I went to that part of Teesside. Very few contributions were made in the House by the hon. Lady's predecessor. The hon. Lady was elected after her predecessor was deselected by his party——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to allow the debate to continue along these lines. Unless the hon. Member can direct his remarks to the Bill, he must resume his seat.

Miss Mowlam: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to clarify the position of the previous hon. Member for Redcar, who was not deselected but stood down of his own free will. If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) had read the article in "The House Magazine", he would have seen——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is compounding the offence of which I am complaining.

Mr. Holt: I hope that at the end of this debate a few more hon. Members and people outside will know where Langbaurgh and Redcar and the UDC's boundaries are. Even Ministers might begin to know where the UDC is. Perhaps more industrialists will get to know where Langbaurgh and Teesside are and there will be greater penetration of job prospects in the area.

The UDC in Teesside is only newly formed. It has been suggested that the composition of its membershp was biased and that there were not sufficient Labour members. When the Government first announced the UDC, the leader of the Middlesbrough council denounced the Government and said that it would be a terrible thing to have a UDC—until he was offered a seat on the board. Then it became fashionable to be a member of the UDC.

While I accept your strictures in full, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must refer back to planning, in the context of a UDC that will be able to cut through much of the present bureaucracy. Whichever party is in power, the Government of the day sit on planning applications for a long time, until it suits them to allow a plan to go through. When I led a local council in the south of England, a planning application went in that the Ministry did not want. Two and a half years passed before a public inquiry was announced. That is how things can be slowed down. I am not making a party political point, because the Government and the local authority in question were Conservative. The UDC will be able to cut through all that red tape. It will be able to take many more instant decisions and that is good.

Recently, and sadly, we lost the Wali of Swat. I am sure that all hon. Members read his obituary a fortnight ago. He did away with the lawyers in his kingdom; the UDCs are doing away with planners in their kingdoms. The Wali of Swat was able to deal with case after case every day —as many as 80 to 100 cases—and he dispensed justice. If we can speed up planning applications in this country through the mechanism of the UDCs——

Mr. Simon Hughes: With justice.

Mr. Holt: Indeed, with justice. I do not maintain that there must be injustice. What there must not be is a slowing up. We shall then bring in the money and try to obtain private money to match the UDC pump-priming exercise.

Mr. Frank Field: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House. Merely because a development corporation has been created does not mean that it will act as the hon. Gentleman says. I intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to say that we in the Wirral —in Birkenhead—are covered by an urban development corporation, and little action has taken place. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that if development is not held back by waiting for planning application to be processed, it will take place more quickly, but the mere fact of having an urban development corporation does not mean that action will follow—it has not followed on our side of the river. Other hon. Members who think that something may happen in their areas because of their designated status should look at Merseyside to see the difference in treatment.

Mr. Holt: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. The UDCs are relatively new, and each area has its own unique features. Probably, each will develop in a slightly different way. I hope that the failures and mistakes of some of the UDCs will not recur in the Teesside, Tyne and Wear and other development corporations, which are, as yet, embryonic. They have only a few officers, and have not yet achieved much. One cannot make a generalised statement about them, except that they are in operation, and we hope that they will learn, rather than repeat others' mistakes.

The north-east of England deserves better than the representation it has had by the Labour party over many years. The UDC that we are to have in Teesside will give a fresh stimulus. For many years, we had the North-East development corporation, which spent a fortune and achieved nothing. It did not produce jobs—except for the boys. It did nothing——

Mr. Frank Field: It has not even done that in Birkenhead.

Mr. Holt: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, we are talking at cross purposes. The NEDC, which was unique to the north-east of England, had nothing to do with Birkenhead. It was a composite body of trade unions, local authorities and others. It spent a lot of money and became moribund. It has been replaced by the Northern development corporation, which is a new corporate unit trying to bring industry into the north-east of England. One of the reasons why the NEDC failed lamentably was that it was too big. It was overloaded with representations from all sorts of people. One of the beauties of the UDC is that the representation is small, so it can make decisions relatively quickly and is not overloaded with bureaucracy.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene before he finishes. He made a comment about Councillor Mike Carr and the attitude of Middlesbrough council when the UDC was announced. All the councils in the area have said that they will co-operate fully with the urban development corporation. Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that when councillor Mike Carr and I saw the Prime Minister in Middlesbrough after the general election, we made it plain that we would support the UDC?

Mr. Holt: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am saying that there was a change of heart by Councillor Carr, who condemned the Government on the first announcement of the UDC for Teesside, and changed his mind later on. I have no doubt that he is an honourable man who will support the UDC as he says he will and that he will stand by its corporate decisions even if he, as an individual, does not agree with some of them. I am not criticising any of the local authorities in Teesside, all of which are Labour-controlled and have said that they will co-operate with the UDC. I am not criticising their willingness to co-operate. I have some reservations about their ability to do so, which is a different matter.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman has not been in the House much this afternoon, but he could have interrupted at any time. I see no reason to give way, because I doubt whether there will be much of a contribution from him.

We have been debating the amount of money that the Government are putting in, and the financial controls on that money. We have also had quite a proper shot across the bow on the accountability of the spending of that money. As far as I can work it out, only Members of Parliament will be able to raise questions sufficiently frequently and in depth to find out what exactly the UDCs are up to. I am not sure that that additional, onerous task is one that we should have.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister tell us whether the UDCs, with their additional funding, will be able to issue some sort of regular bulletin or minutes of their work, so that we can see exactly where they are going, without having to ask questions all the time? Perhaps the Government will not go along with my thoughts. If not, they must make the case for why not, rather than dismissing them out of hand. The whole issue of accountability in an area carries with it suspicion, lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown. If the Government are to make the UDCs successful in areas such as Teesside they must take all the people with them, and to do that, they must make available information that might sometimes be embarrassing but must always be accurate.

Will the Government give some sign that they are prepared to examine again the boundaries of the areas covered by the UDC, and incorporate part of my constituency, which is just as derelict as any part of the constituencies of the hon. Members for Redcar and for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner)? Many areas in my constituency are worse in many ways than those areas. The rate of unemployment is no different. I cannot say why we have been singled out for exclusion by the Government, so I hope that they will reconsider the boundaries of the UDC so that Langbaurgh can be included in future.

Until fairly recently the debate was pretty quiet, low key and almost a non-event. I confess that it was difficult to stay awake during the major thrust of the speech by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). It was a speech of moderation of the first order. Yet we are talking about inner cities, about urban development corporations, about the main plank of the Government's policies in many ways and areas where, in the main, the people are represented by Labour Members. A derisory number of Labour Members have been in the Chamber for the debate, yet in many ways——

Mr. Simon Hughes: Where are the Conservatives?

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said that there were only five hon. Members on Opposition Benches, including the Front Bench spokesman. *[Interruption.]* I get the impression that many Opposition Members learned their trade in town halls from the way in which some have been shouting from a sedentary position.

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to define, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington, the difference between a wealth-creating entrepreneur and a speculative developer. At the beginning of the hon. Gentleman's speech he was condemning the speculative developers and at the end he was praying that there could be more entrepreneurs and risk takers. He was condemning the docklands development. I wonder how many people realise that one of the principal men behind the development of the architectural excellence of the constituency of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) conceived the idea of redeveloping the warehouses when he was 23. He had the gumption to go to the bank, get the money and do it. That is real risk-taking and the sort of entrepreneur that we hope will now go with the UDCs to the Tees and Tyne areas and the north-east of England. I hope that when they get there they will not be stultified by local authorities that are negative and have no idea about profit-making jobs. This is all about jobs.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do not want to postpone the ending of the hon. Gentleman's contribution for too long, but he referred to the 23-year-old developer. I presume that he means Mr. Wadsworth, who started at the age of 23. Fine. Let him do well, but not when one of the results the other day was to propose a tower block of luxury flats in the middle of Bermondsey that looked like a phallic symbol, which nobody wanted but which would provide a massive profit for himself and his company, but not benefit the community. That is not a benefit, but a disadvantage of development.

Mr. Holt: That was an aesthetic argument. I was talking about entrepreneurial risk taking. That man is doing that and seeking to make a profit.

You asked me to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have been—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] As a consequence of that, I shall draw my remarks to a conclusion by saying that this has been a happy debate because the Government are putting more money into the area next to mine. It will be an even happier debate when they start putting some of that money into Langbaurgh.

6.15 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I hesitate to comment on some of the issues raised by the debate following the remarks made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), but we must address ourselves to them.

With the Government's new-found interest in the inner cities, there may be some cause for concern that the outer areas are being neglected. There seems to be some difficulty of definition, particularly with regard to urban development corporations—for example, what areas are in, what areas are out, which schemes apply where and how the problems are to be tackled. My concern is as much with the approach through UDCs as with outer areas, particularly as my constituency is one. I was interested to note that the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), said on 14 September 1979 when he announced the urban development corporations:

> "It is important that we learn the lessons of the impact of the various policies that have been pursued by successive Governments. The Government, over the coming year, will be looking very closely at the mix of schemes produced under the present arrangements."

[Mr. George Howarth]

Perhaps this is the most important point:

> "In addition we will need to review the role of inner city policy within the wider context."

I take it that "the wider context" also covers outer areas and the plethora of regimes and systems that have been introduced.

In that context, we must start to measure the effectiveness of UDCs and other types of scheme. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others covered leverage and gearing. I do not intend to go into that. However, currently in England about 210,000 hectares of urban land are vacant, and much of that is derelict. I am reliably assured that this is the equivalent of the whole of Nottinghamshire. That is a great problem that needs to be tackled. I suspect that the UDC model is the only way to tackle it.

The effect of such concentrations of that problem in certain areas is worrying. In Liverpool, which has figured in some of the debates today, it is estimated that 10 per cent. of the land is vacant. One has only to drive casually round the city to realise that there are horrendous eyesores and problems as a result of that vacant urban land. In my area of Knowsley it is conservatively estimated that about 15 per cent. of all urban land is vacant. Driving around some of the industrial estates, one sees derelict sites which, in the 1950s and the 1960s, were formerly thriving industrial areas and which are now nothing more than a heap of rubble. Such areas are in a queue with many others to be redeveloped by the local authorities for industrial use some time in the future, I hope.

One also sees the parts left over from large municipal developments in the 1950s and the 1960s that have not been treated properly and are an eyesore, often because of reductions in local government expenditure. They are badly maintained and not kept up to a reasonable standard. Thus people's lives are impoverished because of the environment in which they live and work. There is no question but that the visual impact of the area is also damaged, as well as the prospects of the local authority and others of attracting further industry and investors.

Mr. Trippier: There is quite a lot of sense in what the hon. Gentleman says. Some of the dereliction to which he refers is acknowledged by his area being one of the 57 programme authorities. So it should be. Will the hon. Gentleman say what he has just said to the House to Liverpool city council? Will he ask what it is doing about the dereliction that we detected, and that he must acknowledge, within the enterprise zone area? When I visit Liverpool, I have to pass through the enterprise zone if I arrive at Speke airport. Although so many Labour-controlled authorities in our region, in the north-west, have been successful in marketing their enterprise zones —most of them are now full—there seems to be a lack of willingness on the part of the local city council to market that area, which would transform it dramatically. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say about that?

Mr. Howarth: It is not my role to speak, in the House or elsewhere, for or on behalf of Liverpool city council. However, I acknowledge that there are problems and that some of the development that has taken place in the enterprise zone was not what was intended when the enterprise zone was established. In defence of my local authority, I remind the hon. Gentleman that, while it is true that it has had urban programme status and has used it to redevelop the industrial estates, it has been a drip-feeding process. Developments are not taking place quickly enough, which has left my authority at a disadvantage in competing with firms that may be considering going into new towns or the urban development corporation area. It is the Government's conscious policy to concentrate investment in that area in preference to other outer areas.

That is precisely my point about the mistaken assumptions. No matter how much attention is paid to urban development corporations, and no matter how large the number of derelict land grants and urban development grants available, there has been during the Government's period of office a steady growth of vacant urban land. The amount of vacant urban land has increased because factories in industrial areas have closed and there has not been enough investment to counter that. While the Government are doing something about the problems in some areas, the problems of other areas are growing at an alarming rate.

Mr. Frank Field: Will my hon. Friend comment on my point that urban development corporation status is not a panacea in itself? It does not follow that anything will happen once one has gained that status for one's area. The Merseyside development corporation needs a kick in the pants to get it working as effectively on our side of the river as it is on the Liverpool side.

Mr. Howarth: I accept my hon. Friend's point and I know from previous forays that he has made into various battles that he is probably the best man to give Merseyside development corporation a kick in the seat of the pants. It is fairly evident that the Merseyside development corporation has concentrated on the areas fanning out from the pierhead. There is little or no evidence of the corporation's work on the other side of the Mersey.

My main point is perhaps less controversial than some of the other points that have been made during the debate. I repeat that the Government are missing some of the problems that bedevil urban planning in this country. I have some experience of the processes and practices of valuation. We have to contend with a number of problems in that respect, whether through the creation of UDCs or through the local authorities.

Having worked for a housing association, I have some indirect experience of negotiating inner-city and outer-areas sites for community-based housing schemes. The practice and processes of land valuation are based on some strange assumptions. On some occasions the housing association for which I worked was the only organisation interested in developing a site but we nevertheless spent months and months negotiating with the land valuers. I am criticising not the local authorities but the professions. Endless time is wasted. Often the value of the site may be virtually zero, but the land valuers negotiate as if there was oil underneath it.

Commercial developers could be forgiven for walking away in such cases. It is only organisations such as community-based housing associations that have the time, patience and commitment to the community to negotiate their way through the maze of procedures and professional problems. The land valuation arrangements are more than ripe for attention. We must do something about them because otherwise, no matter what bodies we set up, the blight and problems in urban areas will continue.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Member has missed a fundamental point. In my experience, land ownership is a jigsaw and we need an organisation to bring the pieces together.

Mr. Howarth: I will be addressing that point shortly.

Mr. Patnick: It is taking a long time, if I may say so.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friends have said, it is too early to judge the overall performance of the UDCs. However, I believe that some of the disciplines that they use are bedevilled with the same problems as those from which other bodies suffer.

Before the Government proceed with the other initiatives that are said to be in train, they should take a long hard look at the matter. They should also spend some time trying to jettison some of the ideological baggage that they seem to be carrying these days. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends agree that many of the traditional urban planning processes and other procedures have failed in the past. The Government must concede that frequently the market has failed, too. They have not really come to terms with that problem yet and we must recognise those simple facts of life.

I conclude with some suggestions to which I hope the Government will give some thought. In considering some of the vacant and derelict sites in urban areas, they should examine the groundwork trust model. The Minister will be familiar with that model. That method, which also involves the local authorities, represents one way of clearing up some of the eyesores inexpensively but effectively and to prepare sites to make them more attractive for development.

Without going into too much detail, I ask the Minister to consider the procedures that have been developed in Austria, Japan, Denmark, Sweden and other countries in collating, mapping and publishing land valuation data. That is an important part of the process of turning over and developing land.

The Government should examine more closely the lessons that can be learned from the Scottish Development Agency's experience in Glasgow through the GEAR scheme — Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal. The SDA works in close co-operation with the local authorities in developing programmes for land development. Those schemes are undertaken in partnership with the local authorities, and I understand that they have been quite successful.

The Government should give some thought to the suggestion of the Royal Institute of British Architects, which proposes the establishment of a national urban renewal agency with an annual budget of £1 billion. That may well be the spur that we need to review professional procedures and practices. If the body worked in partnership with local authorities, a great deal could be achieved through that mechanism.

The Government's policy lacks clarity of purpose. It is piecemeal and is weighed down by ideological baggage. I suggest to the Government that they spend more time listening and a bit less time lecturing.

6.28 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): In this, my first speech to the House, I pay tribute to the electors of Stockton, South whom I represent and to my predecessor, Ian Wrigglesworth, who in 13 years in the House built up a reputation as a very good constituency Member of Parliament, first as the Labour Member for Thornaby and later as the SDP spokesman on trade and industry matters. May I also mention, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is 42 years since my most illustrious predecessor left this House as the Member for what is now a quite different constituency. Harold Macmillan returned as the Member for Bromley, but he never forgot our town by the Tees and he paid Stockton the great honour of taking its name when he went to another place.

I represent a northern constituency and my cause in the House is the north. Much has been said about the north-south divide but I submit that that divide is more a perception than a reality. It persists in the minds of southern folk who think that we northerners all live in back-to-back houses and keep whippets.

The divide between rich and poor is as sharp between Hilton, a plush village in the southern part of my constituency and Ayresome, an inner-city ward of Middlesbrough, also in my constituency, as it is between Mayfair and Brixton in London. In Ingleby Barwick, in Stockton, and in Yarm, executive housing of the very highest quality is being built at high speed to accommodate the young urban professionals of Teesside. Most of them have at least one car and many have two cars. We have some of the busiest BMW and Vauxhall dealers in the country. Where others think that there are dark satanic mills, many are enjoying a standard of living that is more consonant with the new Jerusalem.

It is not just that the southern perception is geographically wrong—we have seen tonight how many hon. Members cannot point out Cleveland on the map. It is also economically incorrect. Recent surveys of disposable income show that the northerner is far better off than his London counterpart. Less of his income is swallowed up by the cost of housing. More can be spent on the enjoyment of life. The average travel-to-work time on Teesside is a mere 20 minutes—more often than not through open country lanes to a factory or office with guaranteed parking.

Sometimes it is thought that enterprise has shifted exclusively to the south-east, to allegedly greener pastures, but earlier in this debate we listened to the speech of my hon. Friend the new Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). He said that those green pastures have disappeared beneath cramped housing estates and busy motorways. The population of London now live in overcrowded tenements and travel in inhumane conditions on the London underground trains—200 or more to a carriage. Their view is restricted to the hanging straps and curved advertisements on those trains. That restricted view —that limited horizon—must not form the limit of the perceptions of the north in the House.

I am not here to ask what the Government can do for the north. That is simple. The Government must help us to help ourselves. They must bolster our self-confidence, encourage the enterprise that we already have and help us to seize our opportunities. Those few requests are all answered by the instigation of the Teesside and Tyneside development corporations. I wholeheartedly welcome them.

I am also here to ask what the north can do for the Government. The south seems to have forgotten, in its new-found prosperity, that it is traditionally in the north that the wealth of our nation is created. At the apogee of empire, when men of liberal views stood in this House and

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

debated the welfare of the Indian and the Chinaman, the engines of the expansion of empire were built in the north and were driven by coal, hewn out of the earth by northern men and women. We were the people who turned out the cannon and cutlery of every great expedition. From King's Cross to Hong Kong, the steel came from Dorman Long.

The spark of enterprise which flashed when John Walker of Stockton first invented the safety match sparked again as the first nail was driven into the first public railway in the world from Stockton to Darlington. Now the sparks fly again as we make steel and plastics to send throughout the world. Those sparks of enterprise will not be extinguished by the damp, laconic lectures of the Opposition, who seek to gain pity for our region instead of the admiration that it so rightly deserves. Those sparks of enterprise will be fanned to a flame by the new development corporation that was set up by the Conservative Government last year to help Teesside to help itself. It is a flame to warm the soul of the nation and it is a flame to perform that vital chemistry which creates new jobs.

The people of Teesside have learnt from the past and they are looking to the future with growing confidence in their own abilities. In the last three months, 58 per cent. of our companies have increased their sales. Similarly, during the last three months 53 per cent. of our companies have increased their work forces and 28 per cent. expect to employ more people in three months' time. A massive 75 per cent. of our companies expect their turnover to increase in the next 12 months.

My constituents have sent me here to tell the House of their successes and to shout for the north. All is not perfect. We have heard during the debate that we on Teesside have suffered job losses on a massive scale, but the turnround has been quite dramatic. Large and successful enterprises have been set up with redundancy money. In each of the last three years, 6,000 new businesses have been set up in the north, more than 10,000 people are now self-employed and one in six people in the north own shares. Moreover, 65,000 families have bought their council homes and the youth training scheme on Teesside has been more successful than anywhere else. The talent, initiative and ability are there.

Recently the Prime Minister visited my constituency and said:

> "With talent, initiative and ability, money will flow."

That phrase will be the slogan under which the Teesside development corporation launches its advertising campaign this week. My only qualfication of that statement would be to agree with the words of Tennyson in a song in which he said:

> "Bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
> And dark and true and tender is the North."

It is true that we keep our successes in the dark. Until now, we have kept the good things about the north quiet and have listened with concern to the sad stories of northern life from Opposition Members. That must change before we do our region irreparable damage.

That campaign starts this very day, this very week. Teesside will tell the world of its successes, and every pity-seeking speech from the Opposition will be met from this side of the House with a proud statement of our achievements. The Conservative party will not hold out the begging bowl for Teesside. This party will rebuild the future of the north on the sure foundation of its glorious industrial past. We shall not merely seek to subsidise those few great industries that we had in the last century. Shipbuilding, unfortunately, has finished on the Tees, just a surely as wooden boat building has gone from Stockton. It is time to encourage the new sparks of enterprise, not to stir the embers of the old industrial fires.

Our Teesside development corporation is pressing forward, with speed and co-operation with all the agencies concerned, on schemes to build high-tech offices, workshops and new developments the length and breadth of Teesside—from Bowesfield lane in my constituency to Hartlepool marina. Yesterday, we were heartened by the news that next year my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is to give an additional £65 million to the urban development corporations. Our new development corporation should go forward with the blessing of the House and with the benefit of this Bill. It must build on the past and look to the future.

If, as I suggest, a brilliant future can be built on a successful past, I can do no better than welcome the Bill with the same words as were used by my predecessor, Harold Macmillan, when he ended his maiden speech 62 years ago. He said:

> "the people of this country have made up their mind that these proposals are to their benefit, and I am quite certain of this; that . . . although we are but young, newly arrived, and inexperienced members of the party, it has been, to have a measure like this, an immense encouragement, and we claim it as a sign of what Conservatism can do and has always done when it is true to itself."—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1925; Vol. 183. c. 406.]

6.37 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): It is always a great privilege to follow a maiden speaker. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockton (Mr. Devlin), on a number of grounds. First, I have to tell him that he did not beat one of our candidates. He beat a Social Democratic party candidate, so it was easier for him to make his speech than otherwise it would have been. Secondly, he kept strictly to the traditions of this House by referring to his predecessor and his constituency. I particularly warmed towards him, because he is from the north-east and I am from the north-west. I agree completely with much of what he said.

The image of the north of England in the south of England is completely wrong. It is not the "Coronation Street" world that many people in the south think it is. As he said, it is a warm and friendly community. It is a working community in the north-east, just as it is in the north-west. I hope that the hon. Member will follow in the traditions of the Conservative party and of his great predecessor, Harold Macmillan.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has unfortunately just left the Chamber.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): That is a plus for him.

Mr. Oakes: No, it is not, because I was going to congratulate him, too, on his absolute honesty. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh expressed far better than did the Minister the true intentions of this Bill. The hon. Gentleman let the cat out of the bag. He told the House exactly what the Bill is about. He gloried in the fact that the chairman of a planning committee in Langbaurgh was previously a bus cleaner. What he neglected to tell the House was that that cleaner was an elected member of the council. People voted for him. People do strange things when they vote; they vote for the most unlikely people. Some even vote for bookmakers, and they have every right to do so.

The hon. Gentleman revealed that under the Bill the Government do not think that ex-bus cleaners who have been elected by the people are superior to people appointed by the Minister—they may be estate agents, or from other professions — but at least an ex-bus cleaner will not have an indirect financial interest in what he is doing, whereas some of the members of the UDCs may have. It is breathtakingly amazing that a Government that screws local authorities are prepared to give almost unlimited budgets to UDCs. If a UDC fails to attract private money, the Government will underwrite it in the same way that they underwrote the BP share issue. The Government will look after their own.

I found very disturbing what my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said about the Government's intention to set up mini UDCs. What does that mean? It means that a mini UDC—planning powers are very important—can take decisions that go against the interests of the community and its elected representatives.

Unfortunately, I had to leave the Chamber when my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was making his speech. We were on the Front Bench when the London Docklands development corporation was set up by the Government. We were assured then that the residents of the area would be able not only to rent but to buy. I do not live in that area, but I have seen the advertisements in *The Observer* and in other newspapers, and I could not afford to live in it. Very few Members — certainly Labour Members — could afford to live there, let alone those members of the community whose parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have lived there. They are being driven out of the area by the yuppies who are buying all the properties. Is that an example of a development corporation? Is that what will happen with regard to mini UDCs?

With regard to areas of dereliction, it is very easy for Conservative Members to point out that local authorities have done nothing about them. Are they saying that Labour councils are being malicious and will not develop an area? Are they saying that Labour councils are unaware of problems in their area, even though the councillors live there? The problem is that the Government will not give local councils the money to develop that derelict land. They screw them down by rate capping and other measures. The money will go not to elected representatives but to appointed development corporations.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): The hon. Gentleman is talking about the lack of money for inner-city areas. He might like to reflect on the words of Councillor Rabbani, who is a Labour councillor on Birmingham city council. He criticised his own council members in these terms:

> "There is already enough money to solve Handsworth's problems, but it is being wasted"

by the local council.

Mr. Oakes: He is an elected representative and he is entitled to say that. He and his colleagues do not agree as to how that money should be spent.

The Bill is about the erosion of democracy. The Government believe that representatives should be appointed to do things, especially in areas that are politically unfavourable to them. That is what the Bill is about and what the Government are trying to do. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh let the cat out of the bag in his remarks about the chairman of a planning committee being an ex-bus cleaner.

I have great regard for the Minister—we are both north-westerners—but when he says that expenditure can be controlled by the appropriation Act he is talking nonsense. The appropriation Bill is the measure on which we have an all-night sitting when we talk about anything under the sun. Nobody votes it down, because to do so would block all Government expenditure for a range of other matters.

The Bill gives the Government economic power to do what they like for urban development corporations and at the same time screw down elected representatives on local councils regardless of their party. Many Conservative councillors, who are true democrats, bitterly oppose what the Government are doing.

I do not believe that there will be a vote on the Bill. I hoped that there would be, because we should vote against it.

6.47 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brando-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I join hon. Members in complimenting my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on two superb maiden speeches. On 12 June—when I was coming down from a blue cloud, having been re-elected—I felt sad at the loss of some very able colleagues. That sadness is at least softened by the quality of the class of '87.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that this was a modest measure. If one judges a Bill by the number of its pages and clauses, this is indeed a modest measure. Its size belies its importance. The concept of the urban development corporation, whether it be mini or maxi, is one of the great motor ideas of this era. Its growing impact on urban regeneration cannot be under-estimated and we must encourage it all that we can.

I acknowledge some of the faults that have been mentioned by hon. Members with regard to the showpiece UDC, the London Docklands development corporation. It is still a showpiece of which we can be proud, and it demonstrates what can be achieved against the warring factions of local authorities that, sadly, put parochial obstacles in the way of desired objectives.

There is no point in the Opposition trying to persuade people that all was sweetness and light in that area of London and that the Opposition would have done this by themselves without a UDC. The reality for all to see is that that is not true. For docklands and for the whole of that area of London, the development corporation was a brilliant idea and is becoming an ever more obvious success.

Not all UDCs are London ones, nor are they likely to be. Nevertheless, the principle is valid. We are debating the narrow point of financial limits and parliamentary control, but we must recognise the party political divide on the issue as to whether we should have development corporations at all. On 12 May, a Committee was dealing

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

with Tyne and Wear, the black country and the Teesside development. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who is an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, said:

> "We are entering a general election campaign. Why are we considering the order this morning? Why not wait until after the general election? Under the next Labour Government—we shall have a Labour Government by 12 June—there will be no need for such orders."

The hon. Member for Jarrow was challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), who said that the hon. Member for Jarrow was saying that, should there be a Labour Government after 11 June, they would repeal the orders and scrap development corporations. In unequivocal terms, the hon. Member for Jarrow said yes.

Mr. Boyes: The hon. Gentleman is being selective in his quotations from the official record of that Committee. The then Minister, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) asked if there was

> "now a clear commitment by the Opposition to abolish all urban development corporations in this country."

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) said:

> "My hon. Friend who leads for the Opposition will answer that question when he catches your eye, Mr. Knox."

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow said:

> "I also said that I do not speak for the Opposition. That is the job of my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes)."

My hon. Friend stressed that again, when he said:

> "However, my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington speaks for the Opposition Front Bench."—*[Official Report, Sixth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.* 12 May 1987; c. 6-22.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow had every right to express, as have other hon. Members in Committee or in the House, a personal opinion. On three occasions in the Committee he recognised that I spoke for the Opposition. I made it clear then, as I have done in this debate, that the Labour party has no intention of winding up the urban development corporations immediately on taking power. I said then, as I said earlier in this debate, that when we come to power we will review all urban development corporations or quangos in exactly the same way as the Government have done with new town corporations and with many of their quangos.

As I said, the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) is being highly selective in his quotations. I hope that he will be honourable enough to accept that I have given the position of the Labour party.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his speech; I doubt whether it could be classed as an intervention. I was not being selective. The hon. Gentleman is quite correct when he says that his hon. Friend was challenged on more than one occasion about his remarks. He then ducked the issue by saying that he was not the Front-Bench spokesman on this matter. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) did not rise and unequivocally deny that statement by the hon. Member for Jarrow. Indeed, on the Floor of the House that day, when the Paymaster General was answering questions, I brought up the matter. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington was present when I made it quite clear that our understanding in Committee was that the Labour party would abolish the urban development corporations. Once again, that was not denied by the hon. Member for Jarrow or the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington or by any Opposition Member. My reading of the *Official Report* of proceedings in Committee and in the House is perfectly correct and fair.

Those of us who had to suffer the speech by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington will be forgiven for feeling uncertain about the Labour party's policy on this matter. The hon. Gentleman has fudged the issue by saying that a Labour Government would review the urban development corporations. Nothing that we have heard from the Opposition, either before the general election or since, shows that they are other than opposed to the principle of urban development corporations. We accept that such corporations remove some authority from local government. That is an inevitable consequence of setting up a UDC, and no one seeks to deny that. We hope that there will be co-operation between the UDCs and the local authorities, but we cannot deny that the UDCs take away some of the authority of local government.

The stated objective of UDCs is to secure the physical, social and economic regeneration of their areas with—I place special emphasis on this—"the maximum amount of private investment."

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The statute says:

> "The object of an urban development corporation shall be to secure the regeneration of its area."

That does not include the word "social", although I moved in Committee that that word should be included. If the statute included that word, its history would be very different. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept this statutory correction from section 136(1) of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I accept that that is what the statute says, but the hon. Gentleman will agree that its main thrust is to ensure that there is a mix of public and private capital. We want the maximum amount of private capital to come in with the UDC in order to give maximum benefit to all concerned. That is the matter that divides the House.

Mr. Boyes: Was the hon. Gentleman in the House when I spoke?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I was, and I listened to everything that the hon. Gentleman said. I grant that the Labour party in the city of Nottingham has certainly not been dogmatic, because it has welcomed the mix of private and public money. The money was in respect of urban development grants, and we have had a multiple of about 5:1 of private money coming in to mix with public money. That has been an excellent development for our city. But the willingness to mix public and private capital is not universal within the Labour party. Indeed, there is a growing body of opinion in the Labour party in Nottingham and its surrounding area that believes that public money only should be involved, and it wants nothing to do with private capital. That attitude does not seem to put the emphasis on the necessary priorities—what is good for our cities up and down the country.

Mr. Frank Field: I apologise, as I am obviously going to bore the House on this point, but in my constituency it is difficult even to get the public money. I shall be grateful when someone on the Conservative Benches addresses himself to that problem. My hon. Friends have already raised the effective point that local authorities lose power to the new corporations, but it appears that the Government Front Bench also have difficulty regarding what some of those bodies do.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The hon. Gentleman has made that intervention five times this afternoon. He is such a nice fellow that I cannot understand why the Government have not responded more favourably to his representation. The hon. Gentleman speaks well on behalf of his constituency, and I am sorry if he has not been successful.

I am the first to admit that my city was Labour-controlled until May of this year. The city sought public money, when available, and put it together with private money, and it has been extremely successful. Indeed, in the past three years I believe that £30 million-worth of development has taken place in our city as a result of that co-operation. However, I am afraid that that is not true of all local authorities. If those authorities take the view that they do not want private development in their areas, the gearing that I have described is lost and much of the regeneration that we believe should take place simply does not occur.

My hon. Friends have suggested that some authorities give the appearance of having a vested interest in misery. They will rest content with the dereliction and deprivation that may exist in their areas because they fear that, if those conditions are ever put right and the area becomes prosperous, its political complexion will be changed. That may or may not be true, but, as I drive around the country, the evidence before my eyes sadly suggests that there is more than an element of truth in that suggestion.

One thing is clear: if the public hold the Government of the day responsible for the regeneration of our towns and cities and the Government of the day find themselves thwarted by local authorities, for whatever reason, that Government are entitled to say, "If we are going to get the blame for inaction, we have the perfect right to take powers to see that what has to be done is done, even if that means going over the head of a local authority that, for whatever reason, has blocked the way." As a Government, we cannot be expected to carry the can for dereliction if a local authority wants to claim the absolute right to refuse to allow us to deliver the regeneration that we were elected to bring about.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) made an extremely valid point about the availability and value of land. I hope that my senior colleagues on the Front Bench will give some time to that matter. All of us, in our local authorities, must have come across the situation where a private owner sits tight on a bit of land because he knows that the value of a retail development will be much higher than an ordinary factory development. Therefore, he will not release that land until, somehow or other, he can generate that retail development.

Similarly, and sadly, some of our statutory undertakings, such as British Rail and the Central Electricity Generating Board, hold on to their land. I acknowledge that they want the best value for the land that they hold, but, in a sense, they hold that public land in trust for the benefit of the community. We must find a way of forcing those statutory undertakings to put that land on the market at a reasonable price for the benefit of the community. They should not sit tight, acting as a kind of land bank for the future, in the hope of finding a handsome retail consortium to develop that land.

I believe that when the operation of the UDCs involves more than one local authority, it is an ideal mechanism. We have the perfect right to establish a mini corporation if a local authority has not undertaken the necessary regeneration.

In May this year, the city of Nottingham — part of which I represent — came under Conservative control after eight years of Labour control, albeit by just one seat, but that is enough, as they say. There has been and is a real desire to co-operate and encourage the involvement of the private sector. The city has selected David White — I hope I shall not embarrass him by describing him as a captain of industry — to be chief executive of a Nottingham enterprise initiative. When a local authority is seen to be co-operating with the private sector and making absolutely certain that it is doing everything that the present Government would wish it to do, I hope that it will not be denied public funds for those enterprises just because it is getting on with it. I hope that those public funds will go not just to those towns and cities that will not co-operate and hence need a mini UDC.

In conclusion, I issue a challenge to the Opposition Front Bench. I listened to the speeches in Committee when we dealt with three corporations. Then the Opposition attitude was, to say the least, extremely woolly. Even today, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington has vaguely said that they will look again at these corporations. However, the reality is that, unless and until the Labour party can return those corporations solely to the control of a local authority, it will not be content. It is ideologically opposed to the concept of the UDCs. I believe that the Labour party should have the courage to be honest about this, instead of trying to hide behind woolly words.

7.8 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I can tell the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) that I am much opposed to UDCs and have been since 1980. I am especially opposed to the existence of the London Docklands development corporation. During the course of a fairly short contribution, I hope to explain to the hon. Gentleman exactly why I take that attitude.

The Government have given UDCs an extremely privileged status. That is in stark contrast to the way in which the Government have treated local authorities in this country, and certainly those in the east end. We in the east end do not like the LDDC because it is not accountable to the people of the east end. It is creating developments in that part of London that do not meet the needs or the wishes of the local people, and the people of the east end have no way of influencing or determining the policy decisions of the LDDC. To that extent, this is an ideological objection. Labour Members happen to believe in democratic accountability, but we cannot get that from the LDDC.

The amount of power given to UDCs is enormous. For example, the LDDC managed to acquire 1,000 acres in the boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets in its first year of existence. It just moved in and took the land over, and neither the local authority nor anyone else had any right of appeal. Contrast that with the procedures through which a local authority must go if it wants to introduce a

[Mr. Tony Banks]

compulsory purchase order. We know exactly what happens. Such authorities are held up and eventually stopped because of the ideological objections of Conservative Ministers to Labour local authorities going in for compulsory purchase. But if it is a UDC, such as the LDDC, made up of hand-picked Tory stooges, such bodies can move in and take things over straight away.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Is my hon. Friend aware that the massive development at Canary Wharf received LDDC planning permission in only two weeks? I understand that the new developers today held a press conference about which I was not informed and to which I was not invited, although I am the elected representative for the area. The LDDC is a fiefdom. There is no consultation whatever. That is disgraceful and points to the truth of what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend — *[Interruption.]* The Minister should not laugh. My hon. Friend makes a serious point because she speaks as one of the elected representatives of the area. The fact that she has been totally ignored is indicative of the way in which the LDDC treats elected representatives. Yet the Minister sits there looking the epitome of tonsorial artistry. I get sea sick looking at the waves in his hair. He should not laugh, because that is one of our major objections to the LDDC and to UDCs generally. They are not accountable, and take no account of the interests, wishes or needs of the local inhabitants.

The LDDC stole Newham's land which could have been used for housing the homeless of the borough— assuming, of course that the Government would have allowed the borough to build any homes. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said that Tower Hamlets was in no position to build any homes at present. It is very easy to say that the LDDC is doing a wonderful job, but the Government are preventing local authorities from building the homes that they need on land that could have been theirs.

It is no mere coincidence that homelessness in London has doubled since 1979, given that the Government have cut by 50 per cent. the funds available for housing investment. There is a correlation between the two. It is therefore dead easy to praise the LDDC for building, because it has been given a wonderful cash bonanza by the Government which has not been accompanied by any planning requirements or accountability whatever. Any fool could make a success with terms of reference such as that, even the fools on the Conservative Benches.

Let us look more closely at some of the aspects of the LDDC. An undertaking was given to provide houses for renting and for sale at affordable prices. The LDDC has done nothing of the sort. Although it gave a commitment to the House of Lords to provide 50 per cent. of housing at affordable rents or prices, only 15 per cent. falls into the LDDC category of "affordable". In LDDC terms, that means prices of less than £40,000. However, there are not many such properties in docklands, as anyone can see if he reads the poncy newspaper advertisements that extol the virtues of housing developments. They are all called something fancy to attract the yuppies to the east end, who move in and take the houses that should be available for the people of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark.

Surveys in our borough have shown that 75 per cent. of Newham households in the LDDC catchment area have incomes of less than £10,500 a year and that 75 per cent. of those in Tower Hamlets have incomes of less than £8,500 a year. At that level of household income, mortgages of even £25,000 are barely affordable. Let us hear no more rubbish from Conservative Members about affordable houses. The people of Newham and Tower Hamlets cannot afford such prices. They do not have the income, and the unemployed stand no chance whatever.

Therefore, the LDDC is not providing the housing for the people of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark, nor is it providing the jobs. We have heard some statistics, and I shall give some more. According to answers that we have received to parliamentary questions, 2,838 new jobs were created in docklands between 1981 and 1987 and 5,059 jobs transferred to docklands, but, according to the LDDC itself, during the same period some 7,000 jobs have been lost through closures and cuts. The reason for such closures and cuts is that the LDDC has been forcing some of the so-called unsuitable firms to close down because of compulsory purchase of their premises or of the land on which they are sited.

Indeed, the jobs that the LDDC has been able to create do not match the skills that the people of my borough possess. It should be remembered that the LDDC is located in an area in which, in the 1960s, provided some 60,000 jobs in the docks. Many of those jobs were unskilled or semi-skilled, but the jobs that the LDDC is providing do not meet the needs of the large number of unskilled and semi-skilled people who live in Newham. The Government and the LDDC should therefore undertake massive retraining exercises in the area so that when high-tech jobs are created the people of Newham will have a chance of getting them. Even so, such jobs will not be on the scale required, given the level of unemployment and the mismatch of skills in the London borough of Newham.

My last point, like my first, relates to the ideological objection. Labour Members think that UDCs are profoundly undemocratic. In no sense whatever are they accountable either to the local people who live in the area or to Parliament. It is nonsense to suggest that we have an opportunity to debate the affairs of the UDCs and to exercise control over their management. We have no such power, and the Minister decieves himself, even if he does not decieve the House, if he believes that to be so.

I have tabled dozens of questions about the LDDC, and the reply to many of them is that it is a matter for the LDDC itself. We cannot hold the LDDC to account in any practical sense. Its meetings are held largely in secret. It does not issue minutes. The press and public are not allowed into the meetings so that they can report what goes on. They must rely on a sort of No.10-type lobby briefing afterwards. Therefore, there is no way of holding UDCs to account. Would any Conservative Member tolerate such an attitude from any local authority in the country, be it Tory or Labour?

Here we see the difference in treatment between a UDC and a local authority. Whatever we may think about the local authorities, ultimately they are accountable to the people through the ballot box. If the people do not like what the local authorities are doing, at least they have the opportunity of getting rid of them in an election. The Minister could make a few friends on the Opposition Benches if he held elections for urban development corporations. At least they would then be subject to the rigours and requirements of the ballot box. I doubt whether he will do that.

Urban development corporations are what the future of local government is all about. We know what is going on on the Government Benches. This evening, Conservative Members have said—certainly, in the past, Ministers have said so—that they would like to replace local authority functions by urban development corporation-type machinery. In other words, inner cities would, in effect, be organised and administered by Tory business men.

That is what it is all about. That is why additional funds are going into urban development corporations: so that they can continue to extend their power throughout inner cities, give them enormous privileged status, give them vast sums—sums that local authorities can only dream about — subject them to no democratic accountability, and then say, "What a wonderful job they are doing." As I said, any fool can make a success of an area in those circumstances.

I look forward to the day, as all Opposition Members do, when we have a Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* That would hardly come as a surprise to Conservative Members. Opposition Members would hardly be sitting here looking forward to the day when a Conservative Government were re-elected. One of the first things that I hope that a Labour Government will do is to get rid of the London Docklands development corporation and restore the assets and the land to the people of the east end which, on their behalf, will be exercised by their democratically elected local council. I look forward with great relish to that day.

7.21 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on making their maiden speeches. In particular, I single out my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South, who will a worthy heir to his predecessors.

I welcome the extension of the financial powers which the Bill gives to urban development corporations. As a west midlands hon. Member and currently a member of the Birmingham city council, I have no doubt that, in areas of the greatest dereliction, urban development corporations are the most effective way of harnessing the energies of inner-city people, of co-ordinating central and local government initiatives, and of attracting private sector investment, thereby speeding up the revival of enterprise and drive that made our cities the growth areas that they once were.

Most people who have an interest in inner cities are beginning to recognise the value of urban development corporations. That may even extend to the Labour party. Although the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), said that, in principle, in the unlikely event that the Labour party returns to government, he is prepared to look at urban development corporations and review them, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) totally objects to them in principle. That is another example of the Labour party's unity of purpose.

However, more sensible people who are concerned about inner cities support urban development corporations. Indeed, in July, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment told us that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said:

> "The Alliance believe that UDCs can do a very useful job. We shall seek to work closely with them."

That hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), the Opposition's housing spokesman, said:

> "We hope that the urban development corporations will be a success. Setting them up is not an attack on local government."

It was reported in the *Financial Times* on 28 March this year that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) urged the Government to use the Merseyside development corporation as a conduit for Government grant aid to Liverpool.

More important than that, the more sensible local authorities, of all political persuasions, are beginning to support urban development corporations. One cannot expect that of the more ideological London boroughs such as Southwark, which has 3,850 empty council properties because it cannot collect £27 million-worth of rent, or Waltham Forest, which closed down a community training programme which, in its words, concealed the true level of unemployment. But, elsewhere, more sensible authorities such as Birmingham, which sadly, at the moment, is under Labour control, Dudley, and, as we were told earlier, Trafford Park, which is near Manchester, have shown a willingness to work with the Government and the EEC to attract private investment to derelict city areas.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that the document entitled "Birmingham City Partnership Annual Review for 1987" states that what is needed for inner cities is precisely the kind of targeted investment and attraction of private investment through business employment schemes that characterises urban development corporations. So convinced are the authors of that view that the Labour Birmingham city council, in Aston, Nechells and Washwood Heath, is busy setting up an urban development association which will have all the characteristics of an urban development corporation, except the compulsory purchase and planning powers. It is quite understandable why they take such a view, having seen the success and potential of urban development corporations in other areas.

We have heard arguments that the docklands comprise a special case. The docklands comprised total and absolute dereliction. Despite that, as a result of the London Docklands development corporation, we have seen no less——

Mr. Spearing: As half my constituency is in docklands, will the hon. Gentleman kindly withdraw the remark or at least suspend it until I have been shown the facts? It is not true to say that docklands was totally derelict. A lot of it was Port of London Authority dockland which was abandoned, but it was not derelict.

Mr. Coombs: Nevertheless, it is true that, since the advent of the London Docklands development corporation, no less than £2 billion of private investment has gone into the area. It did not go into that area before. Recently it was interesting to see that the London borough of Newham has dropped its opposition to the extension of the royal docks through the development corporation. In Liverpool, we see £60 million-worth of private investment

[Mr. Coombs]

and 94 per cent. of contracts going to local firms. In Tyneside, there are projections of 6,500 extra jobs, and on Teesside there are projections of 3,000 jobs. Independent assessments of the black country development corporation estimate that, over the next 10 years, with Government investment of about £130 million, no less than £500 million of private investment will be injected into a previously derelict area. Independent consultants regard that estimate as conservative and say that the amount could be as much as £1 billion. Therefore, in a practical way, these people recognise the potential of urban development corporations to act as catalysts to unlock private sector cash and free enterprise in inner cities.

That potential is enormous, but if it is fully to be realised, there are two respects in which urban development corporations and mini urban development corporations have a part to play. The first relates to co-ordination. Everybody will agree that there is an enormous variety of schemes with different sponsors and, often, different aims.

Overall, the task forces report to the Department of Trade and Industry but are headed by different Government Departments in different respects. The city action teams report to the Department of Trade and Industry, enterprise workshops go to local councils, partnership programmes are responsible to local councils and the Department of the Environment, training programmes are with the Manpower Services Commission, and enterprise agencies are very often the products of voluntary organisations such as Business in the Community and the Industrial Society. As to the Government initiatives, there are some five major block schemes in the Department of the Environment, 32 schemes in the Department of Employment and 64 schemes in the Department of Trade and Industry. I am not criticising the variety of those schemes. Their variety responds to local considerations and local conditions in various parts of the country.

I appreciate that larger companies have the resources to lock into the schemes that are right for individual areas. National Westminster bank spends 1 per cent. of its pre-tax profits on community schemes and Shell, IBM and British Petroleum are involved with the London enterprise agency.

There is no doubt that the contributions of small and medium-sized firms could be greater if they had a conduit through which they could get into what they regard as a maze of schemes. It should be a function of the urban development corporations to act as points of contact and co-ordination so that medium-sized and smaller companies could make any contributions that they wish. The urban development corporations should be able to be the conduits whereby incentive is given to small and medium-sized firms to channel their energies into the inner cities.

The incentives I have in mind are tax allowances and accelerated write-offs for investment in inner-city areas in training, research and development and new enterprise. This approach has been used successfully in some states of America and in regard to training, it would be only part of wider strategies to promote training in private industry, sadly, on an industrial firm basis. Expenditure on training per year in this country varies between one third and one twelfth of that of our foreign competitors. As we heard earlier this week, the "Engineering Vacancies Directory" referred to 7,600 jobs being unfilled because of lack of skills. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that there are inner-city residents who need such training. If we give medium-sized and small companies incentives through tax allowances to provide training, those areas will improve.

The tax allowance approach could be extended to the construction of factory units, and to larger companies investing in smaller companies through the use of corporate venturing, which generally, in the countries that use it, has had a good effect on research and development.

I am aware from the *Estates Gazette* last week that Lord Young is against tax allowances. He said that they distort the market, and I appreciate that argument. However, in some urban development corporations, particularly in Bilston in the west midlands, even the anticipated rents, when buildings are built, are between £2·50 and £3 a square foot. The flow of private capital needs to be speeded up because the rate of return would otherwise be marginal to the private investor. The best way in which to do that would be through tax allowances. I must stress, however, that these are merely improvements that could be made to the urban development corporation strategy, which is basically sound.

I conclude by congratulating the Government, first on having the foresight to set up the urban development corporations in 1981; secondly, on having the guts to extend them now, and on their proposals for mini urban development corporations, which are extremely valuable; and, thirdly, on backing them with the necessary cash, both through this Bill and through the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. Yesterday we heard that an extra £65 million will be spent on urban development corporations. That demonstrates practically the Government's basic and strong commitment to the revival of enterprise and prosperity in our inner cities.

7.35 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I am glad to add a Welsh dimension to the debate. I remind the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) that it was Labour, not a Conservative Administration, who introduced urban development corporations.

I am glad to see the Under-Secretary of State for Wales on the Government Front Bench because within the next two years the question of urban development corporations will be of concern to Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will have a new UDC in his constituency, while my constituency of Torfaen had, for 30 years, the only new town development corporation in the Principality of Wales.

It is important that Conservative Members realise that, during the past 30 years, the Opposition have been appreciative of the work of the corporations. They have housed millions of people, created new industry, brought in wealth and created large commercial and industrial centres. However, at the same time they have created a paradox because those who came to work in the new industries generated in the new towns often came from the inner cities.

Earlier in the debate reference was made to John Silkin. I recall a meeting in Harlow new town many years ago, when he was the Minister responsible for new towns, at which he compared Harlow with his constituency in the London docklands. It is that paradox that has, in a sense, sucked out from the inner cities the prosperity and wealth that it was necessary to develop in the satellite towns around London and elsewhere.

As we are now considering the corporations in a different light, the Government must take note of the mistakes of the past 30 years. The biggest mistake was clearly in the way that those corporations were organised. It was never the intention of the 1940s Labour Government for corporations to develop the towns and then continue to run them. The essence of the corporations then, as opposed to today, was the intention to hand over all of the assets to local authorities. Unfortunately, both Labour and Conservative Governments have reneged on that pledge. All that was offered to the local authorities were the houses. The assets—rather than the liabilities—such as the factories, industrial estates and town centres were, if not privatised, handed to nominated bodies. In England, that was the Commission for the New Towns and in Wales it was the Welsh Development Agency and the Land Authority for Wales. Yet that was never the intention of the original Act.

The framers of this Bill should have asked for the advice of the Association of District Councils new towns committee, on which I served for some years. It was composed of Conservative and Labour members, who were at one in saying that it was wrong for new towns not to be handed to local authorities to be democratically run. During those 30 years, there was a sort of municipal schizophrenia in the new towns. The people did not know who was responsible for what. Even worse, the corporations were run by appointed people who often did not live in the towns, but were appointed because they came from the list of the good and the great. That was wrong. Consequently, the local authorities and the corporations were often at loggerheads.

I am concerned that, under the Bill, the same mistakes could be made. I remind the Under-Secretary of State for Wales that in the town of Cwmbran the corporation will be wound up in a few months and the Welsh Development Agency will look after the industry. There is an unhealthy concentration of power and influence in the hands of a few individuals in the corporations, and it is wrong that that should be continued, whether in Wales, England or anywhere else.

I know from experience over the past couple of decades that if the corporations are to be a success, they must work closely with local authorities and have upon their boards people who live in the towns and know the local problems. If they do not, they will be doomed. I am convinced that the corporations will not do that and that they are nothing more than a sop to the most deprived areas of our land.

7.41 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I wish to clarify one or two points. I must declare an interest because since coming to the House in 1979 I have been joint chairman of the Conservative urban affairs and inner city committee, which has taken a non-stop look at docklands since its inception. The committee has made dozens of visits to docklands and met the various chairmen and chief executives of the London Docklands development corporation. It has heard from them about the remarkable contribution made by, for example, Bob Mellish, who is vice-chairman of the LDDC's board and who was a Labour Member of Parliament. He knows the area a great deal better than does the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) who is grimacing.

For several years, both under a Labour and then a Conservative administration on Birmingham city council, I served on the inner-city partnership. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that one of the failures of the terms of reference of the UDCs was that they did not include a social reference. However, it was that very term of reference to the inner-city partnership that created an imbalance from the start and resulted in some social work being done but no real infrastructure being provided.

All in all, I do not consider that the Brothers Newham —not the Brothers Grimm—have made too much of an impact tonight. Although I am one of those who is called a fool, it is about as important to be called a fool by a ranter as it is to be called irrational by a certified psychiatrist. Furthermore, their speeches have clearly shown the very divisions between local authority and corporation workings that impede the progress that could be made. Such speeches defy, probably well into the next century and perhaps the next millenium, the advent of the Labour Government for whom they so dearly wish.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Bevan: I will not grant the hon. Gentleman time, because he has already had a great deal of time, during which he gave out many expletives and was generous with his adjectival descriptions. Perhaps it is time that he took some of them for a moment or two.

I welcome the Government's initiatives and praise the manner in which they were introduced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary who has grasped the importance of his portfolio so quickly and injected into it the dynamism which he showed in the tourism portfolio. Indeed, I hope to develop the theme of the importance of tourism in urban redevelopment. Deprivation of urban areas accumulated over many years under the previous Administration. They were littered with good intentions but little else. Many documents were produced, but there was not much action. The result was the squalid conditions in the docklands area along the banks of the Thames and not far from the House. I shall repeat figures that I gave in an earlier intervention. Under this Government, in docklands 12,000 houses were built on LDDC land or ex-Port of London Authority land in Tower Hamlets and parts of Newham. Of those properties, 60 per cent. were sold at under £40,000 and were readily available.

Ms. Gordon: Rubbish.

Mr. Bevan: I point out to the hon. Lady that 40 per cent. of those houses were bought by residents of the three boroughs to which reference has been made.

We have seen the progress that has been made. Again, I must declare an interest. Until I came to Parliament I practised as a valuer and surveyor concerned with both residential and commercial development. I cannot carry out that work now, but I make that point lest I am accused of having an interest. I am proud to have had an interest in the past and in having chaired two professional bodies.

The Government have had to tackle this matter because of the inability of local authorities to find an answer. I speak as a west midlander who not only served on Birmingham city council for many years but held the

[Mr. Bevan]

transport portfolio for the West Midlands county council. Therefore, I think I am entitled to comment on these matters. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) nodding in agreement. I welcome him to the debate.

Deprivation was exacerbated under the previous Administration. The policy of the Board of Trade under Sir Stafford Cripps was that in urban areas such as the west midlands not one brick should be laid on another to build structures of over 5,000 sq ft. Assisted area status was wrongly granted to other areas. Strong areas such as the west midlands were weakened by the Labour Government's policy. That has been put right because of the campaign that I and other hon. Members on both sides of the House waged for intermediate area status to be given to the west midlands.

This legislation is another example of the Government putting forward proposals to make progress which regrettably was not made previously. The Government have found that one essential ingredient is co-operation between private and public enterprise. Members of the Conservative parliamentary tourism committee, which I chair, went at no public expense to study inner-city conditions in America. We wanted to be able to plead the case for urban renewal and for tourism and to learn. My colleagues and I saw the success that the Americans achieved in the Baltimore inner port area which had been dynamically redeveloped. That provided a lesson which could be readily understood by the rest of the world.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the significant factor about those developments on the eastern seaboard was the substantial amount of Government-led expenditure, particularly in the industries that have been located there and have blossomed?

Mr. Bevan: The expenditure was initiated by the local board although it was partially Government expenditure. That is the very proposal that we are debating—that the threshold of Government expenditure should be increased. That is on the front of the Bill. We have seen the caring attitude of the Government. For each pound of Government expenditure in London, £9 has been generated in London. That policy has been successful. We have seen infrastructure spring up along the Thames. What started as lots of pepperpots has developed into something greater. The corporation is to be thanked for that. Housing has been developed not only in Surrey docks but in the Isle of Dogs and in Tower Hamlets. Communications are keeping pace with development. The Docklands light railway is one example. The stolport has been developed. That is not to be denigrated but appreciated.

We note also the success of the other urban development corporation in Liverpool, although I am the first to concede that it has not been such a success as London Docklands. About £136 million of Government money was spent on a garden festival in the first instance, in the redevelopment of Albert dock, and Wapping warehouse is being converted into flats, but there is still much derelict land to be cleared between the City and the Albert docks, which stands on its own, rather like a far outpost of Liverpool itself.

The Black Country urban development corporation, which was created on 15 May, will deal with no less than 2,345 hectares. I have only just become used to acres and yards, instead of rods, poles and perches, and must now translate these terms into hectares. For those who, like me, are slow in the uptake of such matters, a hectare is about 2·471 acres, so, if we multiply the hectare figure by 2·5, we will see that the area to be dealt with in the black country is about 5,860 acres. That vast area of land to be affected by industrial and new activities sees the UDC already well established and stretches from junction 10 on the M6 in the north to junction two on the M5 in the south. A new zone has been successfully created in that chunk of land, which is the heart of England.

The gearing will be about 4 : 1. That is not as successful as in London, but each £1 of Government money will create about £4 from the private sector, if we are wise enough to adopt these proposals. The UDC will deal with an investment of about £130 million over 10 years and will create no fewer than 18,400 new jobs.

We have heard some excellent and succinct speeches in the debate. I join the praise for the maiden speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). Their speeches were worthy of the House and augur well. I also wish to commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), who has been a Birmingham city councillor and knows about these matters. He, too, has expressed the views of the west midlands.

I wish to give an interim report on the success of the Black Country UDC. It has got under way successfully and has been much acclaimed by all the interested parties. It is already creating interest in an area which needs major rejuvenation. Many national organisations have expressed their interest, including Trafalgar House. Is it a coincidence that the first chairman of the LDDC is also the chairman of Trafalgar House? This and other great companies are investing in the future of these areas and in the regeneration of our country.

The Black Country UDC has so much to offer. There is a highly experienced work force in the west midlands with adaptable skills. There are hundreds of businesses in and around the area providing supplies and services and, within a radius of 30 miles, there is a population of about 5 million.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has just entered the Chamber. He is my co-chairman of the urban affairs and new towns committee and he can contribute much to the debate. Having assisted him in the creation of his book "A New Life for Old Cities", I know that he could spell out the further objectives that we should have in the west midlands. Not only must UDCs have the power of planning, land assembly, granting of planning permission, land clearance and the building of new roads, but they must be allowed to grant even more concessions. Tax-exempt bonds would draw even more investment into our area.

If urban development corporations are to succeed, local authorities must not artificially hoist land values to historical values. Sometimes, land owned by a statutory undertaking has little value. Some land has negative value and some land nil value. Former gas works land might need to be sweetened and reclaimed and would have a nil or even negative value.

In 1983, my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams and I and others persuaded the Government to initiate a register of derelict land. For the first time, we had a record of the amount of unused land in our cities which should be put to work. But about 100,000 acres of that land is still undeveloped. Perhaps there are good reasons for that. The configurations may be wrong, as in the case of land next to railway lines. Many of us believe that now is the time to carry our successful programme of privatisation a little further and privatise unused public sector land which has not been brought into beneficial use. I should be very gratified if the money that we will vote tonight would help us to use that land in the great task of regenerating our urban areas.

It is good news that the Government are doing a job which was not done by the squabbling local authorities —[HON. MEMBERS: "Untrue."] it is true, and hon. Members know it. Methinks they do protest too much. If local authorities cannot agree or will not get a move on, the Government can now create mini urban development corporations—this is what the Opposition do not like— with powers for land assembly, clearance, redevelopment and refurbishment. This is another important aspect of the Government's policy.

Finally—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that what I am saying meets with acclaim from the Opposition.

Mr. Tony Banks: Only the word "finally".

Mr. Bevan: The Secretary of State is no doctrinal man in this area, as are some Opposition Members who can think only in outdated local authority terms. I was there when the leader of the Conservative party on Birmingham city council, Sir Neville Bosworth, and the Labour leader, Dick Knowles, appealed to the Secretary of State saying, "We want to redevelop and refurbish an area in east Birmingham, but we do not think the only answer is an urban development corporation. We would like an urban development authority for this area." The Government thought about it and the Secretary of State was good enough to say, "You shall have your urban development authority, which will be controlled mainly by the local authority, but which will also involve great public companies and small private companies."

I plead with the Government, who, in their wisdom, conceded the creation of that authority, to ensure that there is no great disparity between the authority and the urban development corporations in terms of powers or amounts of money. The authority must be allowed to prove its success, just as the urban development corporations continue to prove the success of the Government in tackling the problems of the residual tips of the past.

I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the Bill.

8.7 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I was sorry to hear the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) say what he did about local government. As chairman of transport in the west midlands, he developed a transport programme for the region. It is sad when an hon. Member castigates local government after he has made a great contribution to it. There is an element of politicking in this and a sense of unreality about the issues that must be faced.

So that it is not overlooked, may I put on record our thanks and appreciation for the work done for some years by four authorities—Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell—in regenerating the black country. Those four authorities, of different political colours, have worked together. They are a credit to the way in which we expect people to work together in a community that has been decimated by the past eight years of economic recession. Ministers will ignore these communities at the peril of their own communities if they do not recognise the worth of such local authorities, which have worked with the chambers of commerce and the Confederation of British Industry in the black country on projects to rejuvenate the community.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is not present. His speech was most unfair and uncharitable. It must be true: with friends like that, who needs enemies? His contribution was a disgrace and he brought great disdain on himself. His comments on the Labour-controlled authorities and the Labour representatives of the north-east and north-west were also a disgrace. I hope that his constituents will reflect on what he said and wonder about the calibre of their representative. I am of a mild disposition and an affable person; I try to go through life making friends; but I must say that the hon. Gentleman's contribution was underwhelming.

I am not going to say that I do not wish for progress, or that I hold in ill regard the people who have been appointed to serve on the Black Country urban development corporation, because a massive and major job needs to be done. However, unless the Government take account of the role of local government in that exercise—I know that representations are being made to the board—and reach out far more expansively and meaningfully to local government, I am afraid that the experiment will fail.

I have already said that we in the black country have a good reputation for working together. We work across the political divide, with industry and commerce, to try to uplift our community. It is imperative that that team is kept together and that the special relationship that exists between the four black country boroughs and Birmingham is maintained. I hope that the Minister will seek to continue to develop and harness the good will and expertise that exists in those boroughs so that we can make the progress that we wish.

I worry about the reason for this new development as it ignores the existing democratic input of local government. I know that this is a political point that will be challenged, but we have suffered continued reductions in the rate support grant during the past few years because the Government believe that there has been wasteful expenditure, that local government has not progressed as it should, has not been fully accountable or has not done its job properly. All those arguments have been advanced as the reason for reducing the rate support grant to local government. We know—because it is on record and a fact—that whereas in the 1970s we gave 63 per cent. of the national Exchequer contributions to local government, that figure is now 44 or 45 per cent. The amount of money that would have gone to Wolverhampton if that rate support contribution had flowed into its coffers over that period has been identified as about £60 million. That should be related to the amount that is being ploughed in to the Black Country urban development corporation. My figures relate to one authority only, but the corporation will span four or more local authorities. If we put together

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cumulatively the amount of money that has been withdrawn from local government and compare it with the money that will be given to the new corporation, it is easy to see what we could have done had the resources been available.

I know that this will be challenged, but I wish to give my view of the disdain that has been shown for local government by the Prime Minister and the Government. That disdain borders on the unhealthy. A month or so ago, the Prime Minister visited my constituency, but she almost ignored the civic status of my local authority. Only 10 minutes were given to the leader of that council. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) spoke during education questions yesterday about the need for a city technology college in Wolverhampton. The local authority is now Conservative controlled for the first time in 17 years and we have a Conservative mayor.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Bravo.

Mr. Turner: The hon. Gentleman says, "Bravo."

I concede that the Prime Minister had a busy programme, but she never found the time even to meet and receive the mayor of our borough. That was not regarded favourably, and I do not need to explain why. That seems to underline——

Mr. Spearing: It typifies the Government's approach.

Mr. Turner: Indeed. It typifies the Government's approach because they seek to undermine and ignore local government. All hon. Members will recognise the great benefits and contributions that they receive from local government and local authorities. We must all concede that civic pride is vital to our communities.

I wrote to the Prime Minister to ask why she could not take the time to give due and proper civic status and recognition to our authority. She visited a shop called "The Complete Lady" in my constituency. Some members of my local community would not necessarily ascribe that title to the Prime Minister. However, I am told that she bought a lovely handbag and two hatpins. I understand that the handbag cost £40. About 25 per cent. of the people in my constituency are unemployed and receive what is now called "income support" from the DHSS. Those people suffer great difficulties and deprivations, and they must wonder how somebody could spend £40 on a handbag, when they receive that amount to keep mind and body together for a week. However, I must admit that the shop is a good little example of local enterprise. That is an example from the visit made by the Prime Minister to the new area, part of which will be the Black Country urban development corporation.

The black country has things to offer, including its marvellous museum and the best real ale one can buy in the British Isles, and we are developing, through the West Midlands county council, consensus policies and strategic planning. The hon. Member for Yardley has contributed in no small way to the overall development of our transport policy. We have been exploring new ways of developing our economic infrastructure. One improvement which we regard as crucial to the redevelopment of the black country is the black country route. If the Minister wants to contribute to the black country's redevelopment, after the job and industry losses over the past few years, I urge him to reject the application of British Coal's opencast executive for development and possible mining on the route of the new black country road network. The Minister will hear representations from the new development corporation and local authorities which will be as one in saying, "Please do not hold up the black country route because of anything that the opencast executive wants." If the application is accepted, many of the efforts which are expected to be made by the new black country urban development corporation will be wasted.

Some progress will be made if there are meaningful working relationships with the local authorities. I would be the last to pour cold water on anything that will help to rejuvenate the community that I represent or the whole of the black country. I hope that working relationships will be allowed to develop at some stage and that more democracy will be built into local plans. Local people are sceptical about people who live away from the local community and may have no knowledge of it going on the new boards. Our problems can be solved only by people pulling together and contributing. The Government can help us by doing what is necessary to paint the economic backcloth and develop our community. The black country has taken knocks, but its people are no less resilient than people anywhere else in the world. I love them and am proud to represent them.

It is important that we get the legislation right. We shall not vote against the Bill. We want to ensure that people work in harmony to get the groundwork right, not just for people today, but for those who have yet to come and live in the black country and have jobs, security and dignity.

8.24 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I should like to follow up some of the observations of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) about the relationship between local government and urban development corporations. He made the important point that that relationship must be right. If urban development corporations are to be a permanent feature of the political landscape, more thought and time need to be given to that relationship.

No one could possibly accuse a Government who present a Bill of this kind of neglecting the inner cities. There will be a considerable increase in resources as a result of the Bill and yesterday's statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. It can no longer be said that the Government are in any way neglecting inner urban areas or the north-east. There are two urban development areas in the north-east, one on Tyne and Wear and the other on Teesside—plus a wide range of other supports. I have been told that some £700 million has been invested in the north-east since 1983. The UDCs typify the much more carefully targeted nature of Government support.

The north-east has suffered more than any other region from a general blanket approach to its serious structural and social problems. There was regional aid, which was automatic and general and covered 96 per cent. of the north-east. There was rate support grant, spread by Labour-controlled local authorities in the north-east, universally benefiting everyone through extravagant subsidies of housing and transport. The great trick of the urban development corporations is that the resources which they apply are much more specific and carefully targeted than resources from other bodies.

Teesside development corporation is a good example, covering one of the larger areas covered by such corporations, but it is a specific geographical area, closely related to the riverside. Anyone who has studied the problems of the north-east knows that they are concentrated on the river areas. One must start by regenerating the rivers of Tyne, Wear and Tees, because that is where the older industries were concentrated and where the decay and dereliction of the old industrial landscape are greatest. That does not mean that a development corporation specifically concentrated on a small area of the river Tees does not bring benefits to a more general area. My constituents will benefit. They may find jobs in the factories that the UDC brings to Teesside. If the UDCs can do anything, they should be able to lift the north-east out of some of the more parochial envy that local authorities have demonstrated. It does not matter where a factory is located, provided that it is in the north-east or within the areas covered by other UDCs, rather than in Belgium, Ireland or Denmark. The factory should be here.

The purposes of UDCs are specific. Unlike local authorities, they have a clear remit—to sweep away the old industrial landscape and debris of the past, physically to clear away the dying, decrepit factories and industrial sites and to renew that landscape by providing the buildings that will attract new investment. The geographical targeted area of an urban development corporation is as specific as its purpose.

Perhaps most important of all, the development corporations will be much better spenders of public money than local authorities. They will be able to do what local authorities have signally failed to do, even where there were financial incentives for them to do so—to bring in private money in partnership with public money and apply it to the purposes of regeneration. I am thinking specifically of the north-east.

Not only do UDCs attract private money to go alongside public money in generous proportions, but they give the taxpayer much better value for the public pound that is spent. If the urban development corporations are to become a permanent feature of the political landscape, and if my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench are thinking of going further and establishing fresh UDCs — I have heard mini urban development corporations suggested — as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East implied, the Government will need to reconsider the relationship between the development corporations and the local authorities.

Of course, it is wrong for Labour Members to say that a few million pounds more for the UDCs must be looked at in the context of the reductions that have taken place in rate support grant. That argument is nonsense, because the money that would have been allocated to rate support grant and local authorities if Opposition Members had had their way would have been spent in all the bad old ways—on subsidised council housing at ridiculously low rents, on council workers' overtime payments and on wasteful, extravagant local government services.

Of course it is right such a transfer of money should take place. However, that does not mean that we do not have to consider the relationship between UDCs and local government. First, we must ensure that as the UDC takes over, begins to spend money and develop more and more of its functions, it does not add to the burden on local government, but paves the way for a reduction of that burden. The Labour party has rightly suggested single-tier local authorities. At the beginning of this year, it was getting near to advocating the abolition of the shire counties and the concentration of their functions at the district level. One has only to look at Teesside to see the sheer folly of having a Teesside development corporation and a Cleveland county council — and three or four district councils as well.

If the UDC is to be a permanent feature of Teesside, we must re-examine the need for Cleveland county council. Its functions merely duplicate what could be done at district authority level — because the area is predominantly urban — so there is no need for the extravagant bureaucracy and heavy-handedness of such a council, which has done little during the past seven or eight years except to discourage investment and business in Cleveland — with economic development units, and so on, producing a series of gloomy reports. I hope that when Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss makes her recommendations at the end of the child abuse inquiry, she will recommend the abolition of Cleveland county council, so that there will be a clearer relationship with the Teesside development corporation refurbishing the industrial landscape and attracting fresh business into Teesside and the district councils getting on with the traditional functions of local government.

There is, therefore, a corollary for my hon. Friend the Minister to consider. If Teesside and other development corporations are to exist for many years, my hon. Friend must examine the way in which he appoints local authority members to those boards. Of course, it may be right to begin by choosing a couple of leading Labour politicians, putting them on the board and evoking some enthusiasm for the development corporation concept by paying them £4,000 a year each. However, will the Minister for ever continue to appoint the same type of leader of a Labour local authority? Will he reappoint such a leader in each case? How do we select local authority representatives to serve on urban development corporations? Could not there be some slightly wider consultation process about the way in which those people are selected? The relationship between the development corporations and the district councils is centred on that membership.

I shall deal next with the concomitant review of regional policy. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has moved from his former Department, which dealt with small businesses, to one that deals with larger ones. However, as the development corporations have a package of incentives to attract fresh investments to their areas, it is important to ensure that the other aid measures that are available from the other Department concerned — the Department of Trade and Industry — complement and do not overwhelm what the other corporations are doing. I hope that we shall soon hear how the review of regional support measures is proceeding and how the measures are to be properly tallied with what is available from the development corporations.

In the meantime, we wish the urban development corporations well. They now have the physical resources, the finance, the skills — they are beginning to assemble the teams — and the leadership to set about their task. That task is not only the physical one of cleaning up the riverside and building new factories. It is also a psychological one. The corporations must not only sell their areas to the rest of the United Kingdom and the world, but must raise the level of self-confidence in their

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areas. They must make people on Teesside believe again in what Teesside has to offer. Development corporations are ideally suited to this task. They have a clearly defined sense of purpose and direction, and, through this Bill, the resources to match that commitment.

8.37 pm

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I want to respond to a couple of points made by the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). To suggest, as he did, that the psychological atmosphere in Cleveland could be improved, and then to say that the child abuse inquiry should consider doing away with Cleveland county council, was irresponsible and flippant. The inquiry is a difficult, complex issue, about which one should not be flippant. The hon. Gentleman also suggested that Cleveland county council is bureaucratic and top-heavy. He seems to forget that it is an elected body, which the UDC certainly is not. that is an important distinction, and one that I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept.

I agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) about the comments made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who has now left the Chamber. It is a sad reflection on the Chamber that the hon. Gentleman should have made such comments about the leadership of Middlesbrough county council. Clearly, Mr. Carr has his doubts about the Teesside UDC and its ability to deliver for the people of Middlesbrough. However, when faced with another four years of Tory government, it is in his best interests to do what he can for the people there. So he is doing his best to co-operate and to deliver more jobs and a better existence for the people of Middlesbrough. To condemn him, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh did, was disgusting.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh has the incredible ability to stab himself in the foot. After he had carried on about how inefficient and awful Labour authorities were, he went on to describe how the planning delays in a Tory-controlled authority went on for years. It is incredible that he should criticise our side, and then his own, in that way. It was interesting, too, that when the new hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) made his maiden speech, he failed to identify himself with his hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh.

I shall keep my remarks short as there have been a number of excellent contributions from the Opposition Benches.

The problems in Teesside—where, since 1979, 45,000 people have lost their jobs — mean that Teesside will welcome investment warily, but in the hope of regenerating and encouraging industrial development in the area. If, when he goes north, the Minister did not always fly over Redcar but sometimes stopped and visited it, he would see the advantages that it has to offer to industry. Not only do we have an attractive hinterland in the Cleveland hills, but we have good access by road, rail and river, as well as a great many skilled workers who at present have no work. I am willing to acknowledge the silver lining to the cloud, but I wish that Conservative Members would not fantasise and try to ignore the dark clouds, the problems, in Teesside. They must face the reality of our difficulties.

I said that I questioned the Government's sincerity and welcomed the proposals warily. One must do that if one looks at the Government's record on Teesside. We must not forget that when the Tory Government first came to power in 1979, the first thing they did was to reverse the decision to bring the Property Services Agency to Teesside, which meant that many potential jobs were immediately lost.

I emphasise the comments that have been made so often from the Opposition Benches tonight about the lack of democratic accountability and the erosion of democracy that the UDCs bring. After all, we must remember that it is public sector money; therefore, there should be public accountability.

It is clear that the Government do not even trust their own UDCs. Looking at the small print of what the UDCs have to do, one sees that each time they make a decision they must go to the Department for the decision to be okayed. That shows how much trust the Government place in the organisations that they themselves set up.

The Opposition do not want to solve problems just by throwing money at them. We should like to see problems dealt with differently. It is not only a matter of developing property. We should like to see development that is technology-led and skill-based. We want different forms of development, not just development. We should like a strategic plan based on the region that involves local people and relates training to future industrial development. That is the progress that we should like on Teesside.

I should like to finish with five specific questions to the Minister. I should appreciate it if he addressed them in his winding-up speech. First, in view of the massive scale of the problems that we have on Teesside, will the Minister do his utmost to see that there is no hold-up in the cash flow within the UDCs?

Secondly, the problem of drawing up the boundaries to which the UDCs apply is one which I hope the Minister has considered in great depth, but I ask him to look again at those boundaries in relation to Redcar and Langbaurgh. Many areas there need to be considered because of the high level of deprivation.

Thirdly, will the Minister do all that he can to ensure that jobs created by the UDCs are based locally so that local people can benefit from them?

Fourthly, will the Minister review article 15 of the European regional development fund so that there is a chance for more money for the area, which would not mean additional local government funding or Department of the Environment funding?

Finally, it is incumbent upon the Minister to address a question that has been posed several times in the debate. How can we have faith in his Department's ability to introduce the UDCs when the National Audit Office has refused to approve the Department of the Environment's annual accounts, because nearly £200 million has been unaccounted for, which, it is clearly stated, is not the fault of the local authorities?

Mr. Trippier: As there is an acknowledgement in several articles that covered the same subject this morning that the procedure has been streamlined and improved, and even the Comptroller and Auditor General has accepted that that is unlikely to happen again, how does the hon. Lady explain the dichotomy that she has just revealed? On the one hand, she complains that the Department of the Environment wants to keep a fairly close check on the UDCs, yet she now draws the attention of the House to the problem which, perhaps, has been caused by our not keeping as close an eye on them as we should in the past.

Miss Mowlam: That is exactly the point that I am trying to make. If we do not have local democratic accountability and are dependent on the Department for the control of the funds, it is incumbent on the Department to make sure that the money is carefully checked. It is interesting that the Minister should acknowledge the problems in previous years. I hope that with him at the head of the UDCs we do not see the similar problems and waste of public funds in future.

8.44 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): It is a great pleasure to address the House after the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam), for two reasons. One is the fact that, according to her excellent article in *The House Magazine*, I am apparently one of only three Conservative Members who know where her constituency is. I have been there. Secondly, she and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) have brought a spirit of moderation into the debate that was sadly lacking in one or two of the earlier contributions. Bearing in mind the state of dereliction of the Labour party in 1987, perhaps there is a case for an urban development corporation for that party. If so, I shall be happy to suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that the hon. Members for Redcar and for Wolverhampton, South-East should be selected for membership.

I speak in the debate not as a representative of a constituency in one of the UDC areas, but as a representative of a constituency which has found its own way of achieving results similar to those that we are beginning to see in the UDCs. I pay tribute to all the members of Thamesdown borough council, formerly Swindon borough council, who had the foresight — I speak of members of both major political parties — to recognise that a major industry was in decline in the town and that it was necessary to go out and look for jobs.

It is significant that Swindon is 80 miles from London, but has managed to attract so many more jobs than London docklands, which is right there next to the heart of the City of London. It has been only because of the initiative taken by the Government and the LDDC that that story of decay has been turned around. I hope that Opposition Members will recognise that some Labour-controlled local authorities have been successful in following the entrepreneurial policies that create regeneration and bring jobs. Therefore, it is not good enough for them to say, "We never have the money." Swindon has never had a penny of Government money, yet it has achieved 50,000 new jobs in the past 25 years to replace the 30,000 that were lost. Such an achievement can be made and should have been made by local authorities that are now overborne, as some Opposition Members would say, by the UDCs.

I have had an interest in one of those areas, the LDDC, for many years. I worked not far from Wapping in the City of London and many times in younger days I used to walk down Wapping high street and look at an area which, for all the protestations of one or two Opposition Members, had become seriously derelict. The jobs had gone and to a tragically great extent the life had gone out of that area.

Why had that happened? The answer is that the great industry of that area had decayed. The docks industry had all but disappeared. A few years ago I went with a group of fellow Members from both sides of the House to Rotterdam docks. The attitude of people in the London docks in those days was, "Don't try to modernise us. Don't try to frighten us into accepting the modern technology of containerisation." The people of Rotterdam, however, responded positively to the challenge. That is why we must regenerate the area that we still call docklands and why the port of Rotterdam is now the most successful in Europe.

The Government are entitled to a tribute for their success in inner-city policy over the past seven years, and particularly for the activities of the urban development corporations. I welcome the extension of the financial support available to those bodies. The Merseyside and London Docklands development corporations are transforming previously derelict areas into areas of economic growth, prosperity, and—very important—hope. It is a testimony to their success that the Secretary of State has created five new urban development corporations in the past year — Tyne and Wear, Teesside, Trafford Park, Black Country and Cardiff Bay.

The success of the London Docklands development corporation is particularly remarkable and shows how good an investment of public money the UDCs can be. For every £10 spent in docklands, only £1 comes from the taxpayer. The rest of the £5 billion now committed to or already spent on regenerating the areas has come from the private sector. Public funds have primed the pump and stimulated private investment, providing jobs, housing and amenities for docklands and an addition to the economic base of the nation as a whole. Unemployment has started to fall in docklands. The LDDC has brought nearly 10,000 jobs to the area so far and 80,000 new jobs are projected by 1992. Only today the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry officiated at the ground-breaking ceremony at the Canary Wharf development, which will create 40,000 new jobs when it is fully operational.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not present when my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) complained to the House that she had heard of a press conference relating to her constituency to which she had not even been invited. Is the hon. Gentleman now telling us that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has travelled today to Bow and Poplar for a ceremony without my hon. Friend's knowledge and, indeed, without her invitation?

Mr. Coombs: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question, because I do not know the answer. I do not know whether the Secretary of State travelled to Bow and Poplar without informing the hon. Lady. If he did, I would regard it as a mistake, but it would be a mistake that followed hard on the footsteps of innumerable Opposition Members, including the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) who have regularly come to my constituency in the past year without giving me notice. Let us think carefully before we cast any blame.

The LDDC recognises that new job opportunities often do not match the skills of local people. That is why it has launched a major training initiative under which 1,000 local people are now being trained in new skills by an organisation called Skill Net with the co-operation of the LDDC, the Inner London education authority and the

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London borough of Newham. The developers of Canary Wharf have signed an agreement with the borough of Tower Hamlets to fund additional training initiatives. In Newham, the borough council has signed an agreement with the LDDC for co-operation on homes, jobs and training. All of that makes an interesting contrast with the total hostility demonstrated by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

That is the way forward, and other Opposition Members have stressed the need for it. If only all Opposition Members would take the pragmatic view. Still more jobs are being created at the London City airport to be opened tomorrow by the Queen. The airport will be a magnet for still more jobs in the area.

Critics of the London Docklands development corporation like to say that the housing created in the area has not benefited local people. That is simply not the case; 45 per cent. of the houses sold were sold for less than £40,000. That represents the best possible value for money.

Under local tenants priority schemes, 2,000 previous tenants of local authorities have bought new homes. In 1981, 96 per cent. of housing in docklands was rented; today that figure is down to 83 per cent.

The Labour party is in the unfortunate position of having to denigrate success and achievement. It is clear from their remarks that many Labour Members wish that that were not the case, but on they go. There is a deep conservatism among Opposition Members. The Conservative party is now the radical party and is prepared to look for radical approaches to tackle the problems that remain.

Opposition Members should remember these simple points. Regeneration of derelict areas creates jobs and cuts unemployment, and surely they are not against that. It saves taxpayers' money, which can be used for other purposes in social services, education and housing, and it provides the rate base — let us say, the community charge base — for the future when the development corporations have ceased to exist and the local authorities are again entirely responsible for activities in their areas.

Let Opposition Members remember that the so-called yuppies, whom they love to denigrate and in whose so-called downfall they exalt, are often the sons and daughters of residents of the docklands area. With the success that their new jobs in the City has brought them, they want to own their own homes. They want to be part of the property-owning democracy. If the Labour party continues to fail to recognise that point, it will continue steadily to lose its political support.

New companies establishing themselves in the areas of the development corporations should be encouraged to support not only job creation enterprises in these areas but provision for leisure and for the arts. The quality of life for people moving into the areas is vital. It is not good enough simply to provide the infrastructure, jobs and houses. We must ensure that those who come to the areas will enjoy living in them and that they will be attractive parts of our country in which to reside.

As I see him in the Chamber, let me pay tribute to the activities of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). He has encouraged and sponsored and now chairs a charitable trust called the Outlandos Trust, which is essentially the brain child of the pop group The Police. The trust tries to bring the necessary funds to young people in deprived areas to enable them to establish pop groups and engage in other forms of activity that will encourage them to get out of difficult circumstances. That is the kind of practical help that we need and that is given by Conservative Members.

I support urban development corporations because they are pragmatic and because they work. I support the new generation of mini urban development corporations, which will be much shorter in life and much smaller in size but which, I hope, will have an equally galvanic effect on the areas where they are established.

Certain Opposition Members have talked about democracy. Which is the more important aspect of democracy? Is it the caucuses of Labour party activists in smoke-filled rooms, the protesters, or is it the policy of a Government who have been re-elected twice and who are regenerating the areas that are most in need of it by means of the highly successful urban development corporations? The people of this country endorse that policy, when given the opportunity to do so. I ask Opposition Members to recognise that fact, to drop their opposition to these corporations and to show the kind of pragmatic, responsible realism that will enable all of us to create jobs for the people who live in those areas.

9 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me immediately after the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) because I echo 100 per cent. his last words: regeneration for the benefit of the people who live in these areas. But his selective quotation of an area that he knows in part does not reflect the truth.

The truth about the London Docklands development corporation and its strategic plan is that it is not based on meeting the needs of the people of east London. The hon. Gentleman, who is a good debater and who is relatively fair, shakes his head, but that is the truth. The LDDC is not meeting the pressing needs of the people of east London. There are 600 homeless families in Newham, the second most deprived borough in the country. The LDDC is not meeting their needs. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who courteously allowed me to intervene during his speech, unintentionally put his finger on the spot. As the hon. Member for Swindon may not realise, the Bill refers to the regeneration of the area, not to the regeneration of the community.

The hon. Gentleman said that the sons and daughters of my constituents are working in the City. Yes, some of them are working in the City, but some of them are not, and never will. I am referring to the children and grandchildren of the people of Canning Town, Silvertown and north Woolwich. Their opportunities to remain in the area and obtain employment in it are, if anything, being reduced by the LDDC.

I have in my hand an advertisement for the Shadwell basin area in Wapping. The Tower Hamlets council wished to erect houses to rent there. Lord Cross said that the overriding demand in docklands was for small houses for people to rent. Shadwell basin is now advertising for sale flats and maisonettes costing £185,000. Those who bought their properties during the early stages of the LDDC have gained, but the price of similar properties has now soared beyond the reach of almost the rest of the original population of east London. Properties of £20,000 or £30,000, which people could afford provided they were in a job, now cost up to £100,000. That is not an unusual price in my area.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I do not think that anybody fails to recognise the needs of those who live in the area that the hon. Gentleman has described. However, during the latter part of his speech the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said that if the social mix of an area is destroyed and the mangement class leaves, one has to rebuild the social mix during its regeneration. One cannot avoid, therefore, bringing people from outside into the area to give it wholesomeness.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has demonstrated the partial knowledge that Tory Central office and LDDC briefings impart. Often the figures for docklands are related to the area of the LDDC—along the river—but the dockland communities of east London are different, with centres away from that area. The London borough of Newham is a hive of intellectual and artistic activity, as no doubt are Nottingham and Swindon, but it does not figure in the dockland figures. We wanted to use the docklands for the pressing social needs of the community of Newham so that it would act as a balancer for the needs of the rest of the borough. The 200 acres that the borough was allocated to build 8,000 homes for rent was taken by the LDDC and sold to Sir Lawrie Barratt and others. It is true that some housing associations were formed, but not in sufficient numbers. The hon. Member for Swindon said that we have signed an agreement. We have done that because we want something rather than nothing, and I am glad that he agrees that that something is not what it should be.

Another myth about the past — this was said on television by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker)—is that we had not done anything in the area and did not wish to do much for the docklands. Mr. Reg Ward, who is the retiring chief executive of the LDDC, was interviewed on the World Service. The interviewer pointed out that the plan was introduced by a Conservative Government, but that before that the Labour Government had planned to redevelop the area.

Mr. Ward said:

> "Yes, I think there were about four major plans produced over the early nineteen seventies which culminated in the plan of the Docklands Joint Committee in 1976, which tended in fact to see the plan as being the means whereby all the social needs of the area might be redressed."

He meant that his plans did not fill that objective. Perhaps the hon. Member for Swindon will now understand why we feel aggrieved.

The greatest grievance of all concerns Canary Wharf. The Minister has confirmed in written answers to me the cost of the land. The programme was developed with north American capital and will eventually cost about £3,000 million. We were promised 50,000 jobs and a piazza the size of Paddington station. Written answers show that that land was acquired for £20 million — £12 million in equivalent public development and £8 million cash. Will the Minister say how the developers obtained £3,000 million of development for £8 million cash? There are suspicions in east London that there has been a fiddle.

There is a surplus of about £49 million on the consolidated income and expenditure account of the LDDC. Much of that has been accumulated by land deals. Is it not right and proper that that £49 million should be ploughed back into meeting the social needs of the borough? The land values are being increased by the mechanisms of the LDDC, so it should meet the needs of the area.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does the hon. Gentleman understand the distinction that we make between the years and years of decline of the docklands and the innumerable plans, and the short period between the establishment of the development corporation and all the activity that is occurring there now?

Mr. Spearing: I regret giving way to the hon. Gentleman because he does not appreciate what was happening. About £20 million of public money from the Thames water authority was spent on draining Beckton marsh. Plans were being made and many of the council houses in Tower Hamlets were built and can be seen in Shadwell today.

Last week *The Independent* carried a report about the accounts of the LDDC auditors, Messrs. Robson Rhodes. They drew attention to the sum of no less than £7·9 million being spent on consultants and said that over 40 of those deals were not put out to competitive tender and did not comply with the rules laid down by the LDDC. I have a document here that I think I got out of the back of a copying machine. Robson Rhodes are the retiring auditors and I believe that they were appointed by and are accountable to the Secretary of State. The communication from Robson Rhodes says:

> "On other financial controls we noted instances of incorrect invoicing, failure to raise credit notes or otherwise action adjustments agreed with tenants, and uncertainty about the respective responsibilities of finance and area teams in a sample of 22 accounts examined."

Under the heading "Establishment and maintenance of a contracts register" the auditors say:

> "We commented last year on the absence of this control over the correct accounting for interim payments under contracts. We understood then that efforts would be made to establish such a register. As yet, although there have been some systems design work on the project, a contracts register is not yet operated. Establishment and maintenance of a register of fixed assets: we have previously pointed to the absence of such a register, which in our view is required as a condition of the Corporation's Memorandum of Financial Arrangements."

If a local authority had done only one of those three things, I am quite sure that the district auditor would, quite properly, have been down on it like a ton of bricks.

This audit report shows that there is no reason to suppose that a corporation is any better at these things. A corporation is out of the public spotlight and away from the automatic checks that are inherent in our historic system of local government. In spite of that, through this Bill the Minister will pour largesse into organisations which are not only undemocratic, but which have leakages and difficulties of the sort that I have mentioned.

9.11 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I apologise to the House for not being present until soon after 7 o'clock. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, I attended a memorial service for a former hon. Member, Sir Henry Studholme, who was a Whip here for many years. I was not being discourteous in not being here at the start of the debate.

One has a feeling of déjà vu when one listens to the hon. Member for Newham, South. I have heard similar

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speeches from him over and over again on urban development corporations. They are always very enlightening, but they all have the same theme. We appreciate his consistency in this matter.

Urban development corporations are a vehicle for central Government to take things away from local government in the belief that if they pour increasing sums of public money into a locality they can put things right. The idea of pouring vast sums of public money into urban areas is not necessarily the right approach. It is an illusion to think that more public money pumped into selected areas will create a better environment and a better habitat for the people who live there.

President Carter spent $190 million in one very small neighbourhood of Atlanta in the belief that if the area was razed to the ground and the people moved out and a completely new neighbourhood built, when the people moved back the situation would immediately improve. Statistics were prepared showing the number of people on probation, the number of single parent mums, the number of elderly people, young people, alcoholics and unemployed in the area before it was knocked down. Ten years after the area was rebuilt the incidence of deprivation was virtually the same as before.

Therefore, the Minister should be cautious about pumping vast sums of public money into the UDCs, because those corporations will not, by themselves regenerate our cities. They will enable new buildings to be put up and make the place look better, but they will not, in themselves, improve the quality of life for the people in those areas.

Since 1968 endless sums of public money have been pumped into the cities. I have attended many debates in this House on urban regeneration, yet the cities continue to look worse. Whenever I visit my old constituency, in Liverpool, the city does not look any better despite the vast sums of public money that have been spent there.

Although the UDCs are supported by both sides of the House, I do not believe that they will regenerate ailing neighbourhoods, help rundown communities and improve the quality of life in those areas. I believe that the Minister should consider whether he can go a bit slower regarding the UDCs. Rather than pumping money into one small locality for job creation and economic revival, perhaps the Minister could put some more money into neighbourhood renewal. I do not think that public money alone should be pumped into neighbourhood renewal; I believe that the people living in vast council estates and rundown inner-city areas should be encouraged to help themselves.

It is apparent that Baltimore, Cleveland and Atlanta in the United States have been revitalised not by pumping massive dollops of Government money into small localities, but by giving the people in those neighbourhoods the opportunity to help themselves by partnership with central and local government. For example, someone living in Baltimore in a rundown house would be given a grant at an interest rate of about 2 or 3 per cent.—that was the interest rate 10 years ago—to do up his house. That person would borrow the money from the bank and paint the house, inside and out. In return, the local authority would landscape all round his house and the Government would lay a new road. It is that type of partnership between central and local government and the people that will regenerate our cities.

In the past, either local government or central government have been involved in regeneration; the people have always been excluded. Even the task forces that play a great part in the Government's inner-city revival consist of people sent from Westminster to live in the chosen areas. Although it is much slower and more painful, we shall see the restoration of wealth creation and community development only by giving the proverbial carrot to the people living in the area.

I ask my hon. Friend not to increase the money given to the UDCs, but to start giving more money to fund the partnership between local and central Government and the people. That is important. I believe in neighbourhood renewal and that people must be involved in the regeneration process.

Although the UDCs are a fitting vehicle for economic regeneration and the creation of jobs, they do not result in an improved quality of life for the people in those cities. We need to improve their quality of life first and I hope that the Minister will say something about that when he replies.

9.18 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is a pleasure to welcome the closing remarks of the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). They were a welcome change from some of the remarks that we have heard from the Conservative Benches during a long, but not always entertaining, debate.

I had intended simply to speak about some aspects of the co-operation that is needed to ensure the success of the UDCs, but I must refer to one of two of the diversions that have taken up so much time.

Two Conservative Members made maiden speeches, and the Conservative party would benefit from taking note of what they said. One hon. Member warned that we in this House should beware of being trapped by the limited horizons of the London tube line. That was a worthwhile warning, especially as a number of Conservative Members reflected just such a horizon and gave a perspective of our country that I did not recognise.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) appealed for partnership between public and private enterprise. Many Labour Members are used to such a parnership being effective and successful in local areas. I hope that the Minister will proselytise his own colleagues to that approach as a way of regenerating our communities. It is very much needed. Indeed, some of the rhetoric in the debate has been terrible to hear and is something that our communities do not need.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) failed to recognise the achievements of public enterprise over many years. He failed to recognise the wisdom and business acumen that have often been contributed to those achievements, by those with a manual or non-academic background. Like many of my hon. Friends, I resented those remarks.

Such contributions have been made through local government, whereas often a narrow commercial experience in public has not released creative energies into enterprise and local government. Only if the best of the creative ability of all aspects of our communities can work together will development corporations or local authorities work effectively for the communities that they represent. These work well only when people have a care and love for their localities and feel passionately that they want to do the best for them.

The regeneration of the inner cities is important. I care about the regeneration of the Cardiff and Penarth area. It is too important to become a political football to be used as a symbol in debate. I hope that the Minister will explicitly reject the narrow and doctrinaire approach that has been urged on him by some of his more extreme Back Benchers. That is not what the Opposition are arguing for. We are arguing for the positive approach that can come about only through co-operation by everyone who cares about the locality.

It is sad that the debate has been used as an opportunity to denigrate the democratic traditions and effectiveness of local authorities. We should be encouraging the positive aspects of local government and praising the successes rather than keeping the eye always on the odd failures, which have been blown out of all proportion by some hon. Members. We should not wallow in self-indulgent criticism of the work of others, but should look to those aspects from which we can learn. I hope that the Minister will be positive and not follow those negative criticisms.

It seems that the world in which I live is different from that in which some Conservative Members live, because where I come from the Labour party through local government has taken the initiative either on its own or in partnership with commercial interests to regenerate the area. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will confirm that description of the way in which things have operated in Cardiff and south Wales.

The redevelopment of Cardiff city centre is one example of local government success. In that case local government initiated regeneration and worked in partnership with companies in the private sector. It effectively brought about a redevelopment that was in the interests of the city and the area that it serves.

The Cardiff Bay development corporation has been referred to. That has an opportunity to build on a firm foundation that has been offered by local government. It also has a duty to build on that firm foundation, in co-operation with all the other agencies involved. That foundation is sound because it has been created over a number of years by local government. Labour councillors have played a full, positive and leading role in that regard and that is the right way to proceed.

It is a ludicrous misrepresentation to say that we need an urban development corporation to cut through the red tape of local government. My experience in local government is that we have been battling against the red tape of national Government, which has increased over the last five or six years. I hope that there will be some reversal of that trend in the coming years.

The positive aspect of development corporations is that they can be used as constructive mechanisms. They are not a magic wand, as some hon. Members seem to think. They can be used as positive, constructive mechanisms for improving inner cities. Development corporations are being given jobs and the resources to create jobs. I welcome that development. In my area, I shall work with the Cardiff Bay development corporation and everybody involved in it to make sure that it is successful, that it works for the area and my constituents—many of my constituents live within the board's area, although I understand that that is not the case in some other areas —and that resources are used for the benefit of the area.

I welcome the support of the previous Secretary of State for Wales, who was rather quicker than some local Conservative county councillors to recognise the potential of the docklands area, and the present Secretary of State for Wales even if the initiatives are based on the urban development corporation structure. That may not be the necessary structure, but if that is the structure that we have, we should use it in the best way that we can.

I suggest some points to be taken on board in ensuring how that can be done. The effect on employment needs carefully to be measured. We need to ensure that there is evidence, criteria, targets and that we measure the success of the actions that are taken and the way in which resources are used. From experience to date, there is a suggestion that that has not always been the case with some earlier development corporations.

We need to make sure that resources are not simply diverted so that the success of one element in the reconstruction of a city is at the expense of other needed developments — that is, in effect, that money is not creamed off to generate success by stealing from other headings.

We need to encourage a partnership with other job creating agencies. That is important. There is a danger that something such as a development corporation may want to become almost a unitary authority. Local authority partnership with bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency and Cardiff and Vale Enterprise is essential if we are to achieve long-term success. I hope that that aim will be encouraged by Ministers as the corporation develops.

Area priorities need to be recognised. There is a danger that something will be identified as meeting the needs of a development corporation. We must always ask whether it meets not only the short-term needs of a company but the long-term needs of an area. The way in which a criterion is set and the way in which that question is asked and answered is important. We could have heard more in that respect, and I hope that we shall as time goes on.

We must examine the danger of a loss of jobs. During relocation for the purpose of clearing areas, there is a danger that some jobs may disappear. For example, firms may go out of business rather than go to new sites. That aspect needs carefully to be monitored and measured.

In the end, local people will inherit the results of a development corporation's work. It is important that they should be heard and involved at every stage of the decision making process.

Accountability is so important that it has been stressed many times during the debate. At a time when local authorities must make their workings and information—and the basis on which they take decisions—open to the public in a way in which they did not have to in the past, it is ludicrous for an organisation such as a development corporation not to be equally open. I hope that the Minister will say that such accountability and understanding of the process will be built in.

If people are appointed to a corporation, and they are uncertain about what they should say and what should be public, there is a temptation to say as little as possible. I hope that the Government will provide encouragement and confidence to corporations to be as open as possible with the public.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

I hope that I have made some positive suggestions about the way in which urban development corporations can be successful. There is a danger, which was reflected in the comments of some Conservative Members, that a mechanism can become flavour of the month and later, when people or the Government lose interest and move on to other things, be left to decay. The enterprise agencies are in such a danger.

The Minister took an active part in the promotion of enterprise agencies, as I have through local government in my area. There is a danger that they will go on to the back burner now when they have achieved success in many areas. They need consistent encouragement over a long time. Enterprise agencies offer a mechanism that can be used for the positive benefit of local communities and should not be allowed to become a political football.

If the Government take on board and respond positively to the points I have raised, we will be able to work in co-operation for the benefit of the community.

9.31 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): This has been a long and interesting debate, and I add my congratulations to those hon. Members who made their maiden speeches. I hope that we shall be hearing more from them.

I congratulate my hon. Friends on their defence of local government, because we are talking about local services which are mainly provided by local government. Therefore, it is only right that we should express our appreciation to those hon. Members who have been defending local government.

The Minister referred to the Chancellor's declaration that there will be further increases in UDC expenditure next year. The Minister used the word "substantially". I hope that there will be some increase in the resources channelled into local government because urban development corporations cover only small areas of the country that are being given extra resources for extra services. It is important that we take note of the services that are provided by local government, as there is very little difference in principle between the services provided by UDCs, for which we are increasing the available resources, and the services provided by local authorities, although the services provided by local authorities greatly exceed those provided by urban development corporations. I refer to social services and care for the elderly. There are now joint management schemes for health services and social services, and resources should be channelled directly to them. Those services are not provided by the urban development corporations.

It is important that we remind the Minister that some areas in this country are served by good local authorities which need resources to meet responsibilities that they are having to face because of the demise of hospital services in many localities.

On 24 October the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) said:

> "Why does the Government seem to be taking so many powers away from local government? Is this justified? Is it democratic? Will there still be a significant role left for local government? Do the changes proposed deal with temporary problems? Or do they mark a permanent shift in the constitutional balance of power?
>
> As Parliament begins to embark on a massive programme of change in local government finance, in education and in housing, it is natural to ask these questions and the anxieties that have been aroused make it sensible to try to provide answers. To start with, it is impossible to deny that the Government's proposals will reduce the scope of local government activity, and it is best to be candid about this. Within their areas, Urban Development Corporations take on the development powers of local government. Housing Action Trusts are to be allowed to take over council estates. And schools will be permitted to opt out of local authority control. In total, potentially a major reduction in the power and influence of local government."

In other words, it is an attack on local government. That speech was made by a former Tory Minister.

It is significant that several Conservative Members are concerned about the attacks on local government. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) in his place, as he has been absent for some time. He made personal attacks that were both unfair and unreasonable. I was a member of the Wakefield local authority, which was commended by a former Tory Secretary of State for speeding up the processing of planning applications. I therefore reject the hon. Gentleman's attacks on local authorities and their planning departments.

Mr. Holt: Night after night, Labour party councillors in the north-east attack me, but I am unable to defend myself. Suddenly, when the boot is on the other foot and it hurts a little, the hon. Gentleman does not like it.

Mr. O'Brien If that is the level of politics debated in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, I am sure that his office will be of short duration. It is certainly not the sort of debate that we expect in the north-east.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) outlined the Opposition's policy on UDCs. He said that their aim was to attract private investment, although that is difficult in some areas. I understand that the Minister is due to visit the Wakefield metropolitan district. We will tell him that some areas are difficult to develop. Areas that formerly were the home of the mining and steel industries are not considered suitable by hi-tech industries, because it is claimed that the ground might be unstable. There is, therefore, a blight on those areas even before the establishment of a UDC. I hope that the Minister recognises that areas in the industrial north are blighted because of their former industries. In addition, because of the lack of infrastructure it is difficult to attract employers who might generate job opportunities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington put some questions to the Minister. He asked whether there would be cuts in the finances available to urban development corporations. Can we be assured that financing of the corporations will increase? The introduction of mini UDCs was also raised. It would be helpful if the Minister could explain how areas are selected, because that has created much concern.

Reference has been made to the decision of the Comptroller and Auditor General on grants allocation. The Minister said that action is being taken about that problem. What vehicle is to be used? How can we prove that urban development corporations are giving value for money?

My hon. Friends have pointed out that urban development corporations are not democratic and are answerable only to the Secretary of State. Local people do not have a real input and their destiny is left in the hands of those who are in control of the UDCs. If we are sincere in our wish to provide local services and in the rhetoric that local services are important, we must ensure that local people have some say in the way services are provided.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed about local services — a concern that I expressed earlier—what still troubles me slightly is that I have not heard any opposition from his Front Bench to the principle of removing Parliament's control over the money granted to UDCs. Is the Labour Front Bench opposed to the principle of reduced accountability, or is it, like most of the Back Benches of the Labour party, supportive of the principle that the House should still have control over that money?

Mr. O'Brien: I thought that we had made it clear that we, as a party, are opposed to the fact that there is very little democracy about the way urban development corporations are established and will operate. We are opposed to undemocratic procedures.

Money is needed in many areas for the provision of local services. Further resources should be made available for that purpose. When I was elected to a local authority 30 years ago, I wanted to make changes to improve the environment of the area. That is the purpose of local authorities. I hope that the Minister will encourage local authorities whose areas are not included in the UDC development to stimulate job opportunities and develop housing amenities and recreation facilities.

The Minister says that the success of urban development corporations is measured by the amount of private money that they can attract into the areas. Unless facilities are made available it will be difficult for local authorities to match up to the way that UDCs are measured. I hope that the Minister will explain how resources will be provided for the long-term planning of UDCs. We shall not divide on this issue, but we are concerned about the way in which the areas are selected, and the fact that the UDCs are undemocratic.

9.45 pm

Mr. Trippier: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

This has been a wide-ranging, interesting and enjoyable debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) on his first speech from the Dispatch Box. I also wish to compliment and congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on their excellent maiden speeches. It is significant that they both paid warm tributes to their predecessors, Eric Deakins and Ian Wrigglesworth respectively, who were highly regarded by hon. Members of all parties.

I particularly enjoyed the part in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow about the ridiculous rate increase with which we are all familiar—the 62 per cent. increase imposed by Waltham Forest council. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South made a stirring speech, the theme of which could be dubbed, shouting for the north. It contrasted with the contribution of the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam), who gave what could only be termed a dark cloud speech. That seemed to be its theme. I am pleased that we now have an hon. Friend who is prepared to shout for the north and talk about its great strengths. Those of us who are passionate northerners become a little fed up when some of our fellow northerners are too quick to sell themselves short or pull themselves down rather than talk about what is best. I was delighted that the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) picked up that theme and agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South.

The speech of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) was constructive. He said that Labour Members will work with urban development corporations and give them maximum support. Obviously, Conservative Members welcome this support. We have found it difficult to understand the Labour party's official position with regard to UDCs. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman may have difficulty with some of his hon. Friends, particularly in London, because they still cannot decide whether the LDDC is a good thing. The number of Labour Members from London constituencies who are decrying UDCs shows the ideological stance which caused Labour to lose seats in the capital at the last general election—for example, in Walthamstow.

I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), which was most constructive.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) asked me whether we have the local authorities' support for the new UDCs. The right hon. Gentleman has much experience in this field, particularly in the Department of the Environment. We have both the support and participation of councillors, many of whom are Labour, on UDC boards. We are having considerable difficulty, as the right hon. Gentleman will know, with the LDDC board and, to a lesser extent, with the NDC board. I welcome the vast majority of contributions made by Opposition Members during this debate. It has been very refreshing to hear them.

Mr. Frank Field: I hope that the House counts me as a northern Member who wishes to shout for the north. The shouting that I did in earlier interventions was designed to draw attention to the unfair distribution of resources by the Merseyside development corporation, which gave £180 million to Liverpool and only £4 million to Birkenhead. In support of those who shout for the north, I plead with the Minister to grip the Merseyside development corporation gently by the throat and make sure that, in years to come, the distribution of resources is fairer than it has been during the past five years.

Mr. Trippier: I am broadly sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman's point and to the interventions that he made earlier. He knows that a major difficulty has been the transfer of land from the Mersey docks and harbour board to the Merseyside development corporation, as it owns the bulk of the land on his side of the river which is within the development corporation boundary. He and I will be pleased when that transfer of land takes place, and I hope that in the near future I can announce some good news about that.

Mr. Field: When the land is transferred, does the hon. Gentleman expect a fairer distribution of resources?

Mr. Trippier: Yes. I am especially keen to have balanced development on both sides of the river. I am aware of what the hon. Gentleman has said, publicly and privately, about extending the boundaries on his side of the river.

[Mr. Trippier]

I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Houghton and Washingtoon say that he endorses private sector investment. Not all his colleagues have agreed with that. We need private sector money and ingenuity. We do not except similar leverage in each area. As I said in opening, no two areas are the same. The leverage will depend on many local circumstances. In the less promising areas, it may be some years before private sector investment builds up, and I accept the point made by hon. Members from the north-west and the north-east that it may be a little more difficult in their areas. But I refer again to the example of Salford quays, which is next door to Trafford Park urban development corporation, where there is an impressive leverage of 6:1.

The Merseyside development corporation leverage has been low, but that is a reflection of the fact that it has had to concentrate on reclaiming severely despoiled land. That is nearly completed, and the MDC is concentrating increasingly on development. It envisages £100 million-worth of development, which will have a significant impact on the gearing ratio.

The hon. Member for Normanton asked about the financing of UDCs. Recently my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced finance for the UDCs for the next three years of more than £200 million each year. The division of that sum among the UDCs will depend upon the programmes that they introduce each year. Full corporate plans will be prepared next year. The allocation of funds for next year will be based on preliminary strategies and the early opportunities that are available to each UDC.

Several hon. Members asked how we determine value for money. Individual projects are introduced by the UDCs and are the responsibility of the boards, which must decide their priorities within their budgets. As one would expect, the Department will check whether they conform with the established rules under which grant is paid and that they have been properly appraised. What constitutes value for money will vary from one project to another. The answer to the question why we cannot fund them as we did the new towns is straightforward: the new towns were financed from loans and were building on green field sites. The UDCs are building in areas where many millions of pounds must be spent before sites can be developed, and the only prudent way of financing such expenditure is by grant.

I especially welcomed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who knows Trafford Park extremely well. He mentioned a good example of a Labour-controlled authority—Salford—which is prepared to work in co-operation with the private sector and with central Government. It might impress the Opposition if I said that co-operation between central and local government, whatever its political persuasion, and the private sector — the tripartite form — increases leverage. In some circumstances, we have had to bypass the local authority. We take no pleasure in doing that. I believe that that reduces the leverage and therefore Salford is a good example. However, my hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear me say that cheek by jowl and next door to Salford is Manchester city council which, from time to time, has proved extremely difficult for us to work with.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney made a sensible contribution. We are all familiar with the background to it. However, I found it absolutely staggering when he said that much of what has happened in London docklands would have happened in any event, assuming that a Labour Government had been in office. We are all politicians, and I think that I have a vivid imagination, but that is stretching credulity to breaking point. I would suggest that not one hon. Member among the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends, let alone among Conservative Members, believes that. It is palpable nonsense and is demonstrably daft because it never happened. All the plans to which Opposition Members have referred and which perhaps were being considered in the 1960s or even the 1970s were never implemented. That is the difference—we got on and did the job.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about housing. We should be clear about the role of the LDDC in housing. It is not the local housing authority for the docklands area of Tower Hamlets, Southwark or Newham. The local councils have that role. The LDDC has no statutory power to build or provide housing in its area. It does not receive any money for that purpose. It has not diverted housing funds away from the local councils as the right hon. Gentleman appeared to imply. The conditions on docklands council estates are matters for the landlord councils. Their HIP allocations from central Government reflect the housing needs in their areas as a whole. They must determine their own programmes to reflect their view of local priorities. The LDDC has no locus in that.

Mr. Shore *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry, I cannot give way as I have only four minutes left.

It should be clear that the LDDC has shown considerable concern about local housing needs and has acted in a number of ways to complement local authority initiatives. It has promoted an affordable housing policy and has aimed to ensure that more than half of the houses built on LDDC land are priced below £40,000. It has acquired local rundown council estates, often for low-cost home ownership schemes. It has co-operated with boroughs on joint developments of adjacent sites for housing. However, perhaps there should be greater concentration on social housing.

I had the opportunity recently of meeting the chairman of the LDDC board, his deputy and other representatives. I stressed that there is no lack of sympathy with the point made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney about the need for social housing. Certainly I am prepared to discuss the matter with him in detail on any occasion that he wishes. Perhaps we shall find that we agree more than we disagree.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to UDC finance. As I said in my opening speech, there is no shortage of ways in which Parliament can debate and investigate UDCs. There is obviously the formal process of voting on the Estimates, which offer scope for debate. The Select Committee on the Environment scrutinises the Department of the Environment's main Estimates and can look and has looked at proposed UDC projects. The Public Accounts Committee also examines UDCs. The National Audit Office is currently considering the LDDC and the NDC, and, of course, Opposition Members could choose to debate UDCs on their Opposition days. In addition, there are numerous opportunities during Adjournment and other debates on other subjects for UDCs to be discussed.

However, I found it a little difficult to stomach taking lessons from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey on co-ordination. It is a little rich to hear a Liberal Member talk about co-ordination. Indeed, it takes the biscuit that he should lecture us about partnership in view of the internecine warfare that has been going on between the Liberal party and the SDP, and the blood-letting that has taken place since the last general election. At the risk of hammering the nails out of sight, the hon. Gentleman has the temerity to ask who is in the lead on the Conservative side, when we have been baffled as to who is in the lead on the alliance side. The Prime Minister is in the lead. The day after polling day, she said that inner cities were at the top of the agenda. It will be for Parliament and the UDCs to play a vital part in that policy.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at this day's sitting the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS (FINANCIAL LIMITS) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill, it is expedient to authorise any payment out of the National Loans Fund, the Consolidated Fund or money provided by Parliament resulting from provisions of the Act—

(a) removing the limit imposed by paragraph 8 of Schedule 31 to the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 on the sums which may be paid under paragraph 3 of that Schedule to urban development corporations;

(b) providing for the amount of any repayments of sums borrowed by such corporations under paragraph 4(2) of that Schedule to be taken into account in determining the amount of the sums so borrowed which for the time being counts towards the limit imposed by paragraph 8 of that Schedule; and

(c) varying the limit so imposed to £30 million, with power to increase it by order to £100 million;

and any payment into the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund resulting from any such provisions.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 4

CONSERVATION OF AREAS OF NATURAL BEAUTY

10 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 3, line 33, after 'beauty', insert 'or ecological equilibrium'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 3, in page 3, line 34, after 'conserve', insert

'together with any area designated as one of special scientific interest'.

Mr. Spearing: There was some consensus in Committee about the Bill's purposes. There was also wide agreement on the form of the Broads Authority outlined in the Bill. There had been a preparatory Select Committee stage, this being a hybrid Bill. The legislation may well have benefited from that unusual, but sometimes effective, procedure.

I have no commercial interest in the Norfolk Broads. My interest is one of recreation and leisure. I might be regarded by the Government, my hon. Friends and people who live in the Broads and the Norwich area — represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett)—as one of the most desirable types of visitors. I have known and visited the area for the past 50 years. I have hired boats from five yards and know a number of others. At present, and for the past 15 years, I have, as a private owner of craft, paid dues to the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners. Because of those activities, I inject a certain amount of my parliamentary salary into that area of East Anglia. I think that I have a number of proper interests that may commend themselves to all who have at heart the area's future prosperity and the health of the future Broads Authority.

The problem throughout the Bill and the problem for the Broads Authority is how to reconcile conflicting interests. It is difficult to do that, because they all meet within the charming area of the Broads—on the water, on the surrounding marshland or in the surrounding countryside. Natural though we may assume it to be, we all know that the area was created by man through peat diggings and subsequent inundations and, therefore, what is beautifully natural there has been induced by man and can be destroyed by him equally quickly. That fear has brought statutory provisions together and brought the Bill through various and long stages of gestation to this stage, which will probably be virtually the last time the House will discuss it.

Clause 4 states:

> "The Authority shall—
>
> *(a)* before the end of the period of two years beginning with the operative date, prepare a map showing any areas within the Broads whose natural beauty it is, in the opinion of the Authority, particularly important to conserve".

A map is a most useful and accurate tool. It brings together in easily comprehensible and comprehensive form most of the features of an area that are significant for the purposes for which the map has been drawn. The map, which the Authority has a duty to compile, will, in a semi-pictorial way, represent many of the features of the conflicting interests.

Throughout the discussions in Committee, a conflict emerged between those who properly earn their living in the area and wish to develop it commercially—mainly for holiday purposes—and what might be collectively called the interests of conservation. For reasons that I mentioned in Committee, I do not think that one can typify those interests as being navigation versus conservation, because the interests of navigation in the Broads are diverse. People use the Broads for different navigational purposes, and they navigate in different ways. There can be criticism of unsuitable craft with unsuitable engines, travelling at unsuitable speeds. Similarly, there are proper recreational and navigational uses, to which even the most fastidious conservationists would not object. Our problem is how to reconcile those interests in the Broads, and to decide what action the authority will take.

I tabled several amendments in Committee which included the phrase, "the ecological balance". The Minister — we are glad to see him here — was good enough to look kindly on that phrase in several places. For various reasons, he could not accept my amendments—in one case for genuine grammatical reasons; in another, his rejection had something to do with hybridity. I shall not venture into that complex legal area now, unless by some chance the Minister resists the amendment tonight on the same grounds—in which case, I shall comment again later, if I manage to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I hope that the Minister will not adduce that controversial reason on this occasion. As he showed me in a letter, although it may involve complications, the factor of hybridity does not necessarily constrict the House's view, should it wish to change the Bill. I am glad to see the Minister nodding his assent to that.

The amendment adds "or ecological equilibrium" after "beauty". As we discovered in Committee, the two are not the same. The natural beauty of a place may not be imperilled even though its ecological balance may be. For instance, a great deal of the ecological balance may be under the water. We know from what our anglers tell us that there could be great changes to the nutritional bases for fish and their propagation, or to the underwater activities of various plants, which, we are told by the naturalists, do not immediately strike the eye. Mayhem could be created by turbidity, without necessarily affecting what one sees with the eyes. Thus, the importance of ecological equilibrium in its scientific sense, must be added to what we believe is an important feature — natural beauty. That is why clause 4 states that the authority shall, as a duty, produce a map showing all the areas which it believes it is particularly important to conserve — not only areas of natural beauty, but those of ecological significance.

I hope that the Minister will be able to accept the amendment, because I do not believe that it prejudices any of the legitimate commercial interests that we mentioned in Committee, or the successful operation of the Act.

Amendment No. 3 is about sites of special scientific interest. That is a well-known phrase, which is found in many conservation Bills. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is present. He has the distinction of having piloted through Acts relating to the conservation of flora and fauna and to areas of scientific interest. I am glad that he has been able to attend the debate. Those areas are specified under other legislation. They are not specified by the Bill and will not be when it becomes an Act. There will be others which may change and which are already there.

The map, which is statutory, would not be useful if it did not include the many areas designated as sites of special scientific interest that are already within the Broads. Perhaps many of the provisions in the Bill will not necessarily apply directly to those areas, but their presence and location and the fact that they are there should be known, or such a map will lack the comprehensive character that I believe everybody would wish it to have.

The map will become a most effective tool for the workings of the future authority. It will enable people to understand the complex inter-relationships of land, air and water that we find in that unique and lovely area. Such a map, particularly if it is comprehensive in the way that I suggest, will enable those with, on the face of it, conflicting interests, to come together and reach a solution to their problems, in an area of human, political and commercial equilibrium which will match the natural equilibrium that we hope to retain for our future enjoyment.

I shall not go further at this stage because I am sure, looking at the well-attended House, that many other hon. Members will wish to contribute to what I believe is a key debate. The natural equilibrium and how it should be sustained and maintained by the authority will be the heart of the matter in future.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for his personal reference to me.

I should like to make a couple of points, partly because of my involvement in conservation organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and partly because I am extremely fond of the Broads. I spent the last year of my Royal Air Force service stationed not far from the Broads.

I should like to reinforce the argument advanced by my hon. Friend. He rightly said that there can be a real difference between that which is beautiful and that which is ecologically important. I do not want to strike a partisan note, but some hon. Members who were present at the first debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill may recall that one Conservative Member said that it was an area of uninteresting mud flats, of no attraction or importance, yet it was one of the most important Ramsar convention sites in Europe.

Some parts of the Broads are attractive and should be preserved. To the uninformed, other parts may not seem important. However, hon. Members will probably recognise the significance of an area of reed beds that are not particularly attractive, but are the breeding site of the bittern. Parts of the Broads may be less beautiful than others but they are of considerable importance. The breeding site of the swallowtail butterfly is important because it is the last such site in Britain. Other rare insects, too, inhabit the Broads. The marsh harrier and the bearded tit are vital parts of the Broads fauna.

I hope that the Minister will recognise the validity of my hon. Friend's argument. By all means, let us preserve that which is beautiful, but let us recognise that things that are not beautiful may provide the background from which beauty emerges. We should ensure that the Broads authority takes the message that it has a responsibility not merely to preserve the attractions of the Broads for tourists but to maintain the ecological inheritance of the Broads. If the Minister shares that view, which I believe is widely held in the House, he will no doubt consider my hon. Friend's amendment favourably.

10.15 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The point of the amendments, which are linked, is to focus on the fragile ecology of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads as a matter of paramount importance and on the need to take special measures to protect it. No doubt the House would not wish me to trespass too far at this stage into the central issue which really divides the House. The primacy of conservation over commercial activity, which we believe should be incorporated into the authority's objectives, remains the central issue but the amendments help to illuminate it.

The area covered by the Bill is unique in western Europe. It contains 27 sites of special scientific interest, three national nature reserves and wetland sites of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

The significance of the conservation and preservation of ecological equilibrium in such an area has to be set in the local context. The Anglia water authority area has a higher incidence of pesticides in watercourses than any other water authority area in the country. That is according to the report on pesticides of the Select Committee on Agriculture—a Committee that is famous for taking a balanced view of agricultural interests. Nitrate levels in watercourses in Norfolk are at the EEC limit and are found to go above it from time to time. As a result of the mercury discharges into the Wensum the levels of mercury and cadmium in eels in broadland waterways is the highest in the United Kingdom. Discharge of farm slurry and agricultural waste into rivers is a major problem that erupts from time to time. These facts add up to a very disturbing state of affairs and point forcefully to the need to take a rigorous view of the conservation of habitats.

Surveys by the Norfolk Naturalists Trust have shown the extent of the threat to the landscape and wildlife habitats of Norfolk. Only fragments now remain of hedgerows, heath, natural woodland and wetland. Norfolk has been the site of enormous agricultural development in which the majority of hedgerows have been grubbed up, heathland ploughed and wetlands drained. The land has been soaked in nitrates, pesticides and herbicides, with incalculable long-term effects. Our Broads and waterways are grossly polluted with domestic and farm effluents and residues of agricultural chemicals.

As the area receives increasing numbers of people, the effects will worsen and the statutory authorities will have nowhere near the resources necessary to deal with them. The Broads habitat is under constant threat from the effects of agricultural and residential development.

As the pursuit of so-called balance between conflicting interests, as set out in the Bill, is a virtually impossible task, the fullest weight must be given to interests that are committed to the guardianship of the essential character of the Broads, and the protection of sites of special scientific interest should be very high on their agenda. As we frequently pointed out in Standing Committee, the balance has, if anything, been weighted in favour of

[Mr. John Garrett]

commercial interests. Indeed, in the opinion of the Council for National Parks, the measure can be seen as primarily a navigation Bill.

The Broads Authority's action plan for 1987 stated that restoration work on the Broads, which have suffered a serious decline in plants and wildlife, should take precedence over considerations such as tourism. Over the past 30 years, the once-clear rivers and Broads have become algae-clouded and barren.

The Government have persisted throughout their terms of office in taking water pollution too lightly. We know from leaked documents that the Government have permitted safety levels for three notorious pesticides—dieldrin, aldrin and endrin—to be relaxed sixfold to allow existing levels of pollution from those chemicals to continue. The concentration of these pesticides in water and in fish is allowed in this country at levels that are outlawed in Europe and the United States.

It is against this background that we consider the Bill to be inadequate in establishing the objects of the authority. Norfolk watercourses are grossly polluted. That pollution has found its way into most of the Broads. The point of these amendments is to focus on our view that the first object of the authority must be to restore, protect and conserve. The economic value of the Broads will vanish unless its fragile ecology is protected and enhanced. In a small way, these amendments point to the need for meticulous care over the conservation of the most endangered areas by identifying and mapping those areas that are under threat, particularly the sites of special scientific interest. Every week we hear of new damage to such areas from ploughing, drainage and pollution. I know one site of special scientific interest in south Norfolk that may be endangered by the dumping of slaughterhouse waste in the catchment area that lies immediately above this particular patch of wetland.

We need to be constantly vigilant over the protection of these very special areas. In the Broads, the shrinking habitats of the marsh harrier, the bittern, the swallowtail butterfly and rare flora need to be identified and protected. The amendments emphasise that need.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House claim that they are committed to securing the long-term future of the Broads. Why, then, are we shying away from making such a commitment in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill? To his credit, the Minister has been helpful throughout, but the Bill will formalise and institutionalise the downfall of this fragile landscape.

There has been much muddled thinking. Attempts to find words—to say that the Broads come first—have been equated with conservation elitism. It is time for us all to step back from our particular vantage point and realise that the Bill does not say what we think it says—that the Broads come first. Unless we capture that objective in the Bill, I am afraid that there will be no Broads left to squabble about.

We are in danger of losing sight of what makes the Broads special. We might as well be talking about the boating lake in the middle of Battersea park. The Broads are not just a boating lake. If we have any sense of history or of the special interests of the Broads, we know that we must make special provision for them. Even the bodies that represent the recreational interests, whether they be boating, fishing or walking, appreciate that we must put the Broads first, otherwise their natural beauty will be undermined and their unique contribution endangered. We are talking about the restoration of the Broads, not simply their conservation.

For the sake of the Broads, we must ensure that the overriding duty of the authority shall be to secure the conservation and enhancement of the Broads, and within those purposes to promote enjoyment by the public and to protect the interests of navigation. That is what the amendments are about. It is a change that the Minister has so far resisted, and this is the last opportunity to ensure that that statement of principle is written into the legislation. I hope that the House will take that opportunity.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): We cannot separate the economy of the Norfolk Broads from the ecology of the area; the two are linked. It is important that a balance should be struck between the conflicting interests of tourism, agriculture, the habitat and conservation. What links them is the fragile nature of the area, its outstanding natural beauty and the outstanding sites of special scientific interest that support a wealth of wildlife.

It is essential that within the context of the Bill the priority of conservation is recognised. If it is not, the economy of the area will be undermined. If people do not go on boating holidays because the rivers are polluted, smelly or because the fish and wildlife are dying, the interests of the people who rent boats will not be served. If we do not control what goes onto the land in terms of run-off and drainage, thus destroying the wildlife, the nature of the area will suffer. It is important that this amendment is adopted to clarify the importance of protecting the Norfolk Broads.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I have listened to the convictions that have been expressed, not least about the conservation aspects of the Bill, in some of the useful contributions made in the debate. A number of the points will inevitably be covered by the comments that I shall make on Third Reading. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I concentrate on the amendments.

Amendment No. 2 seeks to import into clause 4 specific reference to ecological equilibrium, in addition to natural beauty, as something which it is important to conserve. I hope that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will note that clause 25(2) already provides that all references to conserving natural beauty are to be construed as covering aspects of ecological significance. I hope to be able to persuade the House that the amendment is unnecessary.

I readily concede that in response to a related but somewhat different amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in Standing Committee I undertook to devise some revised wording of clause 4(1)*(a)* that would make reference to the significance of the Broads in terms of its ecology. That is something that we have since thoroughly examined, although we concluded that it would be undesirable and unwise to make any change to the present wording. Our reasons for reaching that conclusion apply equally to the hon. Gentleman's new amendment No. 2, although it raises a number of further objections.

I shall try to explain why any changes to the present wording of clause 4(1)*(a)* are undesirable and unnecessary. The hon. Gentleman suggested on Second Reading that the wording of clause 2 and elsewhere, as originally introduced, was unsatisfactory. It was argued that unless the term "natural beauty", which the Bill used in various clauses, was widened it would not cover flora, fauna and other aspects of ecological significance, which were of as much importance to the Broads as natural beauty is in its normal, visual sense. In his winding up speech on behalf of the Government my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy said that this was an arguable and realistic point and would be looked at carefully. This was done.

We discussed the problem and the possibilities with, among others, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission. As a result, we tabled amendments to clauses 2 and 25 which we put before the Select Committtee in the filled Bill. The approach that we adopted was to bring the Bill into line with the wording employed in existing legislation relating to national parks in the countryside generally. As I sought to explain in Standing Committee, the effect of these amendments and of the Bill as it is now worded is that, wherever conservation of natural beauty is referred to, the wording expressly covers flora and fauna and geological and physiographical features no less than natural beauty in its visual sense.

10.30 pm

Mr. Hardy: I am not a lawyer and I cannot assess what lawyers would do in seeking to interpret the words of the Bill. Clause 25 refers directly and specifically to conserving. Clause 4 refers directly and specifically to the compilation of a map. That seems to suggest that there could be some doubt about the reference in clause 25 being absolutely secure. It would not do the Minister any harm to accept this amendment. If he does not accept it now, I am sure that there will be an attempt to introduce it in another place.

Mr. Moynihan: I can assist the hon. Gentleman on this point. Where conserving is mentioned in the Bill, including references to a map, it means conserving the natural beauty of an area, and conserving flora, fauna and the geographical and physiographical features. That is why we responded to the hon. Member for Newham, South and to the legitimate concerns expressed on Second Reading. I hope that I can persuade the hon. Gentleman that that was the reasoning behind our response and that there is no exception anywhere in the Bill to our definition of the word "conserving".

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who dealt with the Bill on Second Reading, is, because of changed responsibilities, not here. He was one of the major architects of changes in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which affects the map of the areas that we are considering. He supported the idea that this clause should be included in the legislation, because we still do not think that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is strong enough to protect areas of special scientific interest. If the Minister accepts the amendment, he will set a precedent that shows that at last the Government are on the side of the environmentalists and are concerned not just about commercial interests.

Mr. Moynihan: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's reference to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) because his contribution was very important. On previous consideration of the Bill it was the intention of the House and of the Government to ensure that clause 4 was closely modelled on section 43 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as recently amended by section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 which was sponsored by the hon. Member for South Shields. Therefore, I and, I hope, the House would be reluctant to depart from a provision with which the hon. Gentleman was so closely associated, which was so recently considered by the House and which is operating quite satisfactorily in national parks. I understand that some existing maps prepared by national parks authorities under the provisions of section 43 already include sites of special scientific interest.

For these reasons, we firmly believe it to be unnecessary to make any change to the wording of clause 4 to achieve what is the common objective of the hon. Member for Newham, South and the Government. We are satisfied that the existing wording fully covers matters. It would be unwise to depart from the present wording or to make specific reference to additional aspects other than those set out in clause 25(2). That is because that would tend to cast doubt on whether such wording, if it were used elsewhere —not only in this Bill but in the other legislation that we have taken as our model—fully covers that which it ought to cover and which we and conservation bodies have generally believed it covers.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I have considerable sympathy with the amendment. Will my hon. Friend take note that, in seeking to defend the present position, he could take refuge in the fact that, within clause 4 and the amendments that we are discussing, there is provision for the Countryside Commission to issue a review and guidance regarding the Broads Authority's function.

Although I understand my hon. Friend's reluctance to amend the wording already encapsulated in other statutes, he should note that the guidance should be, and should regularly be seen to be, commensurate with the objectives that have been outlined in the proposition for the clause. I hope that my hon. Friend will take steps to make that clearer, either in his remarks tonight or in another place, where, no doubt, these matters can be addressed again.

Mr. Moynihan: I welcome that intervention, not least because it clarifies the important point that was raised in Committee and that we regard as central to the Bill. I shall ensure that during a meeting with the conservation bodies that will take place shortly this issue is brought to their attention. Clause 4 will be a useful vehicle for issuing guidance as a result of the passing of the Bill which, I trust, will take place this evening.

I said that the new amendment raised a number of objections. I believe that the problem that it seeks to satisfy — it fails in that purpose — is that of conserving an ecological equilibrium. That issue was widely discussed in Committee on another amendment that the hon. Member for Newham, South tabled to clause 2. In Committee hon. Members and myself pointed out that the problems of the Broads are not so much those of conserving or maintaining an existing ecological equilibrium, but of halting and reversing ecological decline.

The new authority may well seek to find a new equilibrium or recover one that has long been lost, but that

[Mr. Moynihan]

is not what the amendment under discussion seeks. I do not believe it would be helpful to talk in terms of something so problematic as an equilibrium.

Amendment No. 3 seeks to require the authority to show on its map any area designated as the site of special scientific interest. I have already explained that the term

"conservation of areas of natural beauty"

includes features of ecological significance. Therefore, it seems probable that any areas within the Broads that have been designated as SSSIs will be judged by the authority as those whose natural beauty is important to conserve and therefore as areas to show on its map. It will be open to the authority to do that, and I do not believe that the amendment is necessary.

Specifically to require the authority to include SSSIs in its map would not sit happily with the requirements placed upon it under subsections (3) and (4) to consult the Nature Conservancy Council and others about the proposed contents of the map. The authority would be required by one part of the clause to consult on a matter which, in another part of the clause, it would have no option about.

Mr. Morley: There are 27 sites of special scientific interest in the Broads. I accept that the authority may include them on the map, but if that is so, why not accept the amendment? Nothing would be lost by accepting it.

Mr. Moynihan: I have tried to point out that the amendment, in its own right, is not necessary. Subsequent to the hon. Gentleman seeking to intervene I clarified the technical reason why the amendment would not sit easily in the clause. Indeed, it would be tautologous and would lead to the problems that I have outlined. That technical reason is important and should be considered by the hon. Gentleman. If he wished it could be considered in another place.

To push the amendment to a vote would cause more problems than it would rectify, even if the hon. Member for Newham, South disagrees with the thrust of my argument.

I must take this opportunity to apologise to the hon. Member for Newham, South if he understood an undertaking that I gave him in Committee to mean that we would amend clause 4 as he now proposes. I understood him to be asking the Government to show all of the SSSIs in the Broads on the one-page map of the Broads that we prepared in connection with the Bill. Despite some raised eyebrows in the Box, I accepted his suggestion because I thought it extremely useful. I am pleased to report that the map is now in preparation and should be available soon. I shall send a copy to the hon. Gentleman, and to others who let me know that they would like one.

It appears that I have given the hon. Member for Newham, South something for which he did not ask. I hope that that will soften the blow of my saying that I do not feel able to give him everything for which he asks with regard to amendment No. 3. He should, I hope, have been persuaded that there is no need for his amendment as I am sure that the maps prepared by the Broads Authority will include SSSIs. Given those assurances, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press his amendment.

Mr. Spearing: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

I am disappointed. I had hoped that, if amendment No. 2 did not meet with the Minister's approval, amendment No. 3 would. I have a feeling that the Minister is number four in the boat rather than the cox.

The Minister says that amendment No. 2, which speaks of "ecological equilibrium" and what, in the "opinion of the Authority", it is "particularly important to conserve," is unnecessary and that the point is covered anyway. I shall examine how he says it is covered. Clause 25, the interpretation clause, provides in subsection (2):

"References in this Act to conserving the natural beauty of an area include references to conserving its flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features."

The Minister maintains also that conserving is dealt with in clause 2(1)*(a)*.

It is my experience that, when Ministers resist amendments saying that they are unnecessary, one's antennae should twitch. They are usually not averse to including amendments "for the avoidance of doubt" of their own or lawyers' making. Because the amendment is otiose in the mind of the Minister, or at least some of his colleagues, I have different doubts. His maintaining that clause 25(2) covers the point is, I am afraid, the reverse of reassuring. It immediately suggests that there is a one-way valve in the wording which means that the clause could not apply if it came to a fight in the courts.

I have a different interpretation. Equilibrium is not stationary. It is like the mobiles that were fashionable a year or two ago. It can be different shapes. The statutory definitions clause, however, is stationary and rigid. There is no mention of the relationship between natural beauty, flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features. Rather, they are specified as individuals and distinct elements. We are talking about the total relationship between them. If there is any place in Britain where the total relationship is mysterious to scientists—even today they are researching certain aspects all over the place—it is in the wetlands and the ecological balance and the relationships between otherwise stationary features. What makes me even more worried is the little phrase which *Hansard* will reveal. I have no doubt that it is carefully drafted. The Minister said that the inclusion of the phrase would raise additional aspects. It is one of the major aspects. No wonder he does not want it in. I see that the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) is present. Perhaps other Conservative Members have contacts in other places. In a sense, the Minister has let the cat out of the bag—or let the coypu out of the bag; they are the same in this respect—in relation to the Government's intentions in resisting the otherwise acceptable amendment.

10.45 pm

I am more worried about the second amendment. Although I understand that clause 4 mirrors other legislation—I gather that is one of the reasons the Minister said that it was not necessary to have SSSIs mapped—we have seen the importance of equilibrium because of the relationship between wet and dry land. It is not so intense in other national parks. In any case, the Minister said, "Oh well, they will be consulting the Nature Conservancy Council and representative bodies. If they say that they should be in, they probably will be". In colloquial terms, that is what the Minister said, although he did mention the Nature Conservancy Council. I take it that if an SSSI is on the map, the map will not be illegal. However, it might be, as the Bill refers to preparing a map showing areas of natural beauty within the Broads. Would any additions to that be illegal? I do not suppose that they would be if the Minister has advised us that other things could be added.

What about adding other things to the map? For the avoidance of doubt, would it not be a good thing to have such matters in? Does the Minister suggest that they are not significant or that they should not be mapped somewhere? Indeed, to the contrary. In a gracious reference to a little misunderstanding that we had—*Hansard* will show it—he said that he thought that it would be a good idea to have it on a map. Indeed, that has been done, but the map is not in the Bill. The map is for the guidance of the Committee. No doubt, it will be resurrected in another place, pinned on the wall and the SSSIs will be shown. If they are not there they should be—although, if the Minister said that that they will be there, I am sure that they will. It is good to have the map for Committee discussions. We know that SSSIs are important places. Why should they not be specified in the Bill? The Minister's resistance adds to our worries. We believe that his resistance is based on some other criterion which is not immediately apparent.

Mr. Hardy: Another argument fits that which my hon. Friend is presenting to the House. He will be aware that, in 1973 I introduced a Bill to protect budgies. It was not adequate, although we thought that it was at the time. The matter was examined in connection with another Bill which I successfully piloted through the House in 1975. We thought that it would be adequate, but it was not. We then thought that the Wildlife and Countryside Bill 1981 would be adequate. Experience showed that it was not. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) then brought his amending legislation into the House. It took 10 years to get it right. Although I am not a lawyer and am not particularly well versed in legal matters, I take the view—my hon. Friend might share it—that it is better to have too much rather than too little in the Bill now.

Mr. Spearing: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out precedents that show even greater wisdom than my drafting of the amendment supposed. I am grateful to him for the scientific evidence of the need to be comprehensive in these matters. The reasons that the Minister adduced—and I am sure that he did his best—do not add up. For that reason, I think that some of my hon. Friends will show our dissatisfaction in some suitable way.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 5

NOTIFICATION OF CERTAIN OPERATIONS WITHIN THE BROADS

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 4, line 27, leave out 'three' and insert 'twelve'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we will discuss amendment No. 5, in page 4, line 29, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'twenty-four'.

Mr. Spearing: For the benefit of the House, I should explain that on the previous amendment we felt that we had shown suitable dissatisfaction to serve the points that we had made.

Clause 5 relates to orders that the Minister may make. For the benefit of the House, I shall paraphrase. Under the clause the Minister may specify

> "grazing marsh, fen marsh, reed bed or broadleaved woodland"

and, in any such areas, operations that might affect the character or appearance of those areas. That provision permits the Minister, no doubt after consultation, to specify areas of particular sensitivity. Having identified such areas, the Minister may specify actions likely to affect the character or appeareance of those areas.

Once that has been done, no person—presumably including owners or any outside person—can carry out any work that might contravene the Minister's order, unless written notice is given to the authority, which then gives permission. The authority can then do one of three things. First it can consent to what he wishes to do. I have no doubt that in well-managed land, particularly carr land, or land which is dedicated to the growing of reeds in which there is good commercial traffic, permission might be given if it is not to the detriment of ecological equilibrium or natural beauty or if there is not some other reason why it should not be done. So the authority can give consent.

Secondly, the authority can, if it wishes, neither refuse nor give consent. It is rather like a planning application, but in that case the applicant cannot go ahead. Under the Bill he has to wait three months, and then he can go ahead.

The third possibility is that the authority refuses consent. Then the applicant cannot go ahead and do what he wants to do until 12 months after the date of the refusal.

This is a hybrid way of doing things, similar to that found under planning laws with which hon. Members will be familiar, but with one major and important difference: that, after the lapse of time, the person concerned can go ahead and do whatever he wants on the application even if the authority has said no or if it has not determined the application at all.

I shall not spend much more time on the amendment because it seeks purely and simply to increase the periods. We wish to increase the three months to 12, and the 12 months to 24—a quadrupling in the first case and a doubling in the second. If the Broads Authority does not give consent, there must be a good reason. Therefore, it would be arbitrary to a degree to allow the applicant to go ahead after a relatively short period. I make no secret of the fact that in Committee an amendment was moved to delete these powers altogether. It would not be proper to debate that again here. Many of the arguments may be rehearsed, but if such an amendment had been tabled I am sure that it would not have been selected.

The principle is clear. The authority will have a power which is but temporary. Because of the objectives that the Government have in mind, one would have hoped that the authority would have the first word and the last word. In this case, after an interval, which we wish to extend, it is the applicant who is to have the last word. That, in principle, is wrong. We cannot reverse it at this stage but we think that the applicant should wait a little longer.

Mr. Moynihan: In Committee, Opposition Members tabled a number of amendments to clause 5, including one to delete altogether subsection (2)*(b)* and *(c)* which is the subject of the amendments. I advised the Committee that those amendments would unquestionably rehybridise the Bill, since they would affect private interests in ways not contemplated in the Bill. The present amendments would

[Mr. Moynihan]

have the same effect. Rehybridisation could wreck, and would certainly badly delay, both the Bill and the establishment of the new authority. I cannot believe that supporters of the creation of a statutory authority for the Broads really wish to jeopardise in that way what they and the Bill are seeking to achieve. As hon. Members on both sides of the House know, I have never rested my case on rehybridisation.

Even if the amendments would not rehybridise the Bill, the Government would strongly urge the House not to accept them. We do not consider it appropriate in such a Bill to make any changes in legislative provision of national application other than those which are required in orders to adapt them to the local circumstances of the Broads. Clause 5 does no more and no less than to apply to the Broads the provisions of section 42 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with such relatively minor modifications as are necessary to reflect the unique features of the Broads. For example, where section 42 refers to "moor and heath", clause 5 refers to

"grazing marsh, fen marsh, reed bed or broad-leaved woodland."

They represent the equivalent types of landscape that it is vital to preserve in the Broads.

11 p.m.

Mr. John Garrett: If it is so vital to preserve them, perhaps the Minister will tell us how many orders have been made under section 42.

Mr. Moynihan: That is an extremely good question. I shall ensure that, by the time I have concluded my remarks, the hon. Gentleman will have the precise answer.

Section 42 of the 1981 Act provides a means by which national parks authorities will be notified of impending agricultural and forestry proposals and can impose a period of delay during which management agreements may be negotiated to obviate any damaging effects of such proposals. Voluntary arrangements already exist in national parks, under which such notification is given. Section 42 provides legislative backup should such voluntary notification systems break down. Clause 5 serves simply to extend the backup provision to the Broads.

The existing time limits carried over into clause 5 from section 42 are adequate and are appropriate for their purposes. Three months is a reasonable period in which to expect the authority to reach a decision whether to grant consent. By contrast, it could seem unreasonable to expect those concerned to wait for as long as 12 months for that decision. Equally, 12 months should be a sufficient period for the authority, where necessary, to negotiate a management agreement with the owner or occupier of the land in question. Twelve months represents one complete growing season or agricultural cycle. Any extension beyond that would prevent the proposed operations for two seasons, without any compensation. The House cannot consider that to be reasonable.

I suspect—what hon. Members have said in support of the amendments reinforces my suspicion—that those proposing the amendments are trying to convert the provisions of clause 5, which are designed to provide no more than a useful delaying mechanism, into what would be more akin to stop orders. Such orders would deny landowners, for at least one season, and possibly two, the right to use their land for agricultural purposes in a way that would be open to landowners everywhere else in the United Kingdom, including the national parks.

The Government do not believe that section 42 or clause 5 provide an appropriate way of dealing with the absence, as yet, of effective backup powers to protect the landscape at large from uncontrolled and damaging agricultural operations. Instead, we have been consulting on proposals for landscape conservation orders, which would provide national parks authorities and the Broads Authority with this sort of power, as recommended by the Select Committee on the Environment in 1985. We are carefully considering the responses to our proposals and will make an announcement in due course.

It comes to me in a blinding flash of light that no orders have been made under section 42.

Mr. John Garrett: Does the Minister know where that blinding flash came from? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), came and asked me.

Mr. Moynihan: It was an unusual occasion, with a great deal of thunder in the Box coming before the blinding flash, which took some time to arrive. As hon. Members know, this is a fallback power which, thankfully, has not been needed because management agreements have not broken down.

For the reasons that I have put before the House, I strongly urge hon. Members to reject the amendments.

Mr. Spearing: This amendment is in a different league from the previous one. I do not find the Minister's arguments wholly convincing in some respects. Although a national norm is a good bench-mark, I think the Minister will agree that there is a big difference between the national parks and the Broads, not just in area but because the Broads are very close to river and marsh areas. Although significant, those areas are smaller and similar in a way that bigger areas are not. However, having said that, we understand the Minister's point about the penalties that exist in terms of seasons and the difficulties that might ensue.

The Minister put his finger on the real nub of this issue by saying that management agreements can be negotiated. Some of us hope that, despite the Bill's shortcomings, good will and a spirit of purpose will make things work. Several provisions in the Bill could improve that. However, coming together in voluntary management agreements would probably make full use of the fallback statutory power and the others that the Minister has described as unnecessary. Because of that and because this matter might be taken up in another way in another place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion made, and Question proposed, that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

11.6 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts: In my new incarnation as the shadow Minister for environmental protection and development, this is the first time that I have faced the Minister across the Dispatch Box in his new role. I welcome him to his new job. There was some concern when the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) was shifted away from his responsibilities for the environment. Many environmental groups and other organisations concerned about the environment thought that he might have been moved because he was getting too fond of the environment and was, therefore, committing the Government to too much public expenditure. We have yet to see whether the new Minister can live up to the reputation of the hon. Member for Bristol, West and sustain a campaigning interest for and on behalf of the environment within the Department of the Environment.

I remember the last time the Minister and I crossed swords. It was some years ago. I had cycled to the House and was exhausted. I felt that the hon. Gentleman, who was filibustering on a housing Bill that I was trying to introduce, should give up and, as a keen sportsperson, take my bicycle back to Bethnal Green as the journey was all uphill. He refused to do so although I offered to fit blocks to the pedals. However, I am pleased to welcome the hon. Gentleman and to face him across the Dispatch Box.

The Bill is important, and the principle of the Bill, which sets up the equivalent of a national park for the Norfolk Broads, is one that Opposition Members welcome. The Labour party has always been committed to that concept. In fact, since as far back as 1947 and the publication of the Hobhouse report, which advocated the need for such a national park, the Labour party has advocated that proposition. The problem is that we are not so sure that the Bill meets all the requirements. My hon. Friends have highlighted the issues that concern us.

There are four major problems in the Norfolk Broads. One is polluted rivers, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has talked. Pollution from nitrates and nitrites is increasing, with farm slurry and even human sewage getting into the rivers. That is still happening. We all welcome the concern of the European Community about nitrates in drinking water and in rivers, but the Community is putting it there in the first place because of the common agricultural policy, to which we subscribe. The Government must get to grips with that and in legislation such as this they must protect the rivers in the Norfolk Broads, and elsewhere, from nitrate and other forms of pollution because it is still increasing.

Another problem is the diminishing wildlife. The wildlife in the Norfolk Broads is amazing. The ever-vigilant Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has issued a brief which says:

> "The proposed Broads Executive Area contains important habitats for rare birds such as the marsh harrier, bearded tit and bittern and for rare plants including marsh pea and water soldier."

I had not heard of a water soldier until I started to look at the Bill. The brief does not mention the natterjack toad, which lives in my constituency, but goes on to say:

> "The Broads provide the only remaining habitat in Britain for the swallowtail butterfly and Norfolk aeshna dragonfly."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Oh.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman says, "Oh." If he had his way, he would build a motorway across the area. It is important to protect these species because the whole ecological system inter-relates. There is the problem not only of polluted rivers but of diminishing wildlife.

There is also a problem with the erosion of the sides of banks. One of our criticisms of the Bill is that navigation rather than the protection of the environment has been put first. We are worried that the commercial interests of the Norfolk Broads might have been put before the protection of the environment. A law prevents people going at more than 4 mph along the canals. Boats cause erosion of the banks and there is pollution because of the discharge from motor boats. We are not sure that sufficient attention was paid in Committee to amendments which would have dealt with this problem.

The Opposition are concerned also about effects on the uniquely traditional landscape of the Norfolk Broads, 25 per cent. of which has already vanished. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the declaration of areas of special scientific interest have not saved the Norfolk Broads' traditional special landscape. All right, 75 per cent. is left—that is fine—but, if erosion continues at the same pace, eventually that land will go, too. We hope that this legislation will protect that area, but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We shall examine those points to find out whether the legislation is effective.

Anglers have not been given the consideration in the legislation and amendments that they might have been. More people fish in the Broads than sail on them. Angling is the biggest participant sport in Britain. More attention should be paid to anglers and to the fact that pollution in the rivers affects their sport.

We must preserve the natural beauty and ecological balance of the Broads and put them before commercial interests. If the Government have the balance wrong—a Labour Government will strengthen the legislation to give it more power—they will destroy the very thing that caused them to get it wrong. Commercial interests in the Norfolk Broads are dependent on its environment. The combination of natural beauty and wildlife on the Norfolk Broads attracts hundreds of thousands of people. They give the area its commercial viability. If the Government, in conjunction with commercial interests, destroy that environment—by not giving the necessary powers and not accepting amendments—they will destroy the goose that lays the golden egg.

We shall not oppose the Third Reading. We favour the concept behind the Bill, although we do not think that it is strong enough and are not sure that it will do the job. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We shall wait to see what happens and return to the legislation in the future.

11.14 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I need detain the House only briefly. With the passing of 300 years of history for my constituents as a result of the Third Reading, I think that my constituents expect me to say a few words.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has just said, the Government have got the balance between ecological equilibrium — if one can balance an equilibrium — and other interests right. It would be wrong not to recognise that the concerns voiced by Opposition Members earlier exist in different degrees throughout the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk. Nevertheless, one can tip the balance too far in one direction or the other. I can understand the arguments of those who say that the balance has gone too far in the direction of commercial interests, although I do not agree with them.

For 300 years of our history, powers have been effectively exercised by the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners. They had ample opportunities to

[Mr. Michael Carttiss]

present their views to the Select Committee, and I was able on several occasions in Standing Committee to draw attention to matters that I still believe would have made this a better Bill.

There is no need for the Broads Authority to have the navigation powers that it has. I understand why that has happened, and the issues have been argued effectively. It is important to remember that Norwich, Suffolk and Norfolk are all represented on the commission. It is not a body that is confined to the town of Great Yarmouth. There is now widespread acceptance—notwithstanding my own reservations—that the Broads Authority will be more effective if it has navigation powers. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) would not have been so helpful during the passage of the Bill if it had not included those powers.

There is one aspect of the Bill that will, I hope, be rectified in another place as a result of what the Minister said in Standing Committee. I refer to the Broads Authority's boundaries for exercising its planning powers. Setting the boundary near the Haven bridge in the centre of Great Yarmouth — next to Norwich, the main commercial centre for Norfolk and Suffolk, with respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) — and making the Broads Authority responsible for planning within the heart of Great Yarmouth, overlooking the development of commerce and industry on the riverside, is a matter of concern locally. If the Great Yarmouth borough council, as the affected planning authority, wants to make representations elsewhere, that is a matter best left to it. However, I am still concerned about the fact that the boundaries of the authority's planning powers extend beyond the river.

I have spent all my life on the Broads and seen the decline that has been mentioned. However, it is nothing like as bad in some areas as has been maintained. I think that the Government have got the balance right. I am delighted that they have refused to accept the amendments. I hope that the Bill will return unamended from another place. It is a good job, coming as it does after many years of discussion about the right solution in Norfolk and Suffolk. I hope that people will be able to enjoy holidays on the Broads—including all their flora and fauna — and, above all, that the Broads will continue to be an important provider of employment in Norfolk and the constituency of Great Yarmouth.

11.19 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): As a newcomer to the House, I have come late to the parliamentary procedures on the Bill, although as a member of Norfolk county council I was involved in the early local stages.

The Bill enjoys wide support in Norfolk. I make that point because my hon. Friend the Minister and other hon. Members may be tempted to believe, following the extensive and absolutely proper lobbying by the many special interest groups, that the whole of Norfolk is seething with discontent about the Bill. The reverse is the case. The special interest groups, whether they are concerned with wildlife, the environment or the use of the Broads for work or leisure, are at least united in the view that the powers proposed by the Bill are vital if that unique area is to be safeguarded.

The wider public in Norfolk want to see an end to the conflicts of interest that have brought the Broads to the state of near ruination that they have reached in certain places. That is why, in the county as a whole, there is agreement that it is right, indeed essential, to preserve a balance, as the Bill seeks to do, between those special interest groups, and not to favour any one at the expense of the others. Any other solution would have proved unworkable.

There was one area of concern on which I should have sought reassurance from the Minister had he not been illuminated by a blinding flash. I shall not repeat his other less becoming imagery. Suffice it to say that I should seek a little reassurance from him that he understands the concern in some agricultural quarters that section 42 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 cannot be applicable to an area that does not have many moors, or a great deal of heath or open country that is not to be designated a national park. I hope that my hon. Friend can reassure me on that point, but I believe that the Bill is right in the balance that it seeks to strike.

11.22 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): On Second Reading, I spoke about my childhood memories of Arthur Ransome and the Norfolk Broads and books such as "Coot Club" and "We Didn't Mean to go to Sea". Hon. Members may remember such books. That underlines the affection that we all have for the Broads, which was apparent in Committee. People have great affection for the Broads and a deep desire to make sure that they are preserved and restored.

However, even in the Swallows and Amazons stories there was conflict between the boats and the fishermen and all the different people who enjoyed the Broads. Since those days it has got considerably worse, and now it is imperative that action is taken. The Bill and the Broads Authority that is being established are the ideal answer to the problem. The balance is right. I should like to think that Arthur Ransome would approve very much of what we are doing in the House tonight.

Primacy has been touched on more than once, and it became a major issue when the Bill was in Committee. We have become obsessed by it, and sometimes it has diverted us from what we are talking about. The reason for the Bill and the Broads Authority is the management, restoration and conservation of the whole of the Broads area. Surely it does not need spelling out more clearly than that. All the interests in the Broads have to be carefully managed. That will be the task of the new Broads Authority. Continual talk about primacy and which is the most important of the various interests in the Broads has deflected us to some extent from our purpose, which is the establishment of the authority, whose job will be to make sure that all those different interests are carefully balanced.

Mr. John Garrett: How does the hon. Gentleman square what he has just said with a letter dated July 1987 from the Council for the Protection of Rural England which states that the council supports "very strongly" amendment No. 3—in the hon. Gentleman's name, I believe—which, in the proposed statutory duties of the new Broads Authority, gives priority to conservation.

Mr. Lord: The hon. Gentleman may recall that I withdrew the amendment precisely for the reasons that I am now giving. At one stage, many people clearly thought that it was important that one particular interest should dominate our proceedings. In my view, that would have been quite wrong. The whole purpose of the Bill is to establish the Broads Authority, and the authority's purpose is carefully to balance the interests in the Broads area. That will not be an easy task, but I believe that the authority will tackle it well. As other hon. Members have said, the Government have got the balance about right.

I hope that sensible legislation, coupled with education, will enable us to enhance and protect our surroundings, and not just in the Norfolk Broads, where I am sure the Bill and the authority will work. In the briefest of asides, however, I must say that I sometimes despair when I stand on the Terrace of the House of Commons and look at our great River Thames full of flotsam and jetsam and filth. Clearly we have a long way to go in other directions, too.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the competent way in which he has steered the Bill through the House, and I wish the Bill a speedy passage in another place, and on to the statute book.

11.27 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Delighted as I am to follow my hon. Friends, I find myself in the unfortunate position of having heard my best phrases used already. As an hon. Member with a strong constituency interest in the Bill, however, it is appropriate that I should echo and support the remarks of other hon. Members.

When I was a child, in the days before local government reorganisation, the slogan of the old Lowestoft borough was that Lowestoft was the town where broadland meets the sea—and it still is. Given the strong constituency basis of my interest in the Bill I share my hon. Friends' regret that I did not come to the House at an earlier stage in its proceedings.

There is a strong feeling in my neck of the Broads that at last we are able to move ahead quickly and see the authority in position. It may have been as long as 10 years ago that a television documentary entitled, I think "Lullaby for Broadland" sounded warning bells, and not only in the ecological and environmental lobbies.

Mention has been made of the balance of interests, and I share my hon. Friends' view that the right balance has been struck. The long history of the Bill has been a marriage of interests—more like a harmonisation of fiscal frontiers marriage than a Joan Collins marriage. Provided that it is presented not as another quango or expensive talking shop—or, indeed, another tier of local government—the people of East Anglia, I believe, are ready to accept the new authority as the only co-ordinated and sensible chance of a grand design for the Suffolk and Norfolk broads.

In Committee, I referred to a carbuncle on the landscape in Oulton Broad—the ruin of boat Yellowtail. My hon. Friend said that he would report back to me. For all the good work that the Broads Authority may do in its area, it is possible that just outside the boundaries there may be an environmental nightmare over which the authority will have no control. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister said that there would be an exclusion clause taking out the area where the boat Yellowtail is situated and other parts of Lake Lothing around Lowestoft. I imagine that that will now be introduced in another place.

When we send the Bill on its way, my hon. Friend the Minister will have the distinction of being remembered in East Anglia as the man who gave birth to the Broads Authority—or who artificially inseminated the system to produce it. The resulting animal will have to be very real. It will have to be very effective and, if not loved, it will have to be accepted on all sides. If it fails, parts of Suffolk and Norfolk will become a devastated wasteland that will make the October hurricane look like a storm in a teacup.

11.29 pm

Mr. Spearing: This is the last opportunity for hon. Members to comment on the Bill. I do not think that the balance is right. Greater attention should be paid to ecological equilibrium. The wording of the Bill is not, therefore, as it should be, but we shall have to see what happens in practice.

I am a little suspicious about the words

"promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public".

We want the public to enjoy themselves, but I hope that those words will not result in the Broads Authority being turned into a publicity agency for an already very well-known area. The people who go to the Broads, perhaps in increasing numbers, will need to be appropriately accommodated. That phrase may ring a few bells in some places.

There has been frequent mention of commercial pressures, especially on those who hire out boats. The traditional Norfolk boat yards were run by local people. However, there has been a change during the past 10 years, or more. National bodies have bought up boat yards. I refer to breweries, betting shop chains, caravan manufacturers, caravan site owners and a large motor car concessionaire. A few years later those bodies have sold the yards. We are referring not only to the legitimate interest of local commerce. National commercial interests, which I believe are inappropriate to this area, should be looked at again, because the Bill does not offer sufficient protection against such a threat.

The Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners have been established for 300 years. I hope that there will be successful co-operation over their agency navigation function in the Broads.

I do not believe that the establishment of this new authority within such a short period will necessarily yield the best results. There ought to be a period of reflection to enable good planning to take place, in partnership with the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners. They could improve their performance in some respects. Some of the most modern boats make the most noise. There are no noise limitations, and some of the boats have too much power. In the days of Arthur Ransome one needed only a 10 hp modified car engine to get one safely through the Yarmouth area. Now nothing less than a 50 hp water-cooled engine with reduction gear box is good enough for some people. Electricity may be the great future propellant. It would admirably suit the Broads.

In Committee I raised fears about the dredging powers of the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners in schedule 5, paragraph 2. I have been given no scientific information by either the Minister or the commissioners that satisfies me. If they cannot supply it now, perhaps the matter can be dealt with in another place.

Provided that there is good co-operation, new areas of ecological balance may be pioneered without prejudicing any of the other factors. That point should be studied by

[Mr. Spearing]

the new authority, and I hope that all its members will be prepared to co-operate. I understand that even a sailing boat can disturb birds. I hope that people on the extremes will realise that the best interests of all are served by co-operative enterprise. The best traditions of local government will be transferred to the new authority.

I thank the Minister for his courtesy. He may come from a dry stable, but he has wet experience, which he has shown politically and in the practical way in which he has conducted the Bill. I hope that the Bill is improved elsewhere and that we shall be able to discuss those improvements at a later date.

Mr. Moynihan: To the many hon. Members who in the past half an hour have rightly mentioned the question of balance, I reaffirm that in tackling the problems of the Broads it is essential that we strike a balance between the various interests. On Second Reading my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) the Minister then responsible for the Bill, declared his conviction on the need to afford equal importance to the various interests when he said:

> "Clause 2 sets out the vital balance between the interests of navigation, conservation and enjoyment by the public. All three are, in their own way, equally important, and the authority is required to have regard to all three aspects in discharging its functions."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1986; Vol 106, c. 670.]

In Committee and tonight the House has reaffirmed that view.

I thank the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) for his kind comments. I reciprocate by congratulating him on his new appointment. We wish him well and I look forward to many debates with him on important environmental issues.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The bicycle is still here.

Mr. Moynihan: I am beginning to feel a lot less fit than when I took over the job as Minister for Sport.

It is appropriate for the House to acknowledge the outstanding work of the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who chaired the Select Committee proceedings on the Bill.

I should congratulate the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). He gave great service on the Standing and Select Committee stages of the Bill. While I am in this eulogistic congratulatory late-night mood, hon. Members will wish me to place on record the fact that the Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), has had a long interest in the Bill, but was obviously unable to contribute during its passage through the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) wisely drew our attention to the Great Yarmouth port and haven commissioners. I congratulate him and them on their responsible contributions during discussions of the provisions of the Bill and throughout their many years of service to this unique area.

I note the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shepherd) made. I have written to her on a number of the relevant issues that she raised this evening, but I should also add that—perhaps I did not sufficiently emphasise this point in the earlier debate—our consultations in December over proposals for landscape conservation orders were critically important. Consideration is still being given to the comments that we have received. We believe that this way forward may overtake the section 42 provisions and make it less likely that they would ever need to be used.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) mentioned a number of issues on which I have corresponded with him, and I confirm that those points will be raised in another place. I thank the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for his extensive contributions both in Committee and in the House. It is useful to benefit from his experience, and I know that all hon. Members thank him and congratulate him on the depth of his analysis and on his useful contributions.

The purpose of the Bill, as amended, is to establish new statutory arrangements by which the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads can be conserved for the enjoyment of all who treasure this unique area. There is general recognition in the House, emphasised by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) in his speech, of the need for a new statutory authority to manage the land and water spaces in a harmonious way. That is necessary if the continuing deterioration in the ecology of the area is to be halted and reversed.

The existing non-statutory Broads Authority has done valuable work and I pay tribute to its efforts. However, more is needed and the sooner the new authority can be established, the sooner we can hope to gain the real improvements that all concerned, boating and commercial interests no less than nature conservationists, wish to see. No one doubts that they all share a common interest in preserving, protecting and enhancing the Broads. The authority that the Bill seeks to establish will harness those interests to tackle the problems that must be faced.

Happily, the Bill has commanded general all-party support, although there has not been unanimous agreement on all its details. We greatly value that support and hope that we can rely on it to secure the Bill a Third Reading and allow it to continue its parliamentary stages in another place. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Bill has the unanimous support of the Opposition. We have only one caveat: that, if it does not succeed to the extent that the Minister and the Opposition wish the Government will support us in returning to the issue and strengthening the Bill if that is required.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Ordered,

That Sir William Clark be discharged from the Public Accounts Commission, and that Sir Peter Blaker, Sir Barney Hayhoe and Mr. Peter Shore be added to the Commission.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

United Kingdom Space Plan

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

11.41 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I am grateful for an opportunity to raise what I and many colleagues believe is a very important matter. The space industry has not often occupied parliamentary time, but for any nation that aspires to a modern base in research and technology it is an essential ingredient. Space provides the indispensable means of telecommunications on a worldwide scale. It offers unparalleled opportunities for earth and atmospheric observation and activity over a wide range of civil and defence applications. It is the breeding ground for the development of a huge spread of technologies ranging from materials to artificial intelligence, from propulsion systems to human life sciences. It is the best and, in some respects, the only way in which we can extend our knowledge of the universe and of our place in it. It is perhaps uniquely capable of firing the imagination and ambition of our best young people to embark upon a scientific or engineering career.

Last week during Trade and Industry Questions, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in response to my specific question, confirmed his acceptance of the importance of the space industry and the Government's willingness to spend substantial sums on it. He also reiterated the Government's commitment to obtaining value for money in public expenditure. That is certainly not controversial — at least as far as Conservative Members are concerned.

However, great controversy was aroused during the summer, leading to the resignation of the director-general of the British National Space Centre. My purpose in seeking this debate is to clarify the Government's policy towards the space industry in the run-up to the important European Space Agency council meeting and to demonstrate that there is strong feeling in all parts of the House that the important opportunities now open to the United Kingdom should not be lost to other countries.

It is, of course, well known that Governments of other countries currently spend rather more than us on their space Industries. In 1986, France spent $934 million, Japan $804 million, Germany $545 million, Italy $460 million, and even India spent $183 million. We spent $174 million. The USA spends as much as the rest put together, and the USSR spends considerably more than that.

I quote those figures not because size necessarily reflects the quality of the spending, but to underline certain important realities that we must recognise. First, space should be seen as a high priority, not only in developed but in developing countries. There is no obvious political or technological reason why we should be the odd man out. Secondly, the Governments of the countries mentioned are actively involved in what is an extremely regulated, highly complex, inter-active and essentially long-term industry. Thirdly, the European nations together can barely begin to compete with the USA or the USSR, and individually they have no chance.

For Britain, space poses the challenge that we must get our act together effectively both at home and in the wider, international context. At home, 18 different Government Departments, councils and research organisations are involved in space. We must add to that 67 universities, polytechnics and other institutes and more than 300 companies. If we are to get value for money in our spending we need the co-ordinating thrust of the British National Space Centre and the focus of an appropriate national space plan. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take this opportunity to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the continuation and development of both.

As regards overseas involvement, I have had the opportunity, at first hand, to see many aspects of the ESA's work. In common with any international organisation, it could be improved. However, we must not ignore the great contribution that it has made to the development of the European space industry from an initial low base. We cannot afford to undermine its continued development. Without that agency we would be submerged under the weight of United States spending and technology. I hope that the Minister understands and appreciates that. Of course, that does not mean that we have to accept or participate in every optional programme that the ESA puts forward, or that the mandatory science programme should not be subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny as we would impose at home.

It must make sense for us to concentrate our financial, technological and scientific endeavour in those areas where we excel and to ensure that the ESA does not overreach itself with over-ambitious targets. We must also recognise that our partners have their own legitimate objectives. They would resent any suggestion that either we wanted to be free riders on the back of their investment or that, because we were not prepared to back their investment and commitment, we were prepared to inhibit their identification and achievement of realistic objectives involving a quantitative and qualitative leap forward.

I am not suggesting that the ESA programmes should be an alternative to national and bilateral activity both with our ESA partners and with others. These are and must remain complementary, and the priority and balance between them is a matter for judgment. I accept that that is easy to say, but difficult to translate into the building bricks of a national plan, and especially so in Britain when so many different Departments are involved.

However, we cannot afford to let something as important as the space industry to fall between the cracks of inter-Departmental funding, with each Department fighting its corner for its own research and development, but without objective and strategic comparisons as to quality, priority and merit.

In answer to parliamentary questions last week the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that he had now received the advice of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology — ACOST — on R and D priorities. When will that be published? Will my hon. Friend ensure that there will be opportunity for parliamentary debate, as it is a matter of great interest and importance.

Much of the controversy of recent months has been over the level of funding for space. I am not clear that there need be, in practical effect, a serious difference. Roy Gibson, the former director-general of the British National Space Centre, and others argue for a minimum Government spend of about £200 million to sustain a viable United Kingdom space industry. In that they appear to be supported by the industry, although it is divided to some extent as to how that funding should be allocated. The industry's fundamental point is that there

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

is a minimum threshold of commitment below which we will not be able to realise the potential that we have already developed. It believes that our current commitment falls somewhere below that threshold.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster appears to be arguing that the Government are already giving substantial support to space—this year £112 million—as well as to civilian R and D in a wider context and that the United Kingdom industry should do more. That is certainly true. My right hon. and learned Friend is seeking the re-evaluation of R and D priorities in general, and that is sensible. He is concerned about the strategic and financial thinking of the ESA and some of the proposals for its new programme, especially the development of the Hermes mini shuttle and the man-rating of Ariane 5. In that, he is not alone.

The two points of view are not necessarily incompatible. It would therefore be very helpful if my hon. Friend could clarify further the Department's current thinking. I appreciate the difficulties, in terms of timing, that that may impose, but it is important that the industry should have clear guidelines for the future.

To which areas of the United Kingdom space industry does my hon. Friend attach primary importance? Is he willing to support new bilateral space collaboration such as that under the agreement signed with the USSR during the Prime Minister's visit there in March, especially in areas in which the Soviets are showing interest in our expertise in, for example, space biomedicine?

Will my hon. Friend continue to support the HOTOL project, at least to final proof-of-concept stage? It could be the most significant development of all in the long term.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): HOTOL seems to me to be one of those projects where it is clear that Britain could develop something worthwhile in conjunction with European partners. It would be tragic if lack of funding from Britain meant that such projects, which could be very beneficial, were set aside.

Mr. Batiste: My hon. Friend makes his point strongly and demonstrates the breadth of support for the space industry in the United Kingdom.

If a valid case is made out, and if the private sector is willing to contribute more, will my right hon. Friend the Minister support Government funding for the space industry beyond the current £112 million? Will his decisions be incorporated into a revised space plan that will help to provide much needed focus and direction for the industry? The answers to those questions will be awaited eagerly by all who believe that we cannot afford to opt out of the space industry and back away from the sharp edge of so many new technologies.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that he wants the Department of Trade and Industry to be the Department of enterprise. He well knows that successful enterprise requires vision, consistency and application on the one hand and adequate working capital on the other. I and many others would like to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister tonight whether the Department of Trade and Industry is willing to play its part in this process.

11.51 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me to speak. I support everything that my hon. Friend has said. He is secretary of the all-party space committee and has put in tremendous efforts to encourage space research as, for example, at Sheffield. His words carry great weight and I support them.

I have two questions for my hon. Friend the Minister. First, does he recognise the need to allay disquiet at the apparent inflexibility in the Government's stance on space, as I believe the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has done in an article in *The Times* today? Secondly, will he argue that the inflexibility is more apparent than real? Will he, for example, confirm that, whatever the reservations about the European Space Agency's current thinking—I share reservations about the somewhat unrealistic budgeting and its seeming inability to come to terms with what many of us feel is the way ahead, namely, bringing industry and ESA funding together—the Government will consider pledging financial support for proposals which are essentially long term? We must resolve the problem of industry's short-term need for a return and the long-term support necessary for programmes such as Columbus, HOTOL and remote sensing.

A commitment in principle to support such programmes will not lock the Government in, and anything that the Minister can say about it will be helpful. I am sure that he, like all hon. Members who study these matters, knows that there is no alternative to Government commitment combined with the work of industry to take research and development into the commercial phase. We earnestly hope that the Government will reaffirm their commitment to that tonight.

11.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) for raising the subject and for speaking with a great deal of conviction and from an informed base. I pay tribute to his work on the all-party space committee. On a local basis — indeed, on an almost constituency basis—he has been involved in the movements at Sheffield university to bring together various disciplines to provide expertise in space technologies in which, in partnership with our friends on the other side of Eastern Europe he has a great deal of interest.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) who, as ever, spoke up not just for his constituents' interests but for his personal conviction that Britain should seriously think about the early appraisals now being made regarding HOTOL. That point has been echoed by hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall).

The question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel is timely, almost to an excruciating extent. He is asking me to provide some of the finer details of the matters that our right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will need to deploy when he goes to the Hague on 9 and 10 November. To begin to answer his question on how flexible we shall be would do my right hon. and learned Friend a disservice. I agree with my hon. Friend on whether one can apply short-term considerations to space. We wish to see a much greater reference to commercial considerations. We believe that many of them have been lost in the political movement for a bigger space programme within Europe. But we have never pretended—I said this to the space community at Brighton two or three weeks ago—that one can judge such programmes on a traditional three-month profit and loss account basis. It is precisely because we have appreciated that fact that public money has been put forward on the programme. Many long-term benefits are to be obtained.

This is a particularly interesting time for us to discuss space as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be attending a crucial European Space Agency meeting on Monday and Tuesday of next week. I therefore welcome the opportunity to make a statement about Government policy on space.

Space is an important industry. It is a central technology driver, demanding exceptional standards of quality control, improved production processes and expert project management. There is considerable cross-fertilisation between it and other advanced sectors, for example, robotics, avionics and power generation. Commercially, the rewards from space could be great. A promising start has been made in the communications sector, about which I shall say more in a few moments. There is also commercial potential in other respects such as earth observation, but exploitation will involve high risks and will be over a long timescale. There are many other sectors in which space has, or will have, an impact, including defence, education, and science.

Although space activities are important, they are also, as my hon. Friend recognised, expensive. Therefore, we have to tailor our investment to reasonable objectives within the reach of our available resources. Against that background, the main thrust of our public expenditure for the past decade has been towards collaborative developments in the European Space Agency, supplemented by a complementary national programme and a number of bilateral initiatives.

To date, this policy has worked well. Our participation in ESA has led to our communications satellite industry being one of the world's leaders. My hon. Friend rightly homed in on that point. British companies have led the consortia which have built ESA's communications satellites, and have gone on to win contracts for various operational satellites. The Ministry of Defence has ordered three Skynet IV communications satellites from a consortium of British Aerospace and Marconi. The consortium has also won a NATO contract for two such satellites, thus breaking the American monopoly in NATO satellites which has existed since the early 1970s. British Aerospace is leading the industrial team for the second generation of satellites for Inmarsat, and major subsystems are being supplied from Britain for the new Intelsat and Eutelsat satellites.

I should point out that, as my hon. Friend mentioned, the United Kingdom is also a major user of communications satellites. We are among the top three investors in each of the major international organisations in that area—Intelsat, Eutelsat and Inmarsat, which together provide the means of linking the world's 500 million-odd telephones, and which bring television to a world audience of half a billion. The scientists tell me that it is probably the largest man-made machine ever constructed. British Telecom is the largest user of satellite capacity in Europe.

Another excellent example of the United Kingdom's participation in ESA is the Giotto satellite's encounter with Halley's comet last year. British Aerospace was the lead contractor for the construction of the satellite for the ESA mission, and British scientists were responsible for two of the 10 experiments on board.

The national programme has concentrated on developing the technology for commercial applications. That has, for example, led to Pilkingtons becoming the world's largest supplier of the glass used in satellite solar cells.

We are involved in a number of bilateral programmes, mainly in space science. We have arrangements with several countries to provide a framework for those collaborations, including agreements with China, India, and the one that my hon. Friend mentioned with the Soviet Union. Under this last agreement, we are already supporting British participation in the planning stages of a Russian mission to Phobos, one of the moons of Mars and a proposed Russian X-ray space telescope.

When we set up the British national space centre in 1985, its immediate tasks were to maximise the benefits to the United Kingdom from existing activities and to develop a space plan that would take into account the needs of the various users of space. The advice that we received made clear the substantial cost of maintaining our share in ESA's ambitious and expensive proposals. The fact that ESA is poised to embark on an extensive new long-term plan has caused us to take a more rigorous look at the cost-effectiveness of our policy.

In considering the proposed increase, we of course had to view the costs against the potential benefits of alternative uses of the funds in support of other areas of United Kingdom industry. We already spend some £4·5 billion each year on research and development, and we are not able to find more resources. In a statement to the House on 23 July in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that the Government had decided against switching funds to space. She also suggested that if the private sector was interested in space research, it should come forward with further resources.

Industry's initial response has been positive and discussions have begun between my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the space companies and the British National Space Centre. The purpose of those discussions is to establish what the United Kingdom wants to get out of involvement in space, and how that can best be achieved through a much closer involvement of the private sector. The outcome of those discussions will clearly influence our views on many of the questions that my hon. Friend has raised, for example, on the targeting of space funding and the future structure and organisation of the BNSC.

I am sorry to say that over the last 12 months the ESA proposals have become even more expensive as it has recast the cost estimates of its ambitious schemes. The cost of Hermes, for example, has doubled. The overall proposals that the director-general of ESA will be putting to Ministers in the Hague next week would involve an increase in expenditure by a factor of two and a half over the next five years. My right hon. and learned Friend the

[Mr. John Butcher]

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will represent the United Kingdom at that meeting and will seek to introduce some realism into the debate.

Britain is one of the founder members of ESA and our membership to date has been very worth while. We are anxious to play a constructive part in developing it sensibly, but I do not think that even the most enthusiastic supporter of space expenditure, including my hon. Friend, would believe that we should pursue space programmes regardless of cost. I am afraid that we do not consider the balance, scale and implementation of the present proposals to be sensible. We also doubt whether it would be possible for European industry, from its present capacity level, to take on such a massive increase of work over the next five years without incurring serious risks of wasteful or even dangerous error. Given the continuing uncertainty on some of the programmes, we do not see the justification for decisions on all of them on 9 and 10 November. It is essential that we take stock and ensure that we are all clear about objectives, priorities and methods of operation.

We are looking for sound investments, some of which will of course be long-term, which are likely to benefit us in some way — industrially, technologically, commercially, scientifically or whatever. We see no justification for entering what some supporters have called a space race and giving ourselves technical objectives heavily influenced by political motives such as being able to put a man in space by the end of the century. This would be a return to the era of the race to the moon, which was a spectacular illustration of man's ingenuity, but which cost vast amounts of money without commensurate commercial or economic return.

In The Hague, we shall therefore be asking what is the purpose of the Hermes proposal. What is man going to do when he gets into space? Is it cost-effective? Is there a follow through into the next century? Or is it likely that the next generation of safer launchers, which could possibly be HOTOL, will mean that the Hermes development is a blind alley? Above all, what will be the cost? I have already indicated our concern about Hermes, the estimated cost of which has doubled in the past 12 months, and there is good reason to believe that the present figure of over £3 billion is still too low.

As I have said, before ESA makes a decision on the proposed increase in the scale of its activities, it is essential that we should be clear what the objectives are. For some countries in Europe, the motivation is, I am afraid, political. They appear to believe that Europe should seek to keep up with the American and Russian space programmes, for the greater glory of Europe and for their own national prestige. It is this approach which has led to demands that Europe's top priority should be to develop an independent capability to put man in space by the year 2000.

There is also the objective of advancing pure science; there are areas of science which can only be advanced by observations from space, or experiments carried out in space. But space science is very expensive. The money for a single space experiment could fund many teams of experimenters on the ground. We must decide how large a share of all our science budgets we are willing to put into ESA's science programme.

There are also potential economic benefits from space research and development. These are of two types. First, there are the technological advances which are achieved in other areas, for example in materials research and software development. Though such spin-offs would not in themselves justify a space programme, it is important that we consider them in structuring our programmes and in encouraging industry to exploit them.

Secondly, and more important, there can be direct economic benefit in terms of programmes providing real commercial returns on the capital investment. These may be profits for the aerospace companies producing the hardware, or more likely for the providers of new or improved services. Telecommunications satellites have already reached this stage, and it is possible that satellites which observe the earth from space will provide the next example.

The Government's view is that greater priority should be placed on the commercial, industrial and ecomomic benefits, but our main concern is that the European countries should debate these priorities. It is only by agreeing what we want to achieve that we will be able to develop a coherent long-term plan and establish an appropriate level of funding.

Unfortunately, the European Space Agency has not so far helped Governments to agree on priorities. The present long-term plan seems to be little more than an accumulation of the various aspirations held by different European interests, resulting in a strategy designed to pursue every objective regardless of cost.

ESA is presently run as a pure research and development organisation — one where almost all projects are wholly Government funded. It has seen its role in technology as enabling the development of capabilities which member states can then exploit nationally in separate programmes. The result has been that it is largely divorced from the market place and there is little, if any, commercial or industrial input to its decision-making process.

Three main projects are being worked on by the ESA officials. The first is Ariane 5 — a new heavy lift launcher — part of the justification for which is to be able to launch the second project, Hermes. This is the proposed spaceplane which would enable Europe to launch its own astronauts. The third is Columbus, the proposed European contribution to the United States-led international space station. The United Kingdom is interested in the Columbus programme, but negotiations with the Americans are still continuing and it is not even firmly established what the European elements will be. It therefore seems premature for ESA to be pressing us to commit to a 10-year development programme which will cost at least £2·5 billion.

Last year, ESA spent about 1 billion ecu — about £700 million. Its proposals would increase this to more than 2·5 billion ecu, or more than £1·75 billion, by 1992. If this were agreed, maintaining our position in ESA could mean tripling our contribution in cash terms over just five years. We currently contribute about £80 million a year to ESA, and spend about a further £30 million domestically. That is not insignificant. If we went along with the ESA proposals and backed this with corresponding increases in national support, it would require an extra £200 million a year from the United Kingdom taxpayer.

An emphasis on commercial exploitation does not mean a negative approach to projects. For example, the main restraint on commercial use of space at present is the extremely high cost of putting satellites into orbit with conventional launchers. There is, therefore, a need for a new generation of launchers which can make space more affordable. One of the most promising ideas in this area is HOTOL, a revolutionary——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read.

To be considered upon Thursday 12 November.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate [23 July.]

Debate to be resumed upon Tuesday 10 November, at Seven o'clock.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 November.

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Sir Anthony Grant be disharged from the Committee of Selection, and Sir Giles Shaw be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

HIGHLAND REGION HARBOURS (MISCELLANEOUS POWERS) ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Highland Region Harbours (Miscellaneous Powers): And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday 11 November and to be printed. [Bill 47.]

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Lerwick Harbour: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday 11 November and to be printed. [Bill 48.]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Police Cells)

1. **Mr. Bowis** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on remand are currently being held in police cells and court cells manned by the police; how many of these are category A prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Today, 787 prisoners are held in police cells in England and Wales, most of them on remand. Only very rarely are category A prisoners held in police cells overnight. None is now so held to my knowledge.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that most people want their police to be either on the beat or within reach in case of emergency? Does he accept that police looking after prisoners in cells are not on the beat and, therefore, not available to the public for their protection? Does he accept that every unit of cells requires one sergeant and three constables? In the northern part of my constituency alone, three sergeants and nine constables are involved. That is largely due to the results of the prison officers' strike. Will he therefore urgently negotiate a no-strike agreement with the Prison Officers Association?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right about the wrong diversion of police time, which at its worst was as bad as during the Wapping dispute. I am glad to say that we are now improving on that because the Prison Officers Association in London prisons has suspended industrial action and is receiving prisoners. The figure that I gave of 787 compares with 1,335 at the peak. We are steadily moving prisoners to where they belong — mainly in prison. I note my hon. Friend's further point.

Mr. Madden: Will the Home Secretary help to tackle the crisis of overcrowding in prisons and the difficulties in many police cells by issuing guidance to magistrates to offer bail to all those accused of non-violent crimes? That would make a positive contribution to dealing with the crisis of the Home Secretary's own making.

Mr. Hurd: The crisis is not of my making. The immediate problem has been that of industrial action in London and the south-east. I hope that that is now being resolved. It is not my job to instruct magistrates about the people to whom they should give bail. It is a difficult job and must be left to the magistrates. I am anxious that they should have options and the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, with approval I hope, the provision in the Autumn Statement of more money for bail hostels.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons for so many people being remanded in custody in police cells is that many people are unnecessarily remanded in custody? Does he draw some lesson from the Minister of State's answer to me on Friday in which he revealed that black defendants are twice as likely as white defendants to be remanded in custody and acquitted or not proceeded against? Will he look at new alternatives to remands in custody so that black defendants are not unnecessarily remanded?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that one can discriminate in that way. It is for the courts to decide in each case whether someone should be remanded in custody, given bail or put in a bail hostel. I am anxious that in each case the court should have the most accurate information about the circumstances of the person with whom it is dealing. The hon. and learned Member will know the steps that we are taking in that direction.

Nationality

2. **Mr. Battle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider using the discretionary powers that exist under the British Nationality Act 1981 to ensure that on every occasion when an applicant is unable to afford the registration fee, he or she is granted a suitable extra period of time before registration is required.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): The limited discretionary powers will be used very sparingly; they would not justify exercising discretion solely because an applicant stated that he was unable to afford the fee.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that there is a serious and misleading error in the guidelines for registration issued by his Department? In view of that error, is he prepared to extend the deadline for registration by a further six months?

Mr. Renton: I am totally unaware of any such error. If the hon. Member is aware of an error, I should be grateful if he would contact my office immediately. We have distributed hundreds of thousands of application forms and leaflets explaining the rights for registration and they are now in circulation with citizens advice bureaux and immigrants advisory organisations.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my hon. Friend agree that £60 is a fantastic bargain for the priceless gift of British citizenship? Is it true that my hon. Friend and the Secretary of State have no authority to exercise discretion for the purposes of registration after the statutory time limit has expired?

Mr. Renton: Yes, it is a fantastic bargain. It is made even more so by the fact that the £60 fee is £10 less than it was five years ago. That is a remarkable example of Government efficiency. It is true that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has no general power of discretion. He has only a limited discretionary power, which can be used only in the special circumstances of particular cases.

Mr. Rees: In terms of the Secretary of State exercising the discretionary power, I have a constituent who came from Ireland in 1940, his family in Ireland having served the Crown since 1880. He joined the British Army and received the DCM and the Military Medal and I think is a war pensioner. He has served his country well, but he cannot prove that he was born to a British family in Ireland. He said to me:

"In 1940 I showed you where my heart was—I have the Military Medal and the DCM—but now they want £60 out of me to prove it." Is there not a discretion that the Home Secretary could use in such a case?

Mr. Renton: I was talking about the discretionary power of the Home Secretary to consider applications that arrive out of time. That is a limited power that can be exercised only with regard to the merits of individual cases. In the case mentioned by the right hon. Member, I suggest that he writes to me with the full details, and I will investigate it.

Mr. Roger King: Will my hon. Friend tell us about the position of those who do not apply to register before the time limit expires?

Mr. Renton: The position of those who do not apply will be unaltered. They will have the same immigration position as at present. Nor will there by any alteration in their right to civic benefits—for example, to pensions, council housing or the National Health Service. I propose shortly to issue a further leaflet concentrating on that point. The benefits of those who do not apply will not be altered.

Mr. Vaz: Even though £60 may seem a fantastic bargain for hon. Members on the huge salaries that we get, does the Minister agree that for those on supplementary benefit it is an enormous hardship? Is he aware that serious delays in the issuing of nationality forms have prejudiced the rights of people who wish to exercise their rights?

Mr. Renton: This right and the fact that it was going to terminate for specific categories at the end of December has been known for over six years. It is not a new matter. It has been known ever since the British Nationality Act 1981 passed into law. People have had six years in which to save the £60 if they wished.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary does not have a general discretionary power to waive or extend the period for those who do not submit their forms in time. I am not aware of any case where the application forms are not being sent out rapidly to all who require them.

Mr. Carrington: Will my hon. Friend confirm the extent of the publicity given to the registration system?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I can do that with pleasure. We have issued 400,000 leaflets explaining the rights of citizenship not only in English, but in Hindi, Chinese, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali. We have also conducted extensive advertising campaigns in both the local and ethnic minority press. If my Friend would like any of the leaflets in the ethnic minority languages, I should be pleased to send them to him.

Mr. Randall: I listened carefully to the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz). Is he aware that many people cannot afford the registration fee and that they are very worried about the loss of civic rights, including the right to vote, the loss of social security benefits and the possibility of becoming more susceptible to deportation? What will the Minister do to convey the message to the people that they will not lose those rights?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman and other Labour Members should spend more time reassuring their constituents on this issue, rather than encouraging them into a sense of panic. We have constantly explained the matter in the advertising campaign and I have explained it again three times in the House this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman should go out of his way to reassure his constituents and not alarm them.

Knives

4. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of knives to people under the age of 18 years.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Given the general availability of knives, we believe that the most effective way to curb their misuse is to strengthen the controls on possession. We have tabled amendments to this effect to the Criminal Justice Bill in another place, which I am glad to say have been accepted.

Mr. Favell: The whole House will be glad to hear that news. Too many young people carry knives and too often parents do not find out until too late. If it is an offence to sell alcohol to children, why not knives?

Mr. Patten: We believe that an offence of possession is more likely to hit the right target. On the other hand, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will not hesitate, if he is given powers in the Criminal Justice Bill, to ban the sale of abhorrent weapons such as death stars, hand claws and similar apparatus from the sick survivalist culture and the wilder shores of the martial arts world. We do not want those weapons on sale.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am pleased to hear the Minister's response. Is he aware of the range of weapons that can be purchased in shops, and, much more worrying, by credit cards or through mail order? For example, there is the "cold steel urban skinner"—that has nothing to do with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) — the "cold steel magnum tanto" and the "ultimate ninja". Would it not be better if the Government banned the importation from the United States and Japan of these vile and hideous weapons?

Mr. Patten: I am all in favour of banning "skinners" and I expect others are from time to time. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). It will be a very good thing indeed if the House gives the Government the opportunity to ban the importation, advertising or sale in this country of those wild pieces of equipment, which have no known use. The Government intend to do what they can to bring that about and we welcome the support of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Gentleman in that.

Mr. Squire: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are shops, certainly in south London, which simply sell fearsome weapons of that type? What is the justification for the continued existence of such shops?

Mr. Patten: I do not know the shops to which my hon. Friend refers. However, as I have said, if Parliament so decides, we intend to make it possible to list by schedule the kinds of weapon which we believe have no known use other than violent and nefarious uses. We will look at those weapons and in due course the matter will be brought back to the House once the Criminal Justice Bill returns here.

Mr. Hattersley: I am sure that we are all enormously impressed by the Minister's tough talk. But why do we have to wait for tough action until the middle of next year when the Criminal Justic Bill becomes law? Why can we not have an immediate Bill, which certainly would be supported by both sides of the House? Why is a Bill on limiting the use and sale of knives less important to the Government than the Licensing Bill, which will be debated next Monday, and the squalid little Immigration Bill, which is to be debated the Monday after?

Mr. Patten: I am sorry that the support that I thought was forthcoming from the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends seems rather qualified. Of course, all of us want to bring forward the legislation as urgently as possible, but first things first. We have decided to introduce the Firearms Bill, and thereafter we shall deal with the issue of knives and allied weapons in the Criminal Justice Bill as quickly as possible. I look forward to the right hon. Gentleman's co-operation in Committee so that we can make the Bill law as quickly as possible.

Homicide (Releases)

5. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been released from prison after serving sentences for homicide offences and have subsequently been reconvicted for murder or manslaughter since the year 1965; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1965, seven offenders originally convicted of murder and later released on licence from prisons in England and Wales have subsequently been reconvicted of murder. Another four have been reconvicted of manslaughter.

Mr. Taylor: Is it not a matter of grave concern that innocent human lives have been lost because people who have been imprisoned for life for killing have emerged to kill again? Does that not show that there is a case for a careful study of the circumstances in which people convicted of killing are released from prison?

Mr. Patten: That is a matter of considerable concern, and it is kept continually under review by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Perhaps I could draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that since 1983, when a number of convictions took place of people who had committed particularly abhorrent murders—such as the murder of prison officers or of policemen in pursuit of their duties, or sadistic or sexual murders of children — none of those now serving 20 years or more have been released.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Why will the Government not introduce provisions which would enable judges to pass finite sentences in cases of murder, with a meaningful life sentence reserved for the very worst cases?

Mr. Patten: I do not know whether the House would accept such a measure. What I do know is that, following precedent, there will probably be an opportunity for such issues to be debated. It is not a matter for me; it is a matter for the usual channels. However, on previous occasions when a measure such as the Criminal Justice Bill has been before the House hon. Members have had every opportunity to debate the issues.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend accept that we must add to the figures that he has given the numbers who have escaped from prison—for instance, the Maze prisoners—who have killed again since their escape? Will my hon. Friend tell us, regardless of the views of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and the Opposition, when the Home Office will produce a vote on capital punishment for this Parliament? Or must it again be left to a Back Bencher to take the initiative?

Mr. Patten: The business of the House is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the usual channels. I know that my hon. Friend takes a considerable interest in such matters, but when a measure such as the Criminal Justice Bill is before the House, there is always a good opportunity—certainly on the precedents—for the whole House to make its views known.

Ms. Short: Does the Minister agree that, in a week when the conviction of the Birmingham bombers has been referred back to the Court of Appeal by the Home Secretary because of doubt about whether it is safe, we are all reminded that capital punishment will inevitably lead to the killing of innocent people who have been wrongly convicted?

Mr. Patten: The matter is before the court, and is therefore sub judice.

Prison Statistics

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Hurd: On Friday 30 October, the last date for which figures are available, 47,815 prisoners were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. That did not include 968 persons held on that date in police cells.

Mr. Knox: I welcome the fact that the figure is lower than it was, largely owing to the actions of my right hon. Friend. However, does he expect the figure to rise again, and is he at all concerned that the new prison building programme will merely provide additional places in prisons, rather than dealing with the overcrowding problem?

Mr. Hurd: The doubling of expenditure on prison building that we have accomplished since 1978-79 is clearly necessary after the years of neglect, and all the projections show that those places—and, indeed, more places—will be needed. We need not regret that spending decision in the least. It is not for the Home Secretary, the Government or the House to lay down to the courts how many people they send to prison. It is our job to provide places for them.

Mr. Steinberg: Why is the Home Secretary opening up ex-Army camps, when establishments such as Full Sutton, York and Parkhurst have vacant accommodation and the Isle of Wight has had two wings empty for over three years?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is a little out of date. Our problem now is not the shortage of physical space but the shortage of staff. That is why I have handed Rolleston back to the military. The prison service staff, who were entirely responsible for staffing Rolleston, can now be used more profitably in other parts of the prison system. As the hon. Gentleman knows, prisoners are categorised by security risk and we must ensure that those with a high security category are not placed in lower security category prisons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that more than 2,300 juveniles are in prison institutions, of whom over one third are awaiting trial? Secure placement may be required, but surely it is inappropriate and ineffective for that to be provided by the prison service? Should we not bring penal custody for those under 18 to an end?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the House or the country would accept that as a general proposition, but, as my hon. Friend will know, proposals in the Criminal Justice Bill will move some way in the direction in which she points us.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To what extent has intolerable overcrowding led to the abolition or curtailment of association education and work opportunities for prisoners? Is it not a fact that the overcrowding and understaffing that his Department has created mean that some prisoners are even being denied a weekly bath and change of clothes?

Mr. Hurd: That situation has been created largely by the failure of Labour Governments to provide for any expansion of the prison system at a time when crime was increasing. They did nothing about it. We have more than doubled expenditure on the prison building programme in an attempt to catch up, and that is overwhelmingly necessary and justified.

Mr. Burt: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to compliment Her Majesty's prison, Manchester, on its initiative this autumn in inviting hon. Members to see the workings of fresh start? Is he yet in a position to say how fresh start is achieving one of its objects, which is being able to manage the larger number of people in our prisons?

Mr. Hurd: One of the aims of fresh start is to meet the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor)—to which I did not respond—to improve the quality of regimes. In Strangeways and several other prisons that have moved on to fresh start—now over half the total—there are good prospects of that happening. The speed at which we can enhance regimes depends on the number of people whom the courts send to prison and on the speed with which we can increase the number of prison places.

Extradition

7. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had any discussion with the Justice Minister of the Republic of Ireland regarding extradition.

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that extradition, among other matters, has exacerbated the whole question of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Should not some decision be taken, because the Republic is expecting something? Would not action on other questionable matters help the Anglo-Irish Agreement? For instance, we could make some kind of agreement about having three judges in the non-jury Diplock courts in Northern Ireland, where one judge now makes a decision—a concession for which the Republic is asking us.

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly not a matter for me. However, I take this opportunity to express the hope that one necessary decision will be taken and that the Irish will set in hand the ratification of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

Mr. Budgen: As my right hon. Friend was one of the fathers of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, does he agree that if a satisfactory system of extradition is not introduced soon by the Republic it will be difficult to see any advantage in the Anglo-Irish Agreement for Northern Ireland and the remainder of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: The paternity of the agreement is a matter for historians. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is not now a matter that falls within my responsibility.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Secretary of State's comments on the implementation of the treaty for the extradition of terrorists. However, does he agree that criticism of the British courts by the Republic of Ireland, where there have been some questionable pronouncements and judgments, is a case of "as you live your life you judge your neighbour", rather than the pot calling the kettle black?

Mr. Hurd: I can answer only on matters within my responsibility. As the House knows, I have certain responsibilities for deciding to refer to the Court of Appeal cases in which there have been convictions and where there is a new and substantial matter that the court did not consider. I intend to continue to discharge that responsibility in accordance with the principles of the criteria that my predecessors and I have laid down, and not by any others.

Firearms

8. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding his proposals for reviewing firearms legislation.

9. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received to his proposals to amend the firearms legislation.

11. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about his proposals for the further control of the ownership and use of firearms.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): We have received over 400 letters from right hon. and hon. Members and over 3,600 from members of the public, including secretaries of rifle and pistol clubs. We have also received correspondence from shooting organisations, police and local authority representatives and a number of other bodies with an interest in the review of firearms controls. Although many, but not all, shooting interests oppose the proposals that we have already announced, they seem otherwise to have been well received generally.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, but will he acknowledge that there is a substantial body of careful, lawful gun owners and that there are limits on the extent to which illegal activity can be squeezed out by putting pressure on the law-abiding?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The majority of the shooting community are as law-abiding as any other part of the population. It is essential that we achieve a proper balance between the public need for increased firearms control and the legitimate interests of the shooting community, which is what we propose to do.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the only sensible approach to this matter is to achieve a fair and proper balance between the legitimate interest of shooters, the genuine public concern about the wide availability of guns, and the specific requests, to which we must pay attention, of the police? Is not my hon. Friend's approach entirely right?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, Sir. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware of the overwhelming support on the Labour Benches for the control of firearms? However, will the Minister consider another dimension of the gun problem—airguns? We allow 12 and 14-year-olds to carry around these powerful weapons, and they are causing millions of pounds of damage up and down the country, and often damaging people's lives and limbs?

Mr. Hogg: We must concentrate on priorities. If we were to extend the substantial controls to include airguns, it would not be a proper use of existing facilities.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my hon. Friend aware of the concern that is being expressed by many of my constituents, who are responsible people owning guns for rifle shooting or other such sports? Will he assure the House that he will listen carefully to all the representations that are being made to him?

Mr. Hogg: Most certainly we shall listen carefully to the representations that are made to us and we shall take them into account. We want to achieve a fair balance between the public interest and the interests of the shooting community.

Mr. Devlin: In the new firearms legislation, will my hon. Friend consider the possibility of changing the minimum age from 17 years to 25 years or thereabouts, which is a suggestion that I have received from many of my constituents who are members of the shooting community?

Mr. Hogg: I shall certainly take into account the points that have been put forward by my hon. Friend, but I rather doubt that we shall want to move in that direction.

Mr. Ashton: Why is it that when there are problems involving violence in a working-class sport such as football, chief constables immediately become involved, the Home Secretary issues orders regarding membership cards, restrictions on travelling, drinking, the time of kick-off and everything else, but with an upper-class sport such as shooting, the Home Secretary is virtually saying that they can do what they like?

Mr. Hogg: That sort of question shows why the Labour party is wholly disqualified from ever forming a Government. There is nothing class-based about shooting. It happens to be one of the most popular sports in the country and it is enjoyed by everybody.

Television Licences

12. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will meet representatives of the pensioners associations to discuss television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On 11 March my hon. and learned Friend the then Minister of State discussed television licences with representatives of Pensioners' Voice, the National Federation of Retirement Pensioners Associations. We have not had a request for a further meeting.

Mr. Skinner: Has it ever crossed the mind of the Minister and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there is something wrong with a society that allows 13 televisions to be installed in No. 10 Downing street for the Prime Minister with only one licence, and for all the posh hotels to pay only one licence for as many as 600 television sets——

Mr. Skinner: And at the same time permits pensioners and disabled people to be thrown into gaol for non-payment of the licence fee? When requests are made by hon. Members to Tory Ministers to get those people out of gaol, we are told that the Government cannot do anything. Why do the Government not stop that nonsense and let us have free television licences for all pensioners and the disabled?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman's synthetic indignation deserves a statue in Pseuds corner. He knows that 1·4 million households *[Interruption]*.

Mr. Skinner: Come on, you little wimp.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not hear everything, thank goodness.

Mr. Renton: There are 1·4 million households with a television but no licence, and 440,000 households with a colour set but only a monochrome licence. That means that there is a shortage of revenue of about £90 million. If all that money were to be paid it would mean a reduction of £4 in the licence fee for everybody, pensioners and those on low incomes as well.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Can my hon. Friend imagine anything more bizarre than allowing all pensioners to have a free television licence? That would mean that many wealthy pensioners in my constituency would not have to pay for a licence, while many poor families with young children would have to pay. That is a crazy suggestion.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Television licences should not be an instrument of social policy, nor is it the wish of most pensioners that they should have a free licence.

Mr. Corbett: Does the Minister understand that for many pensioners the television is their main, and in some cases only link with the outside world? In many respects, it is their best friend. Does he accept that the new rise in the television licence fee — which we support — strengthens the case for paying for licences for all pensioners out of taxation?

Mr. Renton: Of course I understand that the television is, as the hon. Gentleman said, the best friend for many pensioners. However, the licence fee is being increased by only 7·8 per cent. over three years and that compares with a retail prices index increase over that time of about 12 per cent. and rises in pensions of 15 per cent. Television licences should not be an instrument of social policy, and surely it is much better for the Government to concentrate their efforts, as they have done, on ensuring that all pensions remain ahead of the increase in RPI.

Broadcasting Authorities

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet the broadcasting authorities; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Renton: We expect to keep in close touch with the broadcasting authorities in the coming months about a wide range of policy issues. Topics discussed with them over the past few weeks include the portrayal of violence and sex on television and the progress of the independent production initiative.

Mr. Adley: As the Government have decided to investigate—or make known their views—on the quality of television programmes, have they any view to express on the quantity of television programmes? For example, should the broadcasting authorities decide that 24-hour television seven days a week is to be introduced, would the Home Office feel that it should be consulted or express a view on the matter?

Mr. Renton: As my hon. Friend well knows, the statutory authority for deciding on the quality of programmes, particularly with reference to good taste and decency, rests with the IBA or, in its charter, with the BBC. It is not for me to second-guess their decisions. On 24-hour television, I agree with my hon. Friend, and we would expect to be consulted. As my hon. Friend knows, the Peacock report suggested that separate licences might be let for night hours. My hon. Friend has put his finger on the heart of the decision that we have to make in this matter. We must make certain that more channels and more hours will mean better, rather than worse, television.

Mr. Winnick: When the Minister meets the director general or governor of the BBC will he express the concern felt by many of us at the fact that in recent months very senior management jobs have gone to those very active in the Tory cause? Is the Minister aware that it would be extremely unfortunate if the impartiality of the BBC were undermined by a campaign waged by certain Tory Members, such as the former chairman of the Tory party? The BBC should not be run on more or less the same lines as the broadcasting authorities in South Africa.

Mr. Renton: Decisions about the top management of the BBC are made not by the Opposition but by the BBC, itself. As the hon. Gentleman will doubtless know—and he should give credit for this fact—the deputy chairman of the BBC, who was appointed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and who is now in another place, is a former Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Crime Statistics

15. **Mr. John Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the trend of crime in London during 1987.

Mr. Hurd: I welcome the fall in recorded crime in the Metropolitan police district of London during the first nine months of this year, when 5 per cent. fewer notifiable offences were recorded than in the first nine months of 1986.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the 6 per cent. decline in the incidence of burglary and theft reflects the success of neighbourhood watch in London and the manpower policies of the Metropolitan police?

Mr. Hurd: I think that there is almost certain to be a connection. Yesterday I went to Southall police station and saw a map of the division. I suppose that almost one third of the inhabited area was covered by neighbourhood watch schemes and the police there were in no doubt that the decrease in burglaries in London was connected with those efforts.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Home Secretary aware that academic studies show that in fact neighbourhood watch schemes serve only to displace crime to other areas? Therefore, the drop in crime can have nothing to do with neighbourhood watch schemes.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady is wrong. More and more, we are getting evidence from the police and from crime prevention efforts that neighbourhood watch schemes, which vary in quality, have the effect of reducing burglaries in some places. In other cases they simply recreate a sense of neighbourhood which has been lost. I very much hope that the borough of Lambeth and all the other areas represented by Opposition Members will drop any theological opposition to neighbourhood watch schemes and join what should be an all-party effort to reduce crime.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the increased success of crime prevention strategy is relieving the police the burden of investigating minor crimes so that they can shift their attention to more serious crimes, such as those involving drugs? Will my right hon. Friend comment on his proposals for the drugs confiscation team?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that my hon. Friend spotted that in the Autumn Statement. The extra money available will be used to increase substantially the number of drug liaison officers abroad to create a task force that will track down the assets of drug traffickers. I hope that that increased effort overseas will support the efforts of the police in London.

Prison Officers

16. **Mr. Steinberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the reduction in real terms in the number of prison officer jobs over the next five years.

Mr. John Patten: Present plans envisage a substantial increase, not a decrease, in the number of prison officers employed over the next five years.

Mr. Steinberg: Despite what the Minister says, is there not on the way a crisis in the staffing of prisons? Is it not true that during the next five years there will be a reduction of 25 per cent. in the number of prison officers, which will cause problems for the prison officers themselves, the security of the prisons and the communities in which the prisons are situated?

Mr. Patten: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman heard my answer. There will be an increase, not a decrease, in the number of prison officers during the next five years. The hon. Gentleman has levelled his criticism in the wrong direction by aiming it at a Government who have spent 40 per cent. more in real terms on the prison service and increased the numbers of prison officers by 20 per cent. since 1979. The hon. Gentleman should talk to some of his right hon. and hon. Friends who were responsible for starving the prison service by failing to recruit sufficient prison officers and by not paying them properly between 1974 and 1979.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the weak link in the world economy is the American budget deficit? Will she urge President Reagan to learn from our record of prudent public finance, which has brought us close to a balanced budget? Will she warn the President against accepting the advice of the British Opposition, whose polices of reckless extravagance would have created exactly the same problems in this country?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, negotiations are going ahead between President Reagan and Congress to reduce the budget deficit. We are anxious that those negoitations should succeed and are giving every support and encouragement. I have been directly in touch with the President about the matter. As I told the House last week, a convincing package to reduce the United States budget deficit is a vital first step towards restoring confidence in the financial markets. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must not listen to the Opposition about deficits. I remember the time when they had the budget deficit up to 9·25 per cent. of gross domestic product, which would be the equivalent of £39 billion today.

Mr. Steel: Can the Prime Minister explain why it makes sense to resist spending on public investment while increasing electricity charges to industry by £900 million? Does it not mean that energy costs for British industry will be higher than those of our competitors, and at a time when she is urging our industries to be competitive?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman wants increased investment — and I believe that he does because I am always being urged to do more—it must be paid for. When electricity prices are increased, our industries will still be able to compete with overseas countries on energy prices. Indeed, in many cases their electricity charges will be lower than those of their overseas competitors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if possible, over the period of this Parliament the Government will reduce the basic rate of income tax to below even the 25p rate to which we are already committed? Is it not contemptible that although Labour Members are always prepared to support increases in taxes and rates for others, they are not prepared to support even a 5 per cent. levy on themselves to keep their bankrupt party in business?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that our right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been extremely successful in his economic policy. The growth has enabled us to have both reducing taxation as a proportion of national income and increased spending on social services. It is an excellent record, which is recognised throughout the world.

Q2. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Ruddock: Although the Prime Minister and her Government constantly reassure us that all is well in the National Health Service, is the right hon. Lady aware that, to comply with Government financial limits, the management of the Lewisham district hospital is drawing up plans to close one surgical ward and two out of four of its new operating theatres, thus reducing that major general hospital to an emergency-only unit from now until the end of the financial year, with a consequent quadrupling of its waiting list? Is the Prime Minister prepared to allow people to die in Lewisham?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is aware that spending on the National Health Service has increased enormously over the country as a whole and that many more resources have been directed to it. Like me, she is a London Member and will be aware of the policies of all parties on the reallocation of proceeds, so that more money has been put into the northern part of the country and other non-London seats so that their services can be improved. I agree that that has sometimes been at the expense of other areas. However, would the hon. Lady like us to take that money away from the north?

Q3. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that local authorities such as York need not wait until the enactment of the Local Government Bill to put services out to competitive tender, and that only those local authorities that are either inefficient or corrupt will resist the legislation?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that there is no need to wait for the passage of the Bill before putting contracts out to competitive tender. Many local authorities have already done so and Wandsworth, for example, has already saved about £5 million a year. Other authorities have saved about £20 million a year. Authorities that have put contracts out to competitive tender have saved between £5 million and £10 million annually. The Bill will ensure that local authorities put contracts out to competitive tender. I hope that York will follow the example of many other local authorities which have done so successfully.

Mr. Kinnock: With so many health authorities, north and south, running into deficit just six months into the financial year, will the Prime Minister be saying to them, in the words of her Minister for Health to the Royal College of Nursing yesterday:

> "You will need your money for the winter as well you know. Do be careful that you don't leave yourselves short."?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware—he was in for part of the Autumn Statement—the proceeds available to the Health Service have been increased overall by about 30 per cent. in real terms during the lifetime of this Government. I remind him that during the lifetime of the Labour Government the amount of money that was applied to the Health Service actually went down in one year—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has been asked a question and she must be allowed to answer it.

The Prime Minister: I hope that people realise that the Government's policies have led to the growth that has enabled us to devote more resources to the Health Service than any other Government ever provided.

Mr. Kinnock: As the area health authorities and others have made it clear that a rise in excess of £900 million will be required simply to enable them to provide the same service next year as this year, the right hon. Lady should not take too much pride in the illusory rise that was offered in the Autumn Statement. Will she accept that what the Minister for Health was saying to the health authorities and what she is saying to them now is, "Do not treat too many patients in case your money runs out", and by the same token is she not saying to patients, "Try not to be ill at the wrong time in the financial year"?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman has forgotten that a special allocation of £25 million was made to reduce waiting lists this year, with a further £25 million to reduce them next year. Opposition Members appear to want more spending regardless, which is exactly the attitude that has caused other countries to be in difficulties because of the size of their deficit. We are not going back to the £39 billion deficit that we would have had if we had gone up to 9·25 per cent.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister realise that the pre-election allocation to cut waiting lists induced many health authorities to undertake certain programmes which mean that they are now being penalised for their success? They are running out of money before the end of the financial year. Does the right hon. Lady not know enough about the public health sector to realise that there are people in Britain who cannot get the treatment that they want in the decade that they want?

The Prime Minister: The waiting list money was extra money and was a special allocation. The authorities were asked to put forward bids for it. They did. Once again, in 1979 spending on the Health Service was £8 billion. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given an opportunity to reply.

The Prime Minister: Opposition Members will try to drown out the facts because they do not like them.

In 1979, expenditure on the Health Service was £8 billion. In 1987-88 it will be £20·5 billion. That is an enormous increase, which has come about under this Government and for which many people are thankful.

Mr. William Powell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in 1986, in the former unemployment black spot of Corby, unemployment fell by 25 per cent.? Projections are for an additional 38 per cent. reduction in 1987 and for a 30 per cent. reduction in 1988, which will mean that unemployment in Corby will be as low as it is in Esher, Epsom and Dorking. Does my right hon. Friend recall that the closure of the Corby steelworks was announced in March 1979, and that the reason for the recovery in Corby has been the Government's policies? Will she ensure that the lessons of the Corby phenomenon are applied to all other unemployment black spots in the country?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the excellent record of his constituency, which has ensured that extra jobs have been created. It has welcomed the efforts of private enterprise. If some other places would do the same, they might achieve the same satisfactory results.

Q4. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carlile: Will the Prime Minister find time in her busy schedule to hear the Deputy Prime Minister say on Radio 4's "Analysis" programme tonight that the Government's school opt-out proposals will be defeated in the other place? What will be her reaction to that defeat? Will she abandon the proposals in accordance with the views of peers and parents, or will she do as page 2 of *The Times* today suggests she wants to do; that is to say, to emasculate the powers of the other place?

The Prime Minister: The Government's opt-out proposals will, I believe, go through Parliament and become law. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman wish to cut and reduce parents' choice? Is that the Liberal party's programme?

Q5. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Autumn Statement included a remarkable combination of substantially lower public borrowing, large increases in spending on education and health, and a reduction in the proportion of gross domestic product absorbed by the public sector? That fact, coupled with the prospect of further tax cuts in the next Budget, is a far more eloquent tribute to the underlying strength of the British economy than the gyrations on the stock exchange.

The Prime Minister: Yes, it shows a year of superb financial management by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Q6. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: Will the Prime Minister ensure that further electricity price increases will not be imposed to affect the profits of privatisation? Will she consider the poor and the pensioners, who rely on off-peak electricity? Will she ask her Minister to ensure that pensioners and the poor are protected?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member will be aware that the heating additions have now reached some £430 million a year—a record. I really do not see why we should take lectures on electricity price increases from the Labour party. In May 1974 there was an increase of 27·8 per cent. and in the following year, April 1975, there was an increase of 48 per cent.

Mr. Bellingham: Will my right hon. Friend find time today during her busy schedule to consider the position of small investors? Does she agree with me that the average small investor, unlike some sections of the City of London, is not a punter or a gambler, but someone who has confidence in the management of the economy and someone who is investing in top British companies?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Most small investors invest for the long term. They purchase shares, they have faith in the company and they purchase those shares to get a dividend. They keep those shares and they have been very steady during the recent problems on the stock exchange.

Q7. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lofthouse: Earlier this afternoon the Prime Minister referred to the allocations to health authorities to enable them to shorten waiting lists. Is she aware that the Pontefract area health authority's allocation was in the region of £100,000 and that that authority produced a scheme that would reduce waiting lists by 660 patients? Is she further aware that that scheme was turned down by the consultants at the health authority's hospital in Pontefract? A second scheme was accepted by the consultants, for that money to be transferred to the private hospital at Methley park, but that will produce only 300 operations for the same amount of money. Does she believe that that represents efficiency in the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should make his complaints to those who decided which scheme would achieve the best value for money. In fact, £25 million has been allocated and will result in many people having operations who otherwise might not have got them. In England — this affects the hon. Gentleman as well as myself—the number of people on waiting lists is greatly below what it was in 1979.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Licensing Bill.

Motion to take note of EC document relating to the EC free food scheme. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER—Debate on a motion relating to the 2nd report of the House of Commons (Services) Committee in Session 1984-85 (HC 195).

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER — Opposition Day (3rd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an opposition motion entitled "The Failure of the Government to Provide Adequately for the Transport Needs of the Nation."

Debate on a motion on the Supplementary Estimate on the purchase and sale of shares in BP.

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER — Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Motions on Social Security orders and regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 13 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Immigration Bill.

[Debate on Monday 9 November
Relevant European document:
9138/87 Intervention Food for Poor
Relevant report of European Legislation Committee
HC 43-iv (1987-88) para 6.
Thursday 12 November:
Draft Income Support (General) Regulations 1987.
Draft Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987.
Draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1987.]

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Conservative party, in common with the Labour party, have a free vote on Monday's Second Reading of the Licensing Bill? If not, perhaps he would like to tell us precisely why.

When will we have the opportunity to debate the Government's Autumn Statement? As it is becoming clearer that the public spending increases are, in many cases, fictitious and that the Government are dictating unnecessary and unjustified increases in electricity prices, water charges and rail fares, the sooner we get the chance to consider fully the statement the better.

Will the Leader of the House ensure that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry makes a statement to the House when he has made his decision about the possible merger between British Airways and British Caledonian?

It is now becoming clear that the Government are trying to make a profit out of the scheme that was alleged to give aid to those areas of the country that were hit by the effects of the hurricane last month. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out yesterday during questions on the environment, Conservative and Labour councils will face bills for damage that are far greater than the amount that the Department of the Environment is prepared to give them. The necessary expenditure that they incur to make proper repairs means that they will be penalised and lose Government grant money. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a debate on the parsimony and duplicity of a Government who are trying to foster the impression that they will provide 75 per cent. of the funds needed to help to meet the storm damage repair bills?

The Government survey of school buildings was published this week, after being suppressed since before the election. It showed that a large proportion of our schools are in a derelict and dangerous condition. As the £60 million for school repairs allocated in the Autumn Statement is grossly inadequate to meet the £2 billion estimated repair bills, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on how he will ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out with the necessary speed?

As it is clear that the deputy leader of the Conservative party, Lord Whitelaw, believes that the Education Bill will be beaten in the House of Lords, will the Leader of the House now advise his right hon. Friends in the Cabinet to drop the Bill and save themselves from defeat, and, more importantly, save schoolchildren from the division and disruption that the Government's proposals would cause?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman asked me a number of questions, and I shall seek to answer them in the order in which they were asked.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the Licensing Bill. He knows perfectly well that the days when I had responsibility for the whipping of the party have, mercifully, passed away. He knows, too, that these are not matters that we discuss on the Floor of the House, and I remind him, in case he has forgotten, that we covered the matter in our election manifesto and won the election by rather a large amount.

Mr. Kinnock: Just like the Shops Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: We shall do better this time than we did on the Shops Bill.

There will be a debate on the Autumn Statement, but I cannot promise to announce its date yet because a number of things must be dealt with before that. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman would be well advised to give his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) a bit of a rest—he has had a bit of a clobbering in recent days.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on British Airways. It is being considered by my right hon. Friend, and an announcement will be made in the normal and appropriate way.

With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about storm damage, the arrangements that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State brought before the House were basically the same system, in financial terms, that had been used under the Labour Government, put forward in a much clearer and fairer way to local authorities. However, I shall refer the right hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend.

[Mr. Wakeham]

School buildings are a subject that could be debated when we have education debates, which I expect we shall be having before long; but I have nothing further to say at this stage about that.

With regard to the alleged remarks of my right hon. and noble Friend in another place about the House of Lords, it seems to me that over the years many hopes have been raised on the Opposition Benches about the fate of the Government's legislation in the House of Lords. I believe that my right hon. and noble Friends, Lord Whitelaw and the Chief Whip, do extremely well in the House of Lords, and any remarks were interpreted in a rather mischievous vein.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, I am always reluctant to curtail business questions, but there is an important Opposition Day debate to follow. May I ask hon. Members to put their questions succinctly and not to repeat what may already have been said?

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Could the Leader of the House allow a short debate next week to give the Government a chance to explain why they have decided not to publish the undertaking given by British Rail to Messrs Eurotunnel? Surely the taxpayers and the travelling public are entitled to know how much of their cash is being committed to this shaky venture.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a private venture undertaking, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend to see whether any Government statement is required.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It has been suggested that the Prime Minister and the Government may try to emasculate another place if it proves rebellious by introducing legislation that very much depends on subsequent secondary legislation. Does the Leader of the House accept that that could also emasculate this House, and will he undertake that substantive parts of the forthcoming legislation on education, housing and the poll tax will be primary legislation, and will not be left to loads of orders coming up subsequently?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot anticipate the contents of any Bills that may be brought before the House by my right hon. Friends. I know of no proposals by any of my right hon. Friends that could possibly meet the description that the hon. Gentleman has given.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Is it true that yesterday the Labour party declined to play its part in setting up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the responsibilities of the Leader of the House.

Sir Hector Monro: I am anxious to know from my right hon. Friend whether the Committee will be set up next week, because some of us on the Government side are anxious to get on with it.

Mr. Wakeham: I see from the Order Paper that the Committee of Selection has nominated hon. Members to all but one of the departmental Select Committees. I am not privy to what takes place in the Committee, nor would it be appropriate for me to comment. I can only say that I have heard the same rumours as my hon. Friend.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House be mindful of his responsibilities to the House by recognising that, while it may be difficult for Conservative Members, because of their paucity and lack of quality in terms of membership, to man the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, Opposition Members are very willing to man it and to seek a majority and a Labour Chairman of that Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he will believe anything. My hon. Friends are happy to take on the Opposition at any time.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): When can we expect an opportunity to debate the proposed membership of the Select Committee on Defence and the effect that that might have on the work of that Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give my hon. Friend the exact date, but we shall do it as soon as possible because I know that the Select Committees want to get on with their important work. Before they can do that, the membership has to be approved by the House.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Can the Leader of the House give us an assurance that in the debate on Tuesday on the report of the Services Committee the House will be given an opportunity to reach a decision on a question that has agitated some hon. Members, the withdrawal of the pass from the research assistant of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that the debate on Tuesday will be wide enough to enable the House properly to deal with these matters. However, they are matters for you, Mr. Speaker, as well as for me. I shall be tabling the Government motion later today.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): As more than 100 people have died on our roads since last week's tragedy on the motorway, may we have an early debate on the Department of Transport report called "Road Safety—the Next Steps" so that we can learn what the Government intend to do about motorway speed limits?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future, but my hon. Friend may well find that he can make some of the points that he wants to make during Wednesday's debate.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Is the Leader of the House aware that a Sinn Fein councillor was moving round the House all morning as part of a delegation from Strabane district council? While his presence is unacceptable, it is no reflection on the other members of the delegation who are here to campaign on behalf of people who have been flooded out of their homes in Strabane. In the light of your action, Mr. Speaker, in relation to Mr. Bennett, is it not time that the House dealt with the obscenity of entertaining a councillor who has literally threatened fellow councillors with death by assassination? Cannot that matter be dealt with?

Mr. Wakeham: I sincerely hope that any visitor to the House has been here under the rules that are laid down by the House. That is not a matter for me directly.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend give serious consideration to an early debate on the arts, particularly in respect of the announcement at 2 o'clock today that expenditure will increase by record levels of 17 per cent. for the next three years, and does he agree that that is something that the House should applaud?

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that my hon. Friend has mentioned the important announcement that was made earlier today. However, I cannot promise an early debate on the subject.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Because the occurrence of death and injury in the construction industry is increasing, because lump labour is increasing in that industry and because more and more people need homes, is it not time that the Government allowed time for a full debate on the future of the construction industry in view of the important role that that industry plays in our economy?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has noted the increase in funding that was promised by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Autumn Statement. The Government are to bring forward proposals for the housing industry, which will present an opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to make his comments.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): When may we expect a full debate on science policy and finance?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern about that, and it is one subject that I have well in mind. However, I cannot promise him a date at the moment.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): As the enthusiasm of the Prime Minister for inner cities in the post-election period has diminished, will the right hon. Member arrange for an early debate about the inadequate provisions that are being made to solve the tremendous problems of inner cities? The enthusiasm of the Tory party in the early post-election period appears to have vanished virtually overnight.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend's concern for the inner cities has not in any way diminished. The Government will continue to give further assistance to the inner cities. The education Bill, the community charge Bill and the housing Bill are to be debated this Session and are all directed in part to increasing benefits to the inner cities.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I once again draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the plight of haemophiliac AIDS victims. Has he seen motion 219 on the Order Paper?

[That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to recognise the unique and tragic problem of the 1,200 haemophiliac AIDS victims and their families.]

Does he remember that last week the Prime Minister was kind enough to say that she would discuss the matter with the Secretary of State? Can we expect an early statement, next week if possible, on what the Government propose to do to assist those victims?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern of my hon. Friend, and indeed of many hon. Members. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and my hon. Friend the Minister for Health met representatives of the Haemophiliac Society on Tuesday 3 November and their representations are being carefully considered.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week about progress on the Register of Members' Interests? There is a rumour that Conservative Members are attempting to defer its publication until January of next year. It is customary for a new Parliament to have a new register within a short time of commencement. Many Labour Members are concerned that there seem to be very few declarations of financial interests and that hon. Members on the Tory Benches are busy lining their pockets out of directorships and adviserships and following the former chairman of the Tory party into various board rooms. In the public interest, the register should be published as a matter of urgency. Will the Leader of the House make a statement?

Mr. Wakeham: I will not make a statement. The Register of Members' Interests will be maintained in the proper way in accordance with the rules of the House.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members would strongly support the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) for a debate on the arts, as the Minister for the Arts, in his announcement today of the three-year settlement, confounded all those who make out the Conservative party does not care about the arts?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. I recognise the strong interest in the subject among Conservative Members. I will see what I can do about my hon. Friend's request. However, I cannot promise anything for the immediate future.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): When will the Government give time to discuss discipline in the armed forces? Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the effect on morale of the confining to barracks of a regiment of the Guards. Will the Minister look closely at the thuggery—spelt with a "t" not a "b" —which seems to be happening within the armed forces and which is undermining discipline?

Mr. Wakeham: The action taken by the commanding officer this week demonstrates how seriously the Government and the military authorities view bullying. Bullying will not be tolerated in the Army. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman might like to pursue the matter in Defence questions next Tuesday.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend immediately push right up his list of priorities the need for a debate or an early statement on agricultural policy, particularly on set aside and how and when that is to be implemented?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a very important subject, and I will refer the request to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Important meetings are still going on in Brussels and they will be highly relevant to the outcome of that matter.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Leader of the House noticed early-day motion 253?

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland Affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party'. We did and calls on the Leader of the House, The Right Honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, The Right Honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.] It draws attention to the revealing and well written book of the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley). In particular, the book refers to the Leader of the House's role as saying that now is the time to come to the aid of the party. In order to save time next week, will the Leader of the House tell us right now when he knew about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? Was it before the inquiry reported?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to what has been said on this subject by my right hon. Friends, except to say that it is the duty of any Chief Whip to call all good men to come to the aid of the party. Sometimes, however, that is more important than on other occasions.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): On the day when the English cricket team has had a magnificent victory, may I remind my right hon. Friend that we have not had a debate in Government time on sport since January 1980? In view of the excellent initiatives put forward by my hon. Friend the Minister for sport, will my right hon. Friend make time before Christmas for a debate on this important subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I am in favour of a debate on sport as soon as one can be arranged. However, if the English cricketers are doing well without our assistance, perhaps we should keep quiet a little longer.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House assure us that in next Tuesday's debate on the House of Commons (Services) Committee report he will ensure that the House is able to take a decision on the way in which unelected and unaccountable security services are smearing the employees of people who work in this place, with the consequent withdrawal of their passes? Will ensure that the transgression of natural justice which is happening in this Parliament will be ended forthwith and that no longer will there be any security service interference in the work of members of Parliament or their research assistants?

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir, I will not do that. I will table a motion which will be amendable by any hon. Member who wishes to table an amendment which is in order. Mr. Speaker will decide how the debate will be conducted.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is not the House right to guard jealously the freedom with which hon. Members on both sides of the House carry out their duties without coercion? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if anyone in the City, industry or the unions was to seek to place duress on hon. Members as to the way they behave, that would be unacceptable? In the light of the parliamentary Labour party's decision to place what is called a compulsory levy on their members with what is, after all, public money——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to understand the responsibility of the Leader of the House in that matter.

Mr. Adley: May we have an early debate on that aspect of the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: That is not a matter for me, and I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate. It had crossed my mind that the Opposition might seek to be treated as either a charity or an historic monument to obtain tax relief from the Chancellor.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House deal with the matter of the Register of Members' Interests in the way described by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)? A problem has reared its ugly head within the Tory party. On the one hand, the ex-chairman of the party complains about the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is as bad as the earlier question.

Mr. Skinner: The ex-chairman of the Tory party has complained about the possibility of Lord Young becoming chairman of the party because of a conflict of interests. At the same time, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is not bothered about a conflict of interest when he is lining his own pockets. If it is wrong——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a reflection upon the honour of an hon. Member.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, it is.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may not do that. Will he please withdraw that comment?

Mr. Skinner: No, I cannot.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may not reflect upon the honour of another hon. Member. Will he please withdraw that comment?

Mr. Skinner: No. It is absolutely true.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, will the hon. Gentleman please leave the Chamber? We have an important debate in front of us today, and it will take time if I have to take any further action. I now ask the hon. Gentleman if he will leave the Chamber for having disregarded the request of the Chair.

The hon. Member then withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the point of order afterwards.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I support the call of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for a debate on sport? Could that debate be wide enough to cover sport in schools, bearing in mind the great success of Mike Gatting and his team in the World Cup series, and also bearing in mind that, if he were at school in London today, Mr. Gatting would be taught no cricket at all?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of feeling among my hon. Friends, and we must see what we can do. However, I cannot promise such a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that the vast majority of opinion in the House is in favour not of defeating or even obstructing the Licensing Bill, but of improving it? May I, as the then Minister who took what is now the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 through the House, remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Labour Government of the day took the Bill through the House without whipping a single vote during the whole procedure? Will he give serious consideration to free votes at every stage of the Licensing Bill, with my assurance that it will ultimately produce a much better Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary has heard the hon. Gentleman's advice. However, I have nothing to say to the hon. Gentleman that I have not said to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many months have elapsed since there has been a whole day's debate, in either Government or Opposition time, on the National Health Service? May I suggest that such a debate is now long overdue?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, I recognise that a number of hon. Members would like a debate on the Health Service. It would enable us to explain, particularly to the Labour party, just how much in additional resources has been put into the NHS in recent times.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the great concern inside the House and among the general public about nuclear waste disposal, storage and dumping? As a NIREX report will be issued next week, may we have an early debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern about that issue, but we had better wait to see the report before we decide what to do.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May we have a debate if next week the Church sacrifices its principles on the altar of its own internal political expediency by embracing sodomy against the teachings of the Bible, thereby moving further down the road of believing in nothing but permitting everything? Would it then be appropriate, even right, for there to be a bench of bishops in the other place?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate next week, but I do not think that that will stop him from finding an opportunity to express his point of view.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motions 210, 128 and 223, signed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, expressing concern at the proposed imposition of VAT on printing matters?

[That this House expresses its deep concern that Her Majesty's Government is seriously considering imposing value added tax up to a possible level of 15 per cent. on printed matter, recognising that such a change in value added tax would constitute a tax on knowledge through the inevitable increase in the price of books, magazines, periodicals and newspapers and would reduce the number of books available for schools and libraries; further deplores the effect which 15 per cent. value added tax would have on the printing industry and small firms in particular, leading to closures and further redundancies estimated to be in the region of 13,000 job losses; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to acknowledge the concern of the unions and employers in the printing industry to retain zero rating on all printed and published material.]

[That this House urge Her Majesty's Government to extend to newspapers, books and magazines the welcome commitment that value added tax will not be imposed on foodstuffs and other essentials.]

[That this House requests Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer not to impose value added tax on books and learned journals.]

There are many and varied arguments, but my concern is the effect of that imposition on redundancies in the printing trade and that it is a tax on knowledge. May we have a statement or a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Budget. It would be wrong of me to promise a statement or to say anything more.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My right hon. Friend will be aware that we are rapidly approaching the second anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Will he arrange for a debate in the next week or so to enable us objectively to examine the success or otherwise of that agreement?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there are those who would like a debate on that matter, but there are many calls on my time and I cannot fit it in in the immediate future. However, there will be Northern Ireland questions next Thursday.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not now more important than ever to have a debate on privatisation and vested interests? Is the Leader of the House aware that three years ago the directors of British Telecom had their salaries doubled by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), to make them welcome privatisation, and that they have now asked that same hon. Member to join them on the board at one of those increased salaries? Is not that worthy of debate in the House, because it is morally wrong, if not corrupt?

Mr. Wakeham: There will be many debates on the economy when, subject to your view, Mr. Speaker, it will be in order to discuss privatisation. All that I can say about my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is that any company that invites him on to the board will receive good value for money.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the position and independence of hon. Members? Is he aware of widespread concern at reports of secret votes in parties of the House, levies on their members and the possible extraction of money from hon. Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the responsibility of the Leader of the House. Will the hon. Member please rephrase his question?

Mr. Forth: I requested a debate in view of my right hon. Friend's responsibility for the position of hon. Members, and it is correct that the House should satisfy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to be helpful. Will he please rephrase his question?

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a debate on the conduct of political parties within the House and the independence of members of those parties in the light of reported recent events?

Mr. Speaker: That was just about as bad. *[Interruption.]* Order. Such questions do not help the serious business of the House and it would be helpful if the hon. Member were to withdraw that allegation.

Mr. Forth: I happily withdraw anything that I have said that offends the House.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The Leader of the House mentioned a debate next week relating to an EEC document and free food. If there is to be another distribution of food for which the British people have already paid, may we have an assurance from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that it will be organised and not left to ad hoc arrangements by charities? With the best will in the world, many thousands of people were upset about the last distribution because they thought that it was unfair.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman makes a point which will be relevant to the debate should he catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the Corby phenomenon whereby a town which was sentenced to death in March 1979 has bounced back in quite sensational style. Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate in Government time at an early opportunity so that the Government may have the advantage of being able to deploy to the House and the country the way in which the lessons of Corby can be applied to other areas which suffer from high unemployment?

Mr. Wakeham: That would be a good subject for debate. I well remember being shown around Corby by my hon. Friend not so very long ago and seeing the progress that had been made. However, I am sorry not to be able to accommodate him with a debate next week.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does the Leader of the House remember a fortnight ago, and again today, recognising the tremendous demand from Members on both sides of the House for a debate on the crisis in the NHS? Bearing in mind that matters have become even worse in the west midlands, particularly in Shropshire where a real cash crisis is facing the Health Service, will he bow to those requests by arranging an early debate?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Autumn Statement a record increase in funding for the NHS. Therefore, that would be a perfectly right subject for the debate on the Autumn Statement which I have promised the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On the request of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to expand the debate on Tuesday to cover security passes, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there will be available in the Library copies of the *Official Report* for 25 July 1974, 7 August 1975 and 29 March 1976 so that it can be made clear to the House that a system was introduced under a Labour Government by the Leader of the House, then Ted Short, and a Cabinet of which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was a member? Was the right hon. Member for Chesterfield completely in the dark throughout his ministerial career?

Mr. Wakeham: Those are matters which, subject to whatever you, Mr. Speaker, may say, can be raised during the debate next week. I am sure that the relevant documents will be available in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Has the Leader of the House had time to consider the newly published report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, on community care? If he has, does not it concern him that here we have independent criticisms of lack of funding, under-resourcing and failure to co-ordinate between health boards and local authorities? Does it not concern him that there is evidence in the document of mentally handicapped people being discharged from hospital only to be bussed back because no community facilities were available? If the economy is as buoyant as the Chancellor has been telling us all week, cannot we have a debate on why the under-privileged in our society are being treated in such a mean-minded way?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who is a fair man most of the time, will recognise that, despite vast increases in funding for the NHS since 1979, decisions about priorities will always have to be made and they will always involve difficult choices.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): In view of the widespread concern about the importance of preserving healthy competition in the airline industry on domestic and international routes, can my right hon. Friend assure the House that when the Government's decision on the proposed takeover of British Caledonian by British Airways is announced adequate time will be given to explore whether that element of competition has been sufficiently preserved?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot say anything more than I said to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Leader of the House withdraw his serious suggestion that the Labour party is obstructing the establishment of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Since we understand that the minority Tory administration in the Scottish Office intends to publish a White Paper next week on housing which will affect hundreds of thousands of householders and tenants in Scotland, will the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that there will be a statement in the House from the Secretary of State for Scotland at that time?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall refer that to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman seems to be a little sensitive about what went on in the Committee of Selection. I was not there and I do not know what went on. I do not know whether he was there either.

Points of Order

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Following what the Leader of the House said about Tuesday's debate, it is manifest that the shape of the debate will depend on your attitude towards the selection of amendments. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have it in mind, along with a number of my hon. Friends, to table an amendment that will allow the point about the research assistant of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) to be brought before the House. Will you consider sympathetically the principle of allowing it?

Following your guidance yesterday, I went straight to *Hansard* to find the references to 1974 and 1975 to which you referred. The matter concerned an individual inquiry by the deputy commissioner of the metropolis into security in the Palace; there was no suggestion that it was an ongoing committee. Before the debate on Tuesday, will you, Mr. Speaker, tell us whether the committee, at any stage and in any form, considered the individual case or cases of passes issued to my hon. Friend's research assistant or to other people?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman sent me a draft of his amendment to a motion that was not then on the Order Paper. I must say to the right hon. Gentleman that as an amendment it would not have been in order, but if he can get it in order I hope that it may be possible to select it. I intend, provided all the amendments are in order—this is a House of Commons matter—to select them so that every amendment can be debated within the scope of the Bill and perhaps voted on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, through your Secretary, I drew your attention to the statement of Mr. Speaker Selwyn-Lloyd on 7 August 1985. He said:

> "The Committee would be an informal one, as was the Committee under the right hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bottomley) to study the Compton Report, and not a Joint Select Committee set up by Resolution of both Houses. It will report jointly to myself and, I understand, to the Lord Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords: so far as this House is concerned it will then be for me, in consultation with the Leader of the House, to consider what further action should be taken; in particular whether all or part of the Report, which is at present graded Secret, should be laid on the Table of the House."—[*Official Report*, 7 August 1975; Vol. 897, c. 732.]

The first part of my point of order refers to the Starritt committee report, and whether any reference will be made before the debate to that part of it that was secret and may have covered the vexed question of vetting.

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to another statement of Mr. Speaker Selwyn-Lloyd. He referred to

> "The terms of reference of the Committee"—

you were a member of that committee, along with the late Sir Robert Cooke, Mr. Dick Buchanan and Mr. Walter Harrison, so you will probably recollect the terms of reference better than anybody else. They were:

> "'To consider the review of security at the Palace of Westminster carried out by Sir James Starritt CVO, formerly Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, and to make recommendations'." — [*Official Report*, 31 October 1975; Vol. 898, c. 1947.]

I do not think that the subject of vetting is mentioned anywhere. You will recollect that yesterday, in answer to a query from myself on a point of order, you said:

> "It is an advisory committee which advises the Speaker. I shall reflect on how much I can say about it."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 934.]

I gave the Clerk notice that I would ask, through a point of order, whether you have had time to reflect on these delicate issues.

Mr. Speaker: The matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised can be covered in the debate next Tuesday. May I draw his attention to other references in *Hansard*, on 29 March 1976 and 27 July 1977, both of which touch on the same matter.

I did not answer the question of vetting, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the committee to which he drew my attention, of which the House is aware as a result of these references, does not vet anyone; it is an advisory committee to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot say any more, and I do not intend to do so at the moment.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The substantial question that bothers us is whether evidence in relation to such a matter is seen by any elected Member of the House of Commons. Some of us consider it important that at least——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That evidence was not seen.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, As I understand it, hon. Members are here to represent the interests of their constituents. They are our masters; we have one master to serve. I understand that there is a rumour—it may be no more than that—that there is a compulsory levy being placed on Labour Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even if that rumour were true, it would have nothing to do with me as the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to both hon. Gentlemen that this is an Opposition day and many right hon. and hon. Gentlemen wish to take part in the debate. There will be a debate on Tuesday next week on this matter. They should reserve their fire until then. I cannot say any more than I have said today and yesterday.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before the debate next week, would it be possible to have a written submission from you, not on opinions but on the fact of the matter? Some of us are horrified that these decisions are taken by the Serjeant at Arms or somebody else rather than Mr. Speaker or somebody who has been elected.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows—certainly his right hon. and hon. Friends are aware of this—that that decision was taken by me. It was a decision that I did not relish——

Mr. Dalyell: But you did not see the evidence.

Mr. Speaker: I did see the evidence, or had evidence. I have a responsibility that I must exercise and I had to take a decision. As the House knows, the pass was suspended and my decision will now be debated on Tuesday, which I welcome.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that it will help me.

BILLS PRESENTED

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Secretary Hurd, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Moore, Mr. Secretary Rifkind and Mr. Tim Renton, presented a Bill to make further provision for the regulation of immigration into the United Kingdom; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 49.]

MISUSE OF DRUGS

Mr. Menzies Campbell presented a Bill to extend the coverage of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to include certain drugs which have been misused for the purposes of improving performance in sport: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 22 January and to be printed. [Bill 46.]

Opposition Day

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Financial Markets

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.17 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move,

> That this House, recognising that the stock market collapse results from failures in international economic co-operation and the excessive priority given to finance at the expense of the real economy, and that the collapse has serious implications for the level of economic activity in the United States and for investment and employment at home, notes that the United Kingdom still has close to three million unemployed, that manufacturing output has only just returned to the levels of 1979, and that Her Majesty's Government admits that there will be a downturn in the growth rate, an increase in inflation and a record deficit of £9 billion on manufactured trade in 1988; and urges the Government to initiate action among the leading industrial countries in order to concert adjustment of economic imbalances on a planned basis including expansion in the economies of Western Europe, to significantly cut interest rates, to target increases in public expenditure in order to prevent an economic downturn, and to adopt an industrial stategy aimed at systematically developing the strength of industry, technology and skills throughout the whole of the nation.

This is a timely debate. Following the crash in the financial markets, and with the threat of an economic crisis looming, the House should concentrate its mind on the lessons to be learnt from the turbulent events of recent weeks with one overriding objective—the urgent steps that need to be taken to ward off the threat of economic downturn, with the painful consequences for jobs, the standard of living and the national economic strength that would come in train of that.

We know from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that there are difficulties ahead. The statement was portrayed in euphoric terms by parts of the British press, with its close identity with the interests of the Conservative party. However, it is sometimes useful to see what the foreign press says. *The Wall Street Journal* reported the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. Its headline read:

> "Lawson Warns of Hurdles Facing Britain's Economy."

It continued:

> "Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson painted a picture of Britain's economy next year, warning that the nation faces slower growth, higher inflation and a mounting balance-of-payments deficit."

Let us be in no doubt that we face difficult times. Major change has occurred and markets have collapsed all over the world, particularly in London. Many people sense that we are at the crossroads in the economic development of the country and that if the wrong decisions are taken now they will have consequences for many years ahead. There is a tendency to blame all that on the markets. It is said that they had over-valued and were correcting. The Chancellor offered that as one of the explanations in his Mansion House speech last night.

The Chancellor's initial reaction in the early days of the crash was more outspoken. He said that it was a grotesque aberration and a grotesque over-reaction. He talked about the markets behaving with a herd instinct. The epithets came cascading from the Chancellor as he laid about the markets, which in other times he had revered, or possibly worshipped. Last night, the tone at the Mansion House changed. As the right hon. Gentleman stood in his white tie and tails, the principal guest at the Lord Mayor's banquet for bankers and merchants of the City of London, he obviously thought that he should put his thoughts rather differently. He said:

> "I would like to salute the City for the way in which it has comported itself throughout almost three weeks of a financial blizzard which blew in across the Atlantic."

There were no crude references to grotesque over-reaction, the herd instinct or absurdity. If nothing else, it shows how singing for one's supper can modify one's approach to events.

The Chancellor's case on the cause of the collapse of the market was simple. He said that it was all down to the Americans. The billing and cooing of the Thatcher Government towards the United States' Administration has apparently been replaced by tones of harsh and unforgiving rebuke. That is the line from the Chancellor. However, as we know, a message has gone from the Prime Minister to the President of the United States, the contents of which have not been revealed. It may say, "Do not take this chap Lawson too seriously. He is rude by nature and he cannot help it. I am still your friend. Maggie."

The Chancellor's main point was that it all happened because of a lack of political will in the United States; a lack of will to tackle the budget deficit. When things go wrong, the Chancellor and the Government, notably the Head of the Government, always find someone else to blame. This time it is the naughty Americans. Basically, the Chancellor said that they should be put in the dunce's corner until they had sorted out their problems and that no international action should be taken to deal with an international crisis until the Americans had sorted themselves out.

The Americans have a responsibility for the events that have occurred. They were running twin deficits — the budget and the balance of payments—which could not be sustained. The budget deficit is not the only factor. After all, the Japanese have a large budget deficit, which is not a cause for concern. The reason is that the Japanese, by their own savings, can fund the deficit. Apart from anything else, they tend to buy Japanese and they save. The United States was, and is, relying on the rest of the world to finance its deficit.

I believe that the Chancellor and others may have concentrated excessively on the budget deficit. It is the trade deficit that affects the nation more directly. Both deficits may have to be reduced, but it is crucial that we appreciate that it should be done on a gradual basis that will not cause a major disturbance to world trade and throw us into recession. It is a one-eyed view of the world simply to blame the Americans. The imbalance is at the heart of the matter. The United States has a large deficit, while others, notably Germany and Japan, are in surplus.

I fear that the truth is that for many years the major industrial countries have put the tackling of the imbalance well down their order of priority. Perhaps that was nowhere more compellingly illustrated than at the Venice summit held earlier this year during the general election. I hope that those, including our Government, who took part in that self-congratulatory and vacuous occasion now feel ashamed at the irresponsibility that they showed in not tackling the issue then. We recollect that the United States Secretary for the Treasury asked the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to set targets for expansion so that they could help the United States in the gradual reduction of its deficit. However, he got no assistance from the other countries.

Why was there a failure of international economic co-ordination? Why was there a failure to act in a situation that all the countries must have known would end in tears? Far too many of them believed that just as in their own countries free markets were the regulators of the economy, so international economic relations could be left to the free forces of the market. They could not have been more wrong.

In 1985 some effort started to be made to deal with the dollar and exchange rate instability, through the Plaza agreement of 1985 and the Louvre accord of 1987. In his speech to the International Monetary Fund the Chancellor advocated a new move away from total reliance on market forces and floating exchange rates with his hybrid concept of managed floating. Those faltering attempts at international co-ordination are to be welcomed. It is particularly beneficial for politicians such as the Chancellor to have to realise that their free market nostrums do not work in the real world in which they operate.

There are some differences in attitude displayed by the Chancellor between 1980 and 1987. On 3 July 1980 the Chancellor answered a written question. He was asked:

> "what mechanisms exist for medium or long term alteration of the exchange rate."

The hon. Member who asked the question was given a short and snappy answer. The Chancellor said:

> "Market forces."—[*Official Report*, 3 July 1980; Vol. 987, c. *677*.]

The Chancellor reinforced that in a written answer on 3 November 1980, when he said:

> "The exchange rate is determined by market forces, not by the Government."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1980; Vol. 991, c. *458*.]

In a written answer on the following day he said:

> "The effect on the exchange rate of a reduction of United Kingdom interest rates relative to the United States rates, if any, would depend upon the circumstances of the time."

This is the important part:

> "There is no stable or reliable relationship between interest rates and the exchange rate."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1980; Vol. 991, c. *537*.]

On 7 October 1987 the Chancellor was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying:

> "I believe . . . that we can and should use the experience we have gained to build a more permanent regime of managed floating. I do not see the past two years simply as a temporary phase. Our objectives should be clear: to maintain the maximum stability of key exchange rates and to manage any changes that may be necessary in an orderly way."

The Sunday Times on 11 October 1987 said:

> "Elaborating on these proposals, Lawson explained that 'monetary policy—the determination of short-term interest rates — should be pursued in a way consistent with exchange rate stability'. In other words, interest rates would be adjusted to keep the exchange rate stable."

So much for there being no stable or reliable relationship between interest rates and exchange rates. Of course, we welcome the progress of the Chancellor's education, but it has been an expensive education for Britain, just as the experiments in monetarism have been disastrous for British industry.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the national

[Mr. John Redwood]

executive committee under his chairmanship is looking into an extensive way of intervening in people's savings and wants to go back to the idea that savings should be confiscated and directed at the behest of Labour politicians? Does he seriously believe that that would solve the problems for which we have a perfect answer but about which he does not have a clue?

Mr. Smith: I thought that the hon. Gentleman, as a director of Rothschild, was going to ask me about something else. I gave way believing that his remarks might be relevant. In fact, his intervention had nothing to do with the debate. However, now that he has intervened, let me remind him that he, too, has been going through an education process. He seems to have changed his views a little since his time in the No. 10 policy unit. In a television programme last Sunday he was advocating the borrowing of £5 billion, £6 billion or £7 billion.

Mr. Redwood: The question asked on the television programme was very specific. When asked what I would recommend in the likely circumstances of slower growth, I said that there should be no increase in borrowing and that we should keep a tight ship, which is what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been doing. When asked what I would recommend if world GNP fell by five percentage points in a single year, I said that £5 billion or £6 billion of borrowing would be appropriate and, indeed, unavoidable. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman really suggesting that the world GNP will fall 5 per cent. next year? If he is, I do not believe him.

Mr. Smith: It was generous of me to allow the hon. Gentleman to give his fallback explanation. He will recall——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: It would help us all if the hon. Lady would allow me to answer the point on which I have been invited to comment.

The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) will recall that one of the possibilities considered in the television programme was a British growth rate of 1·5 per cent. It is in that context that he gave the answer to which I referred.

Mr. Redwood *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but it is not fair of him to do so. In any case, there are more important matters in this debate than the views of the hon. Gentleman, and I must move on.

Opposition Members welcome the progress in the Chancellor's education. It is now vital that there should be an international response involving Governments. The fact is that the shattered markets are looking to Governments to play their indispensable role in the regulation of world economies. A gradual but steady reduction in the United States deficits—particularly the trade deficit—must take place in concert with expansion in Western Europe and Japan. It is not good enough to wait until the Americans do something, hint at action on interest rates and seek to reinstate the Louvre accord. That response by the British Government does not rise remotely to the level of events. The British Government——

Mr. Redwood *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman does not want to listen, but perhaps he might do so for the next minute or so.

The British Government should now take the lead in urging a meeting of the G7 countries with the purpose of working out a new international accord, not just to put the United States in the dock, but to engineer—I suppose that the Chancellor would say "manage"—joint action to save us all from disaster. A successful accord would do more than anything else to restore confidence. It would chart a way through the difficult years ahead.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Hon. Members can hardly ask me questions before I have explained my point.

The accord should concern itself with interest rates and managing exchange rates, but it should also contain agreement on one crucial factor: if United States deficits are to decline, Western Europe and Japan must expand to meet the situation. We need an accord related to economic policies as well as financial matters. That is at the heart of the matter. Although the Chancellor has spoken at length about the arrangements since 1985, the fact is that they have broken down. We need a new approach, a sense of urgency and a recognition that internationally interconnected economies cannot be dealt with by policies followed by countries with regard only to their own interests.

That is the response that I would have hoped for from the Chancellor. However, instead of urging a statesmanlike initiative the Chancellor gave only a frenetic lecture to the United States and, what is more, a calculated insult to the president of the Bundesbank. The truth is that the British Government have no policy response to make at international level.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I was very concerned when I heard the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that I gave a calculated insult to the president of the Bundesbank. I happen to know Herr Karl Otto Pöhl very well. I have worked with him in international affairs for the past four and a half years. I have given no insult to him. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman quote the so-called insult that I gave, or withdraw his remarks?

Mr. Smith: The passage in the Chancellor's speech to which I referred states:

> "By contrast, a so-called free-fall of the dollar would solve nothing. It would merely risk the resurgence of US inflation and ensure further disruption to world trade, and the idea that somehow exchange rate stability promoted stock market instability, with the corollary that exchange rate stability would promote stock market stability, is manifest poppycock."

The right hon. Gentleman knew that that was the view expressed by the president of the Bundesbank.

Mr. Lawson: I am quite sure that that is not the view of the president of the Bundesbank. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman kindly give us the evidence suggesting that that is the view of the Bundesbank president?

Mr. Smith: It was certainly the view of some leading commentators in the British press.

Mr. Lawson *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Let me answer. The Chancellor knows that he was attacking that view. He knows where it came from, and he knows the message that he intended to convey.

Mr. Lawson: I am afraid that the right hon. and learned Gentleman must withdraw. That is not the view of the president of the Bundesbank, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman has produced not a shred of evidence to suggest that it is. Will he kindly withdraw?

Mr. Smith: I had no idea that I would touch such a sensitive spot. I have no intention of withdrawing my remarks, which were perfectly within the rules of the House.

Mr. Lawson: It is untrue.

Mr. Smith: I do not believe that to be the case. What should happen—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen will let me get a word in, I will finish. What should happen is that the Prime Minister should send a letter to the president of the Bundesbank, just as she sent a letter to the President of the United States.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman made a serious allegation. Like me, the president of the Bundesbank is a member of the G 7 group. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give the quotation from a speech of the president of the Bundesbank in which he has expressed that view? That is not his view and he has never expressed it.

Mr. Smith: I shall be pleased if the Chancellor will tell me whom he was attacking in his speech.

Mr. Lawson: I was attacking some of the economists employed by City stockbroking firms who have been putting that view forward. Now that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that, will he withdraw what he said?

Mr. Smith: It appears that the Chancellor was attacking some of those whom he congratulated last night at the Mansion House for comporting themselves so well during the crisis.

Mr. Lawson *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I have given way five times.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has now admitted that what he said about the president of the Bundesbank was totally false, fictitious and, to coin a phrase, poppycock.

Mr. Smith: It is clear that there is a difference of opinion between the Chancellor and myself. I have reason to believe that what I said is correct, and I stick to it. I wish to get on——

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No. I want to move to the serious matter of the economy, which we should be discussing in this debate.

The truth is that the Government——

Sir William Clark *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I am not giving way. I have given way five times and I am not giving way again.

The truth is that the British Government have no policy response at international level. We are constantly told that Britain has achieved a new and semi-miraculous status in the world, that some new respect has been acquired, so why is that not used to give a lead towards a new international accord?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I have said that I am not giving way.

I do not know whether——

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): There is no evidence for what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has claimed.

Mr. Smith: As I said, I do not know whether the Government's inaction is due to a lack of appreciation of the danger of——

Mr. Tim Smith: No evidence whatsoever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Sedentary interruptions take up a great deal of time. Many hon. Members wish to speak in this debate, and I hope that it can now proceed quietly.

Sir William Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the world economy in its current state, is it not incumbent upon a spokesman for the Opposition to behave responsibly? The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made an accusation that could sour relationships between this country and West Germany, and he refuses to withdraw it. Is that not disgraceful?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a point of argument, not a point of order for me.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a fact that no statement made in this House could possibly affect the world economy if that statement were wrong? The statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is clearly correct.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Smith: I am not surprised by all this, because it is the usual practice of Tory Members, when they hear something that they do not want to hear, to resort to procedural disruption to prevent us from having a proper debate.

I do not know whether the Government's inaction is due to a lack of appreciation of the dangers that we face, or to an incapacity to respond. Increasingly, the Chancellor reminds me——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No, I am not giving way.

Increasingly, the Chancellor——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When a Labour Front-Bench spokesman is making a valid point, is it in order for the Tory party to use the tactic of wheeling in its second-hand car salesmen to disrupt the proceedings?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House to get on with the debate.

Mr. Smith: As I was attempting to say, I do not know whether the Government's inaction is due to a lack of appreciation of the dangers or to an incapacity to respond. Increasingly, the Chancellor reminds me of the Emperor Nero, to whom he bears a passing facial resemblance. The difference is that Nero knew when Rome was burning.

The link between the international scene and the British economy is direct, so there is a threat of recession in Britain regardless of what happens in the United States.

[Mr. Smith]

If America succeeds in reducing both its deficits, but especially its trade deficit, there will be less room for British exports in American markets. If it fails to reduce the deficits and interest rates have to rise, that will push the American economy into recession and there will be consequences for Britain. Therefore, it is vital that we do not wait for the Americans to find a solution before we adopt a strategy for our country.

The Opposition advocate a targeted increase in public investment — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wokingham wanted to borrow £5 billion, £6 billion or £7 billion for that purpose. We need to improve the infrastructure, and if we have a programme of public investment——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No. If we have a programme of public investment——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman keeps rising, but I shall not give way to him. I hope that he accepts that.

We need a programme of public investment to provide better facilities, better communications, progress in our inner cities and some hope to our declining regions. That would be worth while in itself, but with the possibility of a recession it becomes economically imperative. After all, the Government tell us that our finances are sound. What better base from which to start a new public investment programme? Other countries are doing that. It may not have escaped the notice of those who follow these matters that a fiscal package introduced by the Government of Japan earlier this year amounting to 6 trillion yen—about £25 billion—included a public works component of £11 billion. If it makes sense for the Japanese to invest in their infrastructure, why does it not make sense for Britain to do the same? Doing so would provide new jobs, improve the functioning of the economy and help us to avoid recession.

There may be a reason why the Government do not want to embark on that—perhaps because they are saving that money for tax cuts in the next Budget. In Britain's current economic position, nothing would be more irresponsible than to embark on a programme of tax cuts that would inevitably suck in imports and add to a balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods that is heading towards £8 billion. If the public expenditure programmes were planned with care, concentrating on the regions and the inner cities—where people are out of work, where there is slack in the economy and where, goodness knows, so much desperately needs to be done—we could achieve social and economic results with a low risk of any inflationary consequence. That would be an effective short-term strategy, leading to real benefits in the medium and long terms.

However, we need to do more. We need to improve the long-term competitiveness and strength of the British economy, especially British industry. We are, perhaps, approaching the end of the period during which North sea oil has been a major prop to the British economy. Time after time the Government have been rescued from the consequences of their folly by the reservoir of North sea oil and the huge funds that it has made available to them. It has given them protection against balance of trade and balance of payments problems. Yet this still-oil-rich country is heading towards a balance of payments deficit of £3·5 billion.

We know that investment in industry is still 7 per cent. below its level in 1979—far lower than that of our competitors. We know also that since 1980 Britain has been the only country of the five major Western industrialised nations to reduce spending on research and development as a proportion of gross domestic product. There is a complete failure to realise that technology is the driving force of the modern economy. We need a new approach to education and training so that our people can acquire the skills necessary to become the best educated and trained work force in Western Europe.

The Chancellor used to say that there was no need for the Government to spend money on research and development, and on education and training, because the Government would make industry profitable, and industry would then spend money on research and development and on education and training. Industry has become more profitable, but I am sorry to say that there has not been the promised increase in spending on research and development, and on education and training.

We argue the need for an international response. We also argue for a national strategy as well as an international accord. There should be a reduction in interest rates throughout the countries in Western Europe with which we are closely associated. We need a fiscal response and the public investment programme that I have advocated. We need to build long-term strengths so that this country will have an industry that can sustain us in the 1990s——

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I am not giving way. The trouble is that we have a Chancellor who is compromised by having to get out of the monetarist position that he adopted previously. His policies and recommendations do not fit the time in which we live. Unless the Government alter their course in the way recommended in the motion, not only will they fail, but this country will suffer.

4.50 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add, instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on restoring the public finances to such strength and soundness that the British economy is growing faster and unemployment falling more rapidly than in any other major industrialised country while inflation remains low, thus enabling the United Kingdom once again to play a major role in international financial discussions and providing sufficient resources, despite the halving of the nation's oil revenues, to enable them to increase spending on the National Health Service, education, law and order, and other priority programmes above previous plans, while ensuring that public spending as a whole continues to grow more slowly than national income and while public borrowing, even without any benefit from privatisation proceeds, has been reduced to its lowest level for 17 years".

As far as I can make out a continuing thread in his speech, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) accused me of having learned something. That is not an accusation I can throw at him. He has learned nothing, but merely repeated the policies which led to disaster when his party was last in office.

Before I deal with the problems of the world economy —and as I have said on many occasions, we are going through a difficult time — perhaps I might make an announcement in which the House may be interested.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Chancellor, when referring to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr Smith), said that we would face disaster. I remind the Chancellor that my right hon. and learned Friend and I represent Monklands constituencies and our majorities rose by nearly 30 per cent. in the last election. Does that represent disaster?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. I wish to say something about the BP share support scheme.

As I told the House a week ago today, I have made arrangements with the Bank of England to ensure that there are orderly after-markets in BP shares. Formal notice of these arrangements, under which the Bank will offer to purchase partly-paid BP shares at a price of 70p each, will be published in the national press tomorrow and Saturday.

In my statement I told the House that the offer would remain open for at least one month, and not more than two. I can now be more precise. The offer will close at the earliest on 11 December, and at the latest on 6 January. Five working days' notice will be given before the closure.

The offer will be open to all holders of partly-paid BP shares and—a point which is of considerable importance for the small investor — the issue department of the Bank will make no handling charges whatever, so the investor will receive the full 70p a share. At 3 pm today the price stood at 78p a share.

Mr. Rogers: If the Bank is to charge nothing, who will pay the handling charges?

Mr. Lawson: Taking the whole thing together, it is clear that the taxpayer has a very good deal indeed from the BP share sale, whatever happens. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be pleased to answer detailed questions on this matter.

Mr. John Smith: Who will pay?

Mr. Lawson: If the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East wishes to pursue the matter from a sedentary position, I hope that he will tell the House what is his present view on the issue. The House will recall that on 27 October the right hon. and learned Member was asked by an interviewer for the BBC Radio 4 programme "The World Tonight",

> "What view do you take of the underwriters' request for a postponement?"

The right hon. and learned Gentleman answered:

> "I think it is hard to justify".

But two days later he was urging precisely that course.

Mr. John Smith: I am grateful to the Chancellor for giving way, although he has a certain obligation to give way to me.

On BP, why will the Chancellor not give a straight answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers)? The Chancellor knows perfectly well that the taxpayer is paying, so why does he not say so? He knows perfectly well that from the beginning of the BP share issue we said that the Government should not be party to it. The Chancellor has known that for a long time. When, as in this instance, the Government give a floor of 70p for a share, is that not a speculators' charter? Are they not saying, "Buy a share for 78p, but risk only 8p"?

Mr. Lawson: It is astonishing that last Thursday, a week ago today, the right hon. and learned Member was greatly concerned about the effect of the share sale on BP following the collapse of the stock market. Putting that floor under the price for this period has saved the disorderly after-markets that would otherwise have caused difficulties for BP. That is what I have done. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that that should not have been done, let him say so. I shall gladly give way——

Mr. John Smith: The Government should not have sold the shares.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. and learned Gentleman now says that we should not have sold the shares. The Government of the party that he supported in 1977 made the first share sale of BP at a price for fully-paid shares that was equivalent to under 70p.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Chancellor not understand that we have made it clear throughout that the Government should not have parted with the shares? Taxpayers may have got some money back but they have lost an important and valuable asset. The Chancellor says that he rescued BP, but was it not he who put it in danger in the first place?

Mr. Lawson: Even the right hon. and learned Gentleman will admit that I was not responsible for the fall on the world stock markets, which started in Wall street. The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that his party was against the share sale. I shall read again what happened on the radio programme in which he took part. The interviewer said:

> "What view do you take of the underwriters' request for postponement?"

The right hon. and learned Gentleman replied:

> "I think that it is hard to justify."

That is what he said, but two days later he said that the sale should have been postponed. That deals with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point on BP. *[Interruption.]* I shall come to the international situation in a moment. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has commended the view that I hold, and have held for many years, that the United States needs to reduce its budget deficit. I am glad that there is that agreement between us. But of course that is precisely the opposite view to that which he and his right hon. and hon. Friends have consistently held.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend think that it will be politically easier for the President and those who support him in America to cut the deficit if he is seen to be receiving raucous advice from the rest of the world?

Mr. Lawson: I shall come to the world situation in a moment. However, it would be strange if, having urged the Americans to cut their budget deficit for the four and half years that I have been Chancellor and having warned consistently of the damage that would occur if they did not, I suddenly changed my tune. We have remained the staunchest ally of the United States throughout that period. The views that we express, and that we have a right to express, are listened to and taken seriously because the Americans know that we are their staunchest ally.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): In the light of the answer that the Chancellor has just given about impending disaster, why did he decide to float the BP share sale and then engage in a £20 million advertising programme to try to persuade many unsophisticated small investors to take part in it?

Mr. Lawson: I am not in possession of such prescience that I can forecast what is going to happen to the stock market. However, if we are to talk about predictions, I notice that different predictions are now being made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East than were made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) who predicted time and again that soon after the election we would raise taxes. However, his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East now says that we are going to cut taxes, and that he does not want us to do that. I hope that they will make up their minds. Are we going to raise taxes or cut them?

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way in a moment.

The plain fact is—and this is an important point—that those right hon. Gentlemen consistently commended the Americans for running that large budget deficit which, as the——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Lawson: I shall quote the Leader of the Opposition who is interrupting from a sedentary position. In a speech on 19 October 1984, at the presentation of the Welsh marketing awards in Cardiff, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "There is a vitality in the US economy and no one doubts that it was initiated by Government spending."

— *[Interruption.]* Let me continue. The right hon. Gentleman went on:

> "The indelible fact remains that the climate for growth, for work, for investment and enterprise was created by the stimulus of public expenditure and borrowing policy. If we are to renovate our economy, if we are to stimulate activity and sponsor enterprise, we have to generate expansion in much the same way, by much the same means."

Mr. Kinnock: The Chancellor should quote also the many other instances when I, together with my right hon. and hon. Friends, said that we would not for one second advocate the scale or purpose to which that has been put, but that it was necessary for the Government to act in a similar way for exactly that purpose of stimulation. The consequence of the Government not doing so is a massive manufactured trade deficit and an increasing balance of trade deficit in an oil-rich country that still has nearly 3 million people unemployed. Is the right hon. Gentleman proud of that?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is wriggling and making things up as he goes along. He knows perfectly well that he commended the American budget deficit, the ballooning deficit, and urged this country to emulate it. The consequence of that deficit is that the Americans have got into a difficult position. They have a huge current account deficit which is far greater than ours and a big budget deficit. It is this country which has the fastest rate of growth of all the major nations and this country which is in a strong positon. It is sterling which is strong today and the dollar which is weak. There is no doubt about that. That is not something that I say with any pleasure. I do not think that the weakness of the dollar is of any assistance to either the United States or the world economy. The policies that the Americans themselves now agree are mistaken, and that they are seeking to reverse, are the policies that the right hon. Gentleman has advocated for this country and that he is still advocating today.

Mr. Rogers: The Chancellor criticised my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for proposing minimal increases in income tax. Does he agree that, since 1979, as a result of indirect taxation the burden of taxation has increased?

Mr. Lawson: Tax rates have steadily gone down. The overall tax rate——

Mr. Rogers: What about increased charges for gas, electricity and water?

Mr. Lawson: They are not taxes. The hon. Gentleman seems to be totally unaware of the difference between a tax and a price.

I shall now turn to the problems of the world economy, which the debate purports to be about. We are indeed passing through a difficult time in the world economy. I have made that absolutely clear. In my judgment, it is also clear that the financial collapse that we have seen in equity markets throughout the world has really had three main causes. There has been the reaction of the financial markets which, earlier, had gone far too high in relation to the underlying profitability of companies in which shares were traded. There are also the economic imbalances, to which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East referred, above all in the United States, with a massive budget deficit and, of course, the accompanying massive current account deficit. It is precisely because I and my fellow Ministers of the Group of Seven have been aware of the need to correct the imbalances that, for some years now, we have been seeking to get harmonisation and uniformity of policies, to put the imbalances right.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the Plaza agreement of September 1985, in which I participated, and which successfully set out to achieve two things: first, a sharp reduction in the value of the dollar, which had become heavily overvalued; and, secondly, a reduction in the American budget deficit which, by that time, was identified by the United States as well as by myself and others in positions of responsibility in the industrialised world as being a major problem. That succeeded. The budget deficit of the United States was reduced—although it still needs to be reduced a great deal further—and, indeed, the value of the dollar came down substantially.

Again co-operating in February of this year, we decided in the Louvre agreement to pursue a policy of exchange rate stability. But there was a great deal more to it than that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly has no understanding whatever of the contents of the Louvre agreement. He spoke as though the Louvre agreement were merely an attempt to manage exchange rates to secure stability.

Certainly, securing stability of exchange rates was an important purpose. But he should read the communique that I have in front of me. I shall certainly read it to him. He will take my word for it. That communique contained

10 paragraphs, of which nine were concerned with the uniformity of economic policies, and the 10th was concerned with the stabilisation of exchange rates.

As for why it is possible to stabilise exchange rates now, whereas it was not possible to stabilise exchange rates at an earlier date—I shall explain it for the benefit of the right hon. and learned Gentleman — I made that abundantly clear in my speech to the IMF in September before the storm broke. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when inflation was so high, it was impossible to achieve any stability of exchange rates. A precondition of having any degree of exchange rate stability has to be getting inflation down and a convergence of inflation rates at a low level. That came first and it will be maintained. It is on the basis of that that we have been able to achieve exchange rate stability.

That was the problem on the economic front, which we have been addressing. Of course, that problem remains. There has now been added a political problem, as I said at the Mansion House last night, of a doubt throughout the world and, indeed, in the United States, about whether they have the political will to deal with the problem which faces them.

The importance of the negotiations that are now going on between the United States Administration and Congressional leaders is great. I have been in continual contact during this period with my opposite numbers in the other major nations, and particularly in the United States and Germany, which are the key countries in this issue. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman pointed out, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has sent a personal message to the President of the United States in the same sense. We all wish to see——

Mr. Kinnock: Since the Prime Minister has been reluctant to publish the message which she sent to the President at around the same time as the right hon. Gentleman was speaking in the Mansion House last night, may we have his assurance that it was not just the same sense but the same words, and that it was not an attempt to put balm on what he was saying?

Mr. Lawson: I assure the Leader of the Opposition that, although the words were inevitably different, the message was the same.

Mr. Kinnock: May we have the Chancellor's view on why it was necessary, when his message was so public and so clear, for the Prime Minister to take it upon herself to send another message—a private one—saying only the same thing? Why was that necessary? Was it a lack of confidence in the Chancellor or in his manner?

Mr. Lawson: It seems quite extraordinary, when Opposition Members have been urging us all the time to do everything that we can internationally to secure agreement to deal with the problem, that the right hon. Gentleman apparently criticises the Prime Minister for having participated and sent a message to the President of the United States.

Mr. Kinnock: It is the Chancellor's assumption that I criticise the Prime Minister. The real question is this: was the Prime Minister in any way critical of the way in which the Chancellor was expressing himself or what he was saying?

Mr. Lawson: I assure the Leader of the Opposition that the Prime Minister was not in any way being critical of the remarks that I made. I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition jumps up and down all the time. He is trying to protect the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East from exposing his views any further.

The right hon. Gentleman is urging us to get an international agreement. Of course we want to see an international agreement, but the first step in any international agreement has to be the securing of agreement within the United States on a package of measures — and a credible and sufficient package of measures—to attack its budget deficit and bring it down and thereby recreate market confidence. Because of the American system, where there is a Republican Administration and a Democrat-controlled Congress, and where the steps that are agreed have to pass through Congress — there has to be the necessary legislation — there has to be agreement between the Administration and Congress.

I urge both of them to make every effort to reach an agreement as soon as possible. It is essential that that is done. I believe that they recognise that fact, although, obviously, it will be much more satisfactory when the agreement is finally concluded. Then, certainly once that keystone is placed in the arch, we can have a meeting.

I believe that we shall have a meeting of the Group of Seven to build an international agreement on the basis of the United States' measures to reduce the budget deficit. That will include, I am sure, measures on the monetary front and structural measures to improve the performance of the economies of the various countries, as, indeed, we have pledged in the Louvre agreement. But we shall take that further, with more reductions in interest rates as a distinct possibility.

The international package must be based on the Americans taking steps to put their house in order. They know that, and to have a meeting now, when that is not in place, would have a devastatingly counter-productive effect on world markets. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed with a proper step-by-step approach with the Americans reaching their agreement first. Under the Gramm-Rudman legislation, they have a deadline of 20 November by which they must reach an agreement. I hope that they will succeed in beating that deadline by a significant amount, but we shall have to wait and see.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Chancellor tell us how much it has cost the Government this year to support the dollar?

Mr. Lawson: It is a curious thing that, when we were selling dollars just over a year ago, the Opposition were asking how much that cost. Now that we have been buying dollars, deutschemarks and yen, we are asked how much that costs. There is no cost. All that is happening is the exchange of one currency for another. All that I shall reveal is that the foreign exchange reserves of this country have pretty well doubled since the Government came into office. We also have net overseas assets larger than any other country in the world, with the exception of Japan, so our overseas financial position is stronger than it has ever been before. That puts into perspective the remarks made earlier by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East about the very small current account deficit.

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. Friend says there is no cost, but if many dollars are bought and then go down in value, surely a loss is sustained?

Mr. Lawson: No loss is necessarily sustained. It depends what happens over the long period through which the reserves are held. My hon. Friend has always been strongly opposed to any intervention in the foreign exchange market, but I believe that intervention over the past nine or 10 months since the Louvre agreement has been highly beneficial. That is widely understood, not merely by all those countries who have participated in the Louvre agreement and who have reaffirmed that agreement, but by traders, industrialists and businessmen generally. It is right that we should stick with that.

Mr. Kinnock: The Chancellor said, quite accurately, that his hon. Friend has always opposed Government intervention, but was not that basic to the very strategy of which the right hon. Gentlman was proud to be the author — the medium-term financial strategy — under which everything should find its own level and in which the Government should not intervene?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is totally unable to see the difference between intervention in every nook and cranny of the economy and intervention in the foreign exchange market.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Chancellor has talked about intervention. Can he say whether he will intervene in any future sales of public assets? Will he also let us know whether he will intervene to provide a floor to prop up industries in parts of the country where they have been collapsing precisely because of the lack of confidence that was exhibited when the BP sale took place a week ago?

Mr. Lawson: Like my hon. Friends who I heard muttering behind me, even though perhaps they should not have been, I do not think that that question is worth answering.

What we are talking about is international co-operation to deal with the very difficult situation that the world economy is passing through today, and in which this country's economy is among the strongest in the world, and is widely recognised as such. That co-operation has been demonstrated as recently as the past few days. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East failed to mention that, yesterday, I reduced interest rates again by ½ per cent. and that, today, the German authorities have followed by reducing their interest rates. I welcome that.

Mr. John Smith: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves this matter, can we get it clear that, if the United States succeeds in reducing its deficit, the Chancellor and other Western European countries will expand their economies to deal with the deflationary problem that may arise as a result of the unilateral reduction of the United States deficit? Secondly, in 1980, when the right hon. Gentleman answered a question about what mechanisms existed for the alteration of the exchange rate, he said that there were market forces and that alone. Is that still his view?

Mr. Lawson: On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's second point I do not believe that he listened to my earlier remarks. At the time when inflation throughout the world was very high it was impossible to manage the evolution of exchange rates—market forces were all that could do the trick. I explained in considerable detail in my speech to the IMF annual meeting in September — long before this financial storm broke — that a pre-condition of being able to create exchange rate stability was that, first of all, we got world inflation down, and inflation down in all the major nations. That is what we have done. Now it is possible to intervene successfully to manage exchange rates. I explained that very clearly and that is accepted by the other countries which have taken part in the Louvre agreement.

As to the first part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question, it is a fallacy to assume that expansion is only secured or can be secured in any significant way by expanding budget deficits. That is precisely the point that I have tried to explain to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. That is the problem that the United States has. It expanded its budget deficit considerably, but then found itself saddled with a collapse of confidence and a massive burden of debt interest. By contrast, what we have done is steadily to reduce our budget deficit, as a result of which we are in an unparalleled position of strength, and we have the fastest rate of economic growth in the world today.

If the Americans were to reduce their budget deficit still further, the confidence that that would bring would be beneficial for growth in the United States, and for world growth.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Lawson: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Rogers: The Chancellor has criticised the Americans for having a budget deficit, but is it not a fact that we have had a budget deficit in this country but that it has been hidden by North sea oil revenues? That has meant that the Chancellor can come forward successfully with the charade that taxation has not gone up. We have had a deficit, but it has been fattened by North sea oil and the sell offs.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is — [HON. MEMBERS: "Right"]—no, he is not right.

Following the collapse of the oil price, which is referred to in the amendment, the proportion of our total tax revenues that come from North sea oil is now extremely small. The yield has gone down from about £12 billion to £4 billion. Despite that, we have got our deficit down because we have been pursuing sound policies. So the way to deal with the problem is to continue with the co-operation that we have had among the major nations.

That co-operation is real and was seen only this week with the reduction yesterday of interest rates in this country, followed by the reduction of interest rates in the Federal Republic of Germany today. We must continue with that co-operation. The United States Administration and Congress must continue their negotiations to get a proper package that will secure a reduction not merely in the budget deficit for fiscal year 1988, but for fiscal year 1989. The composition of that package must carry credibility in the world markets. Then, when that has been secured there should certainly be a meeting of the Group of Seven — and I shall certainly participate in that meeting on behalf of the United Kingdom—to build up that package into a wider international package of co-operation.

This debate has taken place after three weeks of turmoil in the stock markets. It is not clear yet when that turmoil will come to an end, or precisely what effects it will have. What is clear is that the United Kingdom economy is incomparably better placed to cope than it would have been had I accepted any of the advice proffered by the Labour party, including, most of all, the consistent advice to expand our budget deficit. The Labour party is giving us that advice again today. I have no doubt that I shall receive more advice from it and indeed from other quarters in the weeks to come.

I shall, of course, continue to keep interest rates carefully under review as I always do. When I decide the fiscal stance in my next Budget—and I do not propose to make that judgment until then—I shall, of course, take fully into account the likely effects of the recent stock market collapse and any subsequent events. One thing that I am not going to do is to follow the primrose path advocated by the Labour party.

The House and, indeed, the country should bear in mind that the reason why we have coped successfully with earlier shocks and why we are so well placed to cope with this one is that, for more than eight years, the Government have pursued firm policies designed to put the economy on a sound footing and keep it there. The benefits of those policies are clear and by sticking to them we shall ensure that the British economy remains among the strongest and soundest in the world.

5.28 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Throughout the difficult period of the past three weeks the Chancellor has been endeavouring to paint a rosy picture of the British economy; and, to some extent, in so doing he has betrayed a certain insularity of approach. He is entitled to take credit for the facts that he outlined in his Autumn Statement—the improved rate of growth, the lowered inflation and the falling unemployment. We, however, are equally entitled to point out that that statement foreshadowed changes—all for the worse—in the year ahead.

The Chancellor is right to take some credit for pointing to the relative strength of this country to stand up to the storm that has been blowing through the markets in the past three weeks. However, he cannot be complacent about the risks that this country faces, flowing principally from a probable United States recession if and when measures are taken to curb the twin deficits. The loss of confidence in the United States that will follow the introduction of the measures that the right hon. Gentleman is advocating is likely to hit investment. The widespread share ownership in the United States means that many people there will reduce their consumption. There is a severe risk—indeed, a virtual certainty—of a downturn in demand, which is bound to affect exports from this country and other developed industrial nations. There is a serious risk that that danger will be deepened and extended if the United States Administration and Congress do not come together to reach an agreement that results in genuine reductions in the fiscal deficit.

It is right to mention that the risks are not peculiarly confined to the United States. The financial markets in Japan have fallen somewhat less than those in the United States and Europe. Many thought that that relative strength rested on a somewhat insecure base; not on real corporate earnings, but on inflated asset values and short-term capital gains. That house of cards could easily gradually crumble, although I believe that Japan incorporated could probably prevent a sudden crash. However, the result could be damage to investment and growth in Japan, too.

I have given the Chancellor what credit I think he is due, but I do not think that he can altogether escape some share of the blame for the suddenness of the turn-round in the financial markets. After all, the right hon. Gentleman was party to the Washington meeting of the Group of Seven when the Louvre bands on exchange rates were reiterated, and the market has simply given its thumbs down. It has recognised that the assertions were unbelievable. The IMF projections at that time showed that at current exchange rates the United States would still have a current account deficit of $150 billion in 1991. There was no way in which the United States could be allowed to build up international indebtedness at that rate. The markets did not believe it, and it is perfectly obvious that they were right not to. Poor United States trade figures for August confirmed that scepticism, convinced United States investors that adjustments would have to be made involving the recession, and undermined the profits that had already been forecast, and also equity values.

The Chancellor's remarks on this subject in his speech on 30 September at the IMF in Washington were certainly not of a kind to suggest that he expected what has happened in the past three weeks. There was a lack of urgency in his remarks, and a lack of appreciation of the risks that we were running.

I do not deny that he has, from time to time, drawn attention to the risks. He has done so, but there was a distinct lack of emphasis on the problem in his speech at that time. When the Chancellor was working with his colleagues in the Group of Seven at the time of the Louvre agreement—with the grain of the markets—he carried more conviction than at the IMF meeting, when he seemed to be running very much against the market forces to which he has usually paid so much more attention.

What must be done now? Of course, the right hon. Gentleman must recognise that his influence in international matters is, to some extent, limited, and the Opposition cannot pin the blame for the turbulence, which is external in origin, on him. Nevertheless, the Chancellor can do several things that would be of assistance in protecting, or assisting the protection of, the world economy. He has not shown any sign of being willing to do several things that he could do to protect the British economy as far as possible from the storms that are beginning to blow. Of course, the United States must reduce its fiscal and current account deficits, as the Chancellor has said. It is easy for us to advocate the fiscal balance measures that he has advocated, but there is no point in our whingeing about the consequences of the steps that will have to be taken, and which will have serious consequences for imports into the United States subsequently, including imports from this country. They are bound to occur, however the United States cuts its deficit.

We must recognise, too, the crucial importance of preserving open markets. There are real threats of recurrent, resurgent protectionism in the United States. It is extremely important that we in Europe do nothing in the European context that promotes or encourages protectionist measures. That places a special importance on the

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

GATT discussions on agriculture. Faced with a weak private sector demand and a cut in the fiscal deficit, the United States must improve its international trading position quickly. That must involve letting the dollar rate fall below the Louvre bands. The Opposition motion today has got it a little wrong. The Chancellor is right to suggest that we should avoid rapid, disruptive exchange rate movements. I do not know precisely what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) had in mind, because it did not become clear in his speech, although the motion speaks of something dramatic on this front. That would be damaging to confidence, and hence to economic activity in other countries. Some fall, however, must be permitted. The alternative is for our exports to be hit by the United States recession, or by United States protectionism.

I also accept the Chancellor's view that the position would be greatly assisted by more expansionary policies, particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany. I welcome the announcement of the cut in interest rate there today. I do not altogether find the Chancellor's earlier public criticisms of the Federal Republic attractive. He sometimes seems a little like a child who is not prepared to play the game himself but criticises other players. That is not wholly edifying. His advice to the Europeans would carry greater weight if he entered more fully into the European exchange rate mechanism, which would give him additional leverage with the colleagues with whom he has to deal, and with whom he should be concerting his voice to bring about the changes to which I know he attaches importance.

Mr. Redwood *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The surplus countries do not really want to reduce their surpluses, and it is as well to face that reality. The United States must cut its deficit. How is a balance to be struck? The answer, or part of the answer, which neither the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East nor the Chancellor addressed in their speeches, lies in the Third world and its need to be able to import more. We must not shut our eyes to the close link between the structural problems of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the debt crisis in the less-developed countries. I had hoped that the Chancellor would say something about that. What is happening to the developed countries is nothing compared with what will happen to the countries whose commodity prices will be struck by the downturn in demand. Those countries will, therefore, be much less well placed to contribute any purchasing power to the economy of international trade.

There is an urgent need to restore capital flows to the less-developed countries and to recognise that at such a time as this, when investment in those countries is risky, it cannot be assumed that the banks will in the near future voluntarily increase lending. Therefore, there is a considerable need for equity capital or guaranteed debt. In his Autumn Statement the Chancellor recognised the importance of an increase in World Bank capital. That is welcome, but it is not enough. The OECD Governments must do more, and Britain should be much more generous about export credit cover. It would be of considerable help to United Kingdom industry if we were to do so, especially if other OECD countries were in decline.

I was disappointed to see in the Autumn Statement the prediction for next year of a 22·5 per cent. fall in Export Credits Guarantee Department cover. The Chancellor would do well to look at that again. No doubt we will be told that this is asking the taxpayer to take the risk of providing such cover, but the taxpayer is already doing so. I call in evidence the tax relief on the banks' provisions against the debts of less-developed countries.

Unless the Government take action to help the less-developed countries to import more, there will be more write-offs and no more tax relief to follow. Therefore, it is in the interest of taxpayers to help to solve this problem. Some of what I say may not seem directly connected with the perceived problems of the domestic economy that will flow from this. While the Chancellor may be right to predict that the United Kingdom's economy will remain reasonably buoyant in 1988, even if the world economy retracts, by 1989 it is certainly likely to be caught in the wake of these damaging consequences. It is important that Britain takes such action as it can to offset that.

If the economy is slowing down, there cannot be any case for the Chancellor focusing further upon the reduction of the public sector borrowing requirement, which is at an extraordinarily low level. It is practically negative, and in the Budget he must recognise that it is time to put more resources into those sectors that will increase Britain's prosperity. Obviously one has to be selective, and if I were to single out one area I would say that the right hon. Gentleman should look at education. It is quite extraordinary that the prediction for next year of the increase in expenditure by the Department of Education is 0·1 per cent. In the first leader of today's *Financial Times* there is a comment on the desirability of the Chancellor looking favourably on such expenditure on education, possibly in the form of tax relief that the Chancellor may have in mind to encourage people to choose education rather than holiday villas in Marbella. There is also a strong case for increasing expenditure on health and social services.

The Government must allow interest rates to come down gradually and should encourage them to do so. There cannot now be much doubt that there is little risk of overheating in the economy, certainly not in the City or in the south-east. Generally, all countries need lower interest rates in a recession, and with inflation no longer likely to rise again significantly, Britain is no exception. The Chancellor must be certain that the pound does not become overvalued in this situation. It is inevitable that there will be some strengthening againt the dollar, but that must be accepted as part and parcel of the reduction in the US deficit.

We must not get involved in a beggar-my-neighbour policy of competitive devaluation. The pound must remain competitive in Europe. Sticking to the deutschmark now is all right, but if there is a realignment in the next few months we should behave like a good member of the European monetary system and negotiate an appropriate level. The pound might not need to fall as far as the French franc, but it does not need to be pegged to the deutschmark.

The Chancellor has no grounds for any self-satisfaction. He has been part of the Group of Seven and party to policies that have led to this crisis. However, he has some opportunity to limit the damage, and to do so he must play a full part in the international discussions. I fully take the point that the Chancellor made in answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, that a premature conference with the ground inadequately prepared and the necessary steps not taken in Washington would most likely be disastrous. There must be international consultation, so that the response to what is happening is absolutely clear. The right hon. Gentleman would be greatly strengthened in the role that he could play if he operated more fully in the monetary system of the European Community.

As I say, the Chancellor could give a lead by example in dealing with export credit, and not give just good advice. Above all, he must recognise that his role in this matter is bigger than he has sometimes suggested, because of the very strength about which he spoke. He can legitimately claim some credit for that strength. The Chancellor boasted about our present growth rate, but he must recognise that as a whole international growth rates are dangerously low and falling. If we continue in this manner, we shall not be isolated from the consequences of a deep recession, possibly plummeting to a slump.

5.47 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Nothing that has been said by the Opposition since the fall in the stock market, since the publication of the Autumn Statement and certainly in the course of this debate, has begun to dent the Government's proud but fully justified claim to have put the British economy in a quite exceptionally strong and soundly based position to weather the economic storms emanating from other parts of the globe.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) began by making allegations, for which he was totally incapable of providing the faintest scintilla of evidence, about the views of Dr. Pöhl. The right hon. and learned Gentleman suggested that there should be international co-operation in the form of a conference before the principal cause of the problems about which the international conference was supposed to confer — the United States deficit — is dealt with. Such a course of action would at best be a charade, and at worst a disaster. The right hon. Gentleman then regaled us with a sad catalogue of tired old policies that have failed in the past and would fail today. It is not surprising that he resumed his seat with evident relief.

I welcome the opportunity to congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on pursuing policies that have brought steady growth, falling unemployment and low inflation.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, despite all the euphoria that he has expressed, in the north, which we both represent, although there has been a drop in unemployment, unemployment there is still far too high? Does he also agree that we need more serious intervention by the Government to build a solid and sound regional economy?

Mr. Brittan: I certainly agree with the hon. Lady that unemployment in the north, and in other parts, is too high, but I draw to her attention the latest evidence from a part of the country with which she will be familiar — Teesside. Growth is no longer just taking place in the south-east or in the traditionally more prosperous part of the country. Teesside, as much as any other part of the country, has suffered from the decline in traditional industries, and sadly it has been an unemployment blackspot. Business and industry have not been slow to point that out. Therefore, it is significant that the 30 October 1987 press release of the Teesside and District chamber of commerce and industry records that the prosperity of local manufacturing business continues to increase, according to its end-September quarter economic survey.

Comparing the results of the survey of local manufacturing businesses for the third quarter of 1987 with the results for the third quarter of 1986, the press release concludes that 58 per cent. report increased sales, compared with 40 per cent. last year; that 53 per cent. report that their work forces have increased over the past three months, compared with 27 per cent. last year; that there is more optimism when it comes to expectations about the future size of the work force, because 28 per cent. expect to be employing more people in three months' time, whereas last year the figure was 20 per cent.; and that investment plans for plant and machinery are being revised upwards by 28 per cent. of the sample, compared with only 18 per cent. last year. When it comes to business confidence, 75 per cent. expect turnover to increase over the next 12 months, compared with only 47 per cent. last year, and 65 per cent. expect profitability to increase over the next 12 months, compared with 36 per cent. last year. I am glad that the hon. Lady gave me the opportunity to draw out those figures.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: I am afraid that there are too many hon. Members who wish to speak for me to give way any further. The policies outlined in the Autumn Statement are likely to sustain the confidence shown by that survey only last month in one of the worst hit parts of the country.

Last year, I frankly had some anxiety about the change in the Government's aims for public expenditure — the change from keeping it roughly level in real terms to reducing it as a percentage of the gross domestic product. It seemed to me that there was a real risk of that change being regarded as a dangerous weakening of the Government's determination to curb public spending. With a growth rate of 4 per cent. this year, it is clear that the increase in spending of £2·6 billion for 1988-89 is perfectly compatible with financial prudence. With such a large increase in the national income, it is entirely reasonable that that should be reflected in a modest increase in public spending, provided that the increase is sufficiently modest for the proportion of national income taken by public expenditure to continue to fall. That condition is clearly met in the Government's spending plans, which I therefore fully support.

The risks to the economy, therefore, emanate from overseas. Absolutely nothing that has been said in the House or outside it has achieved the remotest success in establishing or proving that the policies or actions of the Government have played any part in the current turmoil. Last night and today the Chancellor gave a short, sharp prod to the United States. He stressed the urgency of action to deal with the budget deficit if the fall in world stock markets is not to gather further momentum and lead

[Mr. Brittan]

to a world recession. He was right to do so, but it is important to point out that he added two further matters. He pointed out that he was saying nothing new, and that the problem is one of political leadership.

Earlier in the year I expressed concern about the quality of United States' leadership as reflected in its handling of the situation in the Gulf. That was regarded by some hon. Members as mildly heretical at the time. The concern expressed by the Chancellor has shifted to the economic leadership of the United States, and it is just as justified. That concern, although expressed more openly, frankly and sharply in recent days than in the past, has been felt and stated for many years. I think that the Chancellor referred to a period of four and a half years. When I was Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1982, I had a meeting with somebody who was then, and still is, a senior figure in the United States Administration, when I urged on him the necessity to deal with the budget deficit of the United States. That was not some eccentric frolic of mine. I was saying what everybody in the Government then felt and was saying on similar occasions.

We did not, however, get all that much support from the rest of the country. Some people at that time were urging us to increase the public sector borrowing requirement by massive sums. We were asked, not only by Opposition Members, "What is so magical about the public sector borrowing requirement? Is it not just a figure, just a lot of mumbo jumbo, a few billions here and a few billions there? Surely it cannot make any difference." There were many who added, "Look, the United States is borrowing massively. It is not doing any harm to that country. It is allowing an expanding economy." Frankly, faced with that chorus, it was difficult to keep saying that what was happening in the United States was unsustainable and that the chickens would surely come home to roost. It was impossible to predict precisely when that was going to happen, but it was clear beyond the slightest doubt that happen it would, and happen it has. We cannot expect to be unaffected.

If we had followed the advice of the Labour party and weakened ourselves by massive increases in the public sector borrowing requirement, what has happened in the world markets would already have sent our economy into a tailspin. However, there is only limited comfort in that reflection. While world economic problems remain, it is right to urge the United States to curb its deficit and to urge the Germans and the Japanese to expand. It is not our business to tell the United States precisely how to deal with its deficit, or what combination of spending cuts or tax increases should be brought to bear, although *The Daily Telegraph* was right to point out this morning that the United States could raise $50 billion through a gasolene tax and still leave petrol at prices not seen in Europe for the better part of a decade. I only hope that there is enough of a crisis atmosphere in the United States to provide the political impetus to force the President and Congress to reach a resolution of these matters.

It is important that the cuts in the deficit should be substantial and credible. They have to be more than the $23 billion provided by the Gramm-Rudman Act anyway. Although they must be substantial, they must not be so great or so fast as to create recessionary pressures, unlikely though it is that that would happen. World markets are much more concerned that the announced cuts, if agreement is reached, should be effected within a clear and defined timescale. It is because of the need to have confidence that we are not just seeing another set of words and promises, such as those that we have seen so often from the Japanese, that there should be a tax component in the package. Anyone who has been Chief Secretary to the Treasury in this country, or the equivalent in the United States, is well aware that theoretically agreed cuts in spending can all too soon melt away, and the markets appreciate that.

If such an agreement could be attained there would be scope for concerted world action, with reduced interest rates. However, that alone would not be sufficient. The risk of protectionism in the United States is at least as great a threat to the world economy as the budget deficit. If that is to be withstood—and here I agree with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)—there must be a fall in the value of the dollar. The Louvre agreement will have to be modified, certainly with regard to the principles of managed floating favoured by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, to allow for a fall in the dollar, although not too great a fall, and certainly not a free fall or anything of that kind. However, it will have to fall a certain amount to offset protectionist pressures.

All that has consequences for us, but we cannot be sure precisely what the consequences will be. If international agreement can be secured in response to what has already happened, and in relation to the corrective measures that must be taken, that is likely to lead to only a modest reduction in the rate of growth in this country from the 3 per cent. mentioned by the Chancellor at the IMF meeting in September to the 2·5 per cent. figure that features in the Autumn Statement. However, we will have to consider future interest rate reductions and our own fiscal policy.

The Chancellor was correct to stress that there is a special uncertainty about forecasting at the moment. It is fortunate that decisions about the size of the public sector borrowing requirement and tax cuts do not have to be taken today. All that can and should be done at this stage is to put down a marker or two. With an assumed PSBR for 1988-89 of £1 billion, there would clearly be scope for tax cuts of about £3 billion.

There is a lot of scope for argument about the way in which those tax cuts should be used and I would favour using as much of the scope as possible to take people out of paying tax altogether, one way or another. However, if the international prospects look gloomy, and if the risk of recession increases when the time comes to determine the PSBR for 1988, the Chancellor might well think it appropriate and necessary to accompany lower interest rates with a slightly higher level of borrowing. To do that in such circumstances would not in any way be contrary to our economic strategy. It would make it possible to accommodate more tax cuts than would otherwise be possible. The purpose of that would be economic and not political. In such unhappy circumstances, we would be playing our part to keep the world out of recession.

It would be wrong to increase borrowing substantially or to increase it from a starting point, such as we had a few years ago, of a very large deficit. If we were really facing world recession with a very nearly balanced budget, there would be a powerful case for a modest degree of fiscal relaxation.

I very much hope that it does not come to that. I hope that sanity prevails in the counsels of the nations and that we will be able to reach the kind of agreement that will ensure that economic growth can continue on the scale envisaged in the Autumn Statement next year and in the years beyond. I have no doubt that the policies followed by the Government give us the best chance of doing that.

6.3 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I had been led to believe that I would have the delightful pleasure of following a Conservative Member making his maiden speech. I think that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) did very well and I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree with me. As some editors used to say,

> "There must be some mistake here, surely".

The crash on the stock exchanges around the world strikes at the heart of the Chancellor's belief that markets act wisely and rationally. When the crash started, the Chancellor began appearing on television stations bitterly criticising the market players. However, at least he looked perky and bright. By the time that he eventually appeared in the House and realised that he had a BP flop on his hands, he had turned a bilious green and that colour seems to have remained with him right up to today.

I was very worried for the Chancellor and for the nation today. The Chancellor's speech was so bad that, had the markets been listening to him, I fear that they might have followed the course of the St. Petersburg market in 1917 when the index fell to zero and the Russian revolution followed.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): That was a golden age.

Mr. Sedgemore: The Financial Secretary to the Treasury calls it a golden age. I do not accept that view. I am not one of those old time Stalinists.

On Tuesday the Chancellor delivered his Autumn Statement. I found myself agreeing with the market that it was frighteningly irrelevant to the needs of the nation at this time. On the very day that the Chancellor announced his statement, the markets which, given what had happened over the past three weeks, could only be described as being in ebullient mood, plummeted by 70 points. Yesterday, after the markets had had time for calm and mature reflection on the value of the Autumn Statement, they plummeted a further 45 points.

Who on earth wrote the Autumn Statement? The only name that I have been able to come up with so far is that of John Banham, the ludicrous director general of the CBI, who earlier this week gave us this year's immortal quote:

> "Crash? What crash? I can't remember any crash."

The problem is that there is a complete disconnection between the contents of the Autumn Statement and what is happening in the real world. Most bizarre of all—and nearly all hon. Members have referred to this today—the figure for the PSBR is set at 0·25 per cent. Getting rid of the PSBR seems to have become an icon in the Chancellor's pagan theology. However, why should we get rid of it? What is the reason behind that?

As the PSBR has been reduced, real interest rates have risen. Real interest rates are now twice what they were in 1979. If there is some empirical evidence to show a relationship between reducing PSBR and reducing inflation, I hope that some Conservative Members will produce it tonight. As a member of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, I and Conservative Members have looked hard, but none of us has been able to find that evidence.

What should the PSBR be? I watched the famous television programme "This Sunday" when the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) was asked what he thought the PSBR would be if the dollar had a hard landing. He replied that he thought it should be between £5 billion and £7 billion. That is roughly 1·5 per cent. of GDP. I asked myself what I would have replied if I had been asked the same question at the same time with the same premises. I would have combined prudence with the knowledge that there are many unused resources in our economy and that 2,900,000 people are out of work. It was within the premises of the question that a severe recession was about to follow. In those circumstances, I would have picked a slightly higher PSBR at between 2·5 per cent. and 3 per cent. of GDP. In my view, historically that would not have been out of balance, given the problems that we would have been facing.

The crash on Wall street started on Monday 19 October. Perhaps it was ironic that I first discussed with a journalist in a coffee shop in Brighton three weeks earlier on Wednesday 20 September the political and economic consequences of a crash. Given the time and the place and the fact that I am only an obscure Back-Bench Member in the British Parliament, no one took any notice of the imminent collapse that I was telling people about. That is life, I suppose, but ultimately the academics and the historians will want to know what I was saying at the time. There is also a 20-page speech setting it out for the same party conference, so it is on the record.

It is clear that there is going to be a recession. The only question worth asking is, "How big will it be?" It is sometimes possible for Governments to mitigate the consequences of what happens, but such awesome economic events have the habit of brushing aside the puny efforts of statesmen. We cannot pretend that they have not occurred. The Government have had a lot of luck in their economic management—perhaps more than most other Governments—and it is sad to see that luck running out through the irrational antics of the Chancellor's erstwhile friends who play the markets around the world. The nation should realise that the thundering herd of Thatcher rhinos which stampeded to sell on the London stock exchange are all either friends of the Prime Minister or friends of the Chancellor, or both.

In America, Reagan's buffaloes caused the damage; in Britain, Thatcher rhinos created mayhem. But it will not be only them who pay the price. I remember, when the Labour Government faced a crisis in 1976, Tony Crosland said that the party was over. In 1987, I must say, on behalf of the Conservative party, that the ball is over. No one is fooled by the Autumn Statement.

> "Never glad confident morning again", Nigel!

These have been three terrible weeks for those who believe that the markets know best. We have a Chancellor who, as I have told the House before, could not float one of the richest, most powerful and most profitable companies that the world has ever known without intervention because the markets could not cope. What kind of Chancellor is this who said to the world, "BP—don't be part of it, whatever you do"?

This Chancellor used to tell us that the only determinants of the economy were the various measures of money supply — Mo, M1, M2, M3, PSL1, PSL2,

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broad money and narrow money. He used to say that, because the markets were both the medium and the message, he could abolish the minimum lending rate. Yet, in the middle of a crisis, this free-market, non-interventionist Chancellor, brass-necked, poker-faced and without a hint of shame, told an astonished world that he was about to reduce interest rates by a half of 1 per cent., in what has subsequently been described as the most ludicrous piece of fine tuning that the British economy has experienced since the war.

Are we really to believe that this free-market, non-interventionist Chancellor now has a nightmare every night, in which he goes through the agony of wondering whether to tell the House or the Bank of England next day that he is going to change interest rates by a fraction of a percentage point? Interventionists, fine tuners and Keynesians the world over simply do not know how to respond.

This Chancellor used to appear in the House and tell us that the foreign exchanges knew best. Now the exchange rates are fixed by the Louvre accord, and are basically determined by central banks and central Government. How extraordinary it is to see the great god and lord protector of markets turn turtle in such a ridiculous fashion. Now his only market principle, his only monetary principle and his only economic principle is lack of a principle.

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether you remember James Russell Lowell. He once said,

> "I *don't* believe in princerple, But O, I *du* in interest."

Is that not a definition of the modern Conservative Chancellor? Utterly without principles, but believing in interest—the interest of underwriters and market players whom he must save from themselves, and of fat cats in the City who have ruined it for us all because they operate on a casino called the London stock exchange?

Talking of the word "casino", perhaps I could make a sad—or perhaps joyous—announcement. I am reliably informed that John Maynard Keynes, the famous economist who dubbed the stock exchange a casino 50 years ago, today turned over in his grave, smiled knowingly and went back to sleep for the rest of eternity, because he had realised that the genesis of his ideas would prevail. The hon. Member for Wokingham is right: Keynesian ideas will prevail over those of the Chancellor. I wish the hon. Gentleman well in his argument with the Chancellor, who told the House today that, whatever happened to the world economy, be it a soft or a hard landing, he would not go into deficit financing. In two years' time, the hon. Member for Wokingham will have it right and the Chancellor will have it wrong: there will be deficit financing.

The question that we must ask ourselves is, "How serious will the crisis be?". When I asked the Chancellor a question last week, he replied that it was not the crash but the actions of Government that had created the crisis in the 1930s. I consider that a dangerous half truth. I do not believe that it is possible to wipe $1,000 billion off the value of stock all round the world without severe damage, whatever the response of Governments.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in 1929 the stock market rose significantly before the recession, and it was the imposition of protectionism in the United States that set the recession going? No doubt the Chancellor rightly had that point in mind.

Mr. Sedgemore: First—and I shall say more about this—I do not believe that if the stock markets suddenly bounced up tomorrow the problems would be solved. Secondly, I disagree fundamentally with what the hon. Gentleman has said about protectionism. Perhaps he should realise that protectionism came in in Britain in 1932, and the British economy, which had been growing at 2 per cent. per annum, suddenly grew by 4 per cent. per annum at almost exactly the same time. I know the argument, but I think that there is wide disagreement about the role played by protectionism in that crash. I do not wish to go into the matter in detail, but I am not on the side of the hon. Member's interpretation.

I believe that the real problem lies in the loss of confidence and the creation of uncertainty. Even if the markets bounced back next week, that loss of confidence and uncertainty would still be there, because we would not know where the markets would go in the following week. The interaction between uncertainty and loss of confidence, and liquidity and the ability to borrow, produce, and trade, creates a problem that cannot be wiped out by a series of Government macroeconomic measures.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with considerable interest. There seems to be a certain inconsistency in his attribution of the cause of the present position in the first place to the inefficiency of markets, and in the second place to a lack of confidence and uncertainty. If the market for assets—which is what the stock exchange is—has operated efficiently, should it or should it not have reflected uncertainty or a decline in confidence? Was it operating efficiently, or was it not?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am told that that is a question that the hon. Gentleman must answer because he knows more about the markets than I do.

In the interaction between loss of confidence, uncertainty and liquidity — the ability to borrow, produce and trade—there is a series of timescales and many institutions and individuals are involved. It is naive for the Chancellor to believe that for the British, American, Japanese or German Governments to take one or two macroeconomic measures will suddenly right everything. That is not a credible scenario. The event has happened and some of the damaging consequences will be there whatever happens.

We have been told—again it has been the subject of the debate — that the Americans caused the problem with their budget deficit. There is no doubt that the budget deficit has created many difficulties for America, but we are not concerned with deficit budgeting per se. America decided to finance its budget in order to keep inflation down by borrowing foreign money. They also have to finance a trade deficit at the same time. The cumulative amounts, taking into account interest on foreign debts, built up by its trade deficit and budget deficit, will, it is threatened, be measured not in billions of dollars but trillions of dollars. When that happened, it was clear that the American economy was in an arithmetic hole from which it would not get out without causing a lot of damage.

We have now seen the first part of that damage. There will be second and third instalments. They will hurt America and the United Kingdom. But to seek to argue, as the Chancellor apparently did, that therefore there was no case for deficit financing in any other country—none of the others faced the same kind of problems that the Americans faced as a result of financing theirs through foreign debt—is a patent absurdity. If Japan, Germany, France, Italy and Britain were all to stop their deficit financing, we would see a slump which would make the current situation seem almost like a vicarage tea party on a Sunday afternoon. It is plainly not credible to put forward that argument. The hon. Member for Wokingham has got it right, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has got it wrong.

I agree with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) when he finds it faintly ridiculous that the Chancellor should go along to the City of London and wag his finger and butt his stomach out in the direction of the Americans, almost in complete incomprehension of the kind of problems faced by that political system in this kind of crisis. It is almost impossible to believe that that kind of approach by a British Chancellor, which totally ignores the realpolitik of the United States, can do Britain, the United States or the world any good at this time.

Whether or not the Chancellor has abused Mr. Pöhl, the member of the Deutsch Bundesbank, it is no good us giving the Germans a lecture. Their interest rates are considerably lower than ours in actual and in real terms and they have limited room to manoeuvre. Even if we lecture the Japanese, I am sure that they will not wipe out all their surpluses just because it might suit us.

Although, like everbody else, I can be in favcur of international accords, meetings and some attempt to find some new structure for the way in which the world deals with its financial crises, for the moment the British Government should be changing their monetary and fiscal stance in order to do their bit to help the world. The motion recognises that, and so I shall support it.

6.24 pm

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech so early in the debate. I am also grateful for the compliments on my speech, however premature.

I pray the indulgence of the House to speak briefly about my constituency and to pay proper tribute to my predecessor in Boothferry. The constituency of Boothferry encompasses the Yorkshire wolds and extends down to the vale of York, across the Ouse and Humber to include the Isle of Axholme. It is a beautiful rural area and can claim to be one of the cradles of English individualism. Many of its people fought for their beliefs and for other people's rights. Some died. Robert Aske, who led the pilgrimage of Grace, was hanged in chains in York castle. Others, such as William Wilberforce and John Wesley, have, by the force of their character, and their commitment to their ideas, changed the world in such a way that history will never forget them.

Today, individualism takes the form of enterprise and initiative on the part of the people I represent. That is why Yorkshire and Humberside has many more small businesses, private enterprise and self-employed people than most other areas of Britain.

My predecessor in Boothferry was Sir Paul Bryan. When Sir Paul entered the House as the Member for Howden 32 years ago, he was already distinguished by his war record. He was a holder of the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order. I think that he was the last Member of the House to hold both those decorations. He was clearly a man of considerable courage and leadership. Courage has been described as the quality of exhibiting grace under pressure. Sir Paul had the quality of exhibiting grace in all circumstances. He was greatly loved in my constituency for his dignified leadership, quiet compassion and calm wisdom. If I can do as much for my constituency and the House as Sir Paul did, I shall be justifiably proud.

Sir Paul had one other characteristic when he came to the House which helped him to stand out from the crowd. He had an entry in the "Guinness Book of Records". He was and is a keen golfer and he achieved the feat of getting two holes in one, as some hon. Members will know. He tells the story of returning from that round, buying the traditional round of drinks in the club house and telling the barmaid about the fact that he had scored two holes in one. She asked him which holes he had scored them on and he said that it was the ninth and twelfth. "But, Mr. Bryan," she said, "those are the two shortest holes in the club." Such wry scepticism is often seen on the Opposition Benches today.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has scored hat trick after hat trick — in the Autumn Statement last year, the Budget this year and the Autumn Statement this year — when we had a higher growth record than any other Western nation, a faster fall in unemployment than any other country, and many other characteristics in our financial situation which stood out as being models for the rest of the world. However, the comments of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will not be the real test of the Government's policy. The real test of the Government's policy and our economy will be how it withstands the global adversity that we are seeing today.

I want to explore how that test will come about. I am not just talking about a slump or a potential slump. If we have a slump, everybody understands what that means as a test for our economy. If we avoid a slump, that, too, will be a test for our economy.

Let us examine what has been said about what is needed to avoid a slump. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) basically described five different points. Two of them are American. There is obviously the need to cut the budget deficit and the Americans must abandon protectionism. Three other things have to be done. First, we must maintain the liquidity of the financial markets, and that has already been done. Secondly, we probably have to see some fiscal relaxation in Germany and Japan. Thirdly, we must see a modification of the Louvre accord to allow the dollar to devalue to a proper level against the deutschmark. If that goes ahead and is successful in preventing a global slump, there will be a continuation of growth in global demand —it will not be as high as in recent years but it will continue. However, the structure of that global demand will change.

Labour Members like to talk about the real economy, but what will happen in real terms? The American market will suffer deflationary effects. The policy change and the consumption effects of the Wall street crash will have deflationary effects. American industry and employment

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will be protected from that, to some extent, by the dollar-deutschmark parity change. British industry will not be protected. Some £12 billion worth of exports will be going into the dollar area markets. We will have a smaller, more difficult market for our high-tech and high-value items —typically the items that we sell to the United States—and we will face tougher competition from American producers with that dollar advantage.

We will have to look elsewhere for outlets. If the global economy is growing, by definition there will be expansion elsewhere. When we look elsewhere we will run head on into Japanese competition and Japanese products that have been displaced from the United States market. We will also face German and American competition, which will be tougher because of that dollar parity change. We will have to battle hard for our market share. That market will not necessarily be in the same products—it certainly will not be in the same place—and we will have to fight for every percentage point of share.

How will Britain's industry cope? The transformation of British industry in the past eight years will ensure that we will win enough battles to maintain our growth rate. How would we have done eight or ten years ago if we had taken on the Japanese or tried to sell Jaguars to Germany? That is the acid test of Government policy. That is the test that will apply if the global market does not crash. The previous Labour Government would have failed that test. Their policies would not have coped because of the lack of competitiveness that they brought about in British industry.

That is the successful scenario, but in the unsuccessful scenario the other side of the Government's balance sheet takes effect. Clearly competition and competitiveness still matter. However, the Government's ability to inject more demand into the economy — this is a common sense approach, not a Keynesian one — is a function of its creditworthiness. Any company chairman will know that creditworthiness dictates how one copes. The United States' problem is that it has run out of creditworthiness.

The Government's balance sheet is as good as it has ever been, but it is not the only important balance sheet. Over the past few years it has become fashionable to criticise the bull market. However, one of its side effects is that British industry has been able to obtain lower borrowing levels, better equity funding and a lower risk base than ever before. Thus, it is better equipped to deal with stronger competition and higher margins.

Our policies stand up, on any scenario, in comparison with anybody else's. We have the flexibility to move with the world markets. We have the capacity to cope with a drop in world demand. In the final analysis, whatever the outcome, the British economy has the equipment to harness the wind or weather the storm.

6.33 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It falls to me to be the first speaker to be called after the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis). I add my congratulations to those of Members who are sitting immediately around him on a distinguished maiden speech. It combined matters that we like to hear in a maiden speech. The hon. Genleman talked about his constituency, which has obviously produced men of great character for many hundreds of years, and he paid tribute to his predecessor, Sir Paul Bryan, who many years ago won the affection of hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman made a valuable contribution to the debate. He warned that we will face tougher competition in world markets, which is indisputably true, as a consequence of the past three weeks. We shall look forward to future contributions from the hon. Gentleman.

I should like to say equally pleasant things about the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but they would not be true. He did not do himself any good in his speech, nor during his exchanges with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). The right hon. Gentleman displayed a degree of oversensitiveness and irritability. For the first time, it made me wonder whether we are wise to press for the presence of television cameras in the Chamber. If world markets had be able to see the look on the Chancellor's face—the clear state of anxiety and agitation — panic would have been conveyed to markets here and abroad.

It was not only the manner of the Chancellor's speech that was worrying. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and others put their fingers on a central and worrying point in the right hon. Gentleman's analysis. The Chancellor was challenged by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East as to what he would do if the United States Government followed his advice and cut their budget deficit, with the subsequent contraction of world demand, and what he and his colleagues in the G7 countries would do to expand demand to offset the deflationary influences of the American economy. His answer was one of the most negative and worrying statements that I have heard. He dismissed out of hand the possibility of using public expenditure and the public sector borrowing requirement or a range of direct measures that are available to the Government to compensate for a massive loss of demand elsewhere.

As we approach the end of the third week of disorder in the stock and currency markets, none of us can doubt the considerable dangers that face the western world. Thousands of millions of pounds of capital values have been wiped out, with all the effects that that will have on consumer demand, capital investment and commodity prices. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) for bringing the consequences for the Third world into the debate. It is difficult to quantify these matters, but the effects will be severe. The central task of the British Government and the other leading industrial nations is to prevent the current disorders in the money markets leading to a serious recession in the real economy. I hope that hon. Members can agree on that point.

The Chancellor has done all that he can by verbal reassurance to stabilise the market. Yet successive statements in the House over the past fortnight — following two successive 0·5 per cent. interest rate cuts — have been followed by further declines in the *Financial Times* index.

As to the current state of the British economy, I agree with the Chancellor that the stock exchange has overreacted to a ludicrous degree. Now that our own market, with the Government's enthusiastic encouragement, has simply become a component in a global stock market, it is hardly surprising that our stock exchange is just as much, if not more, influenced by events in the world economy as it is by the fortunes of the British economy alone.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East was right to stress the fact that the basic imbalance between the current account deficits of the United States and the current account surpluses of Japan and Germany are a major source of instability. It is a mistake to have a one-sided view. The United States had a deficit of $140 billion in 1986, but Germany and Japan had a combined surplus of no less than $122 billion in the same year. This year the United States deficit will be $147 billion and the German and Japanese surplus will be no less than $132 billion. Next year, although the United States deficit is forecast to fall to $126 billion, the surplus of Germany and Japan is still estimated to be no less than $116 billion.

In my view, the failure of Germany and Japan to expand their internal demand is just as culpable as that of the United States in failing to bring its external account closer to balance. Indeed, I would say that it is more culpable. The United States deficits have been the only real engine of world economic growth in the past five years. If the United States market had failed to grow, and if exports from other countries, including the Third world debtor countries of Latin America, had been choked off by American deflationary measures, the world economy could just as easily have been plunged into recession and the world money markets disrupted by successive debtor defaults among the main debtor nations. By 1988 the United States is scheduled to have halved the deficit levels incurred in 1985. More rapid progress would give some benefit but, if it is not carefully judged, the American economy could easily tip over into recession. It is for that reason, and because I cannot believe that megaphone financial diplomacy makes sense, that I regret the over-emphasis placed by the Chancellor in his Mansion house speech on the correction of the American budget deficit alone.

Two things are needed. First, we need steady opinion and clear evidence that the United Kingdom Government have recognised the threat to the British economy and are ready to take effective measures to counter the onset of recession. Secondly, we need support for essential international co-operation to bring some balance and stability back into world trade and exchange rates and to foster economic growth.

On United Kingdom internal action, I very much regret the fact that the Chancellor did not take the occasion of the Autumn Statement to announce substantial increases in public expenditure. If only a year ago, when presenting the 1986 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor was able to congratulate himself on his prudent management of the economy with a £7 billion PSBR—equivalent to 1·75 per cent. of GDP—surely a year later, and in the aftermath of the London stock exchange collapse, he could have announced measures to strengthen the British economy well within last year's prudent PSBR target of £7 billion. That would not only have been extremely welcome to those who have pressed for so long for improvements in infrastructure and for better public services; it would have ensured an additional increase in GDP next year of about 1·5 per cent. I heard somebody say that that would be inflationary. Why should it be more inflationary this year than the £7 billion PSBR was last year when we were managing our affairs with prudence?

By limiting the increase to a mere 1·75 per cent. in real terms, the Chancellor has failed to use the main instruments of counter recession policy. He still has the fiscal judgment to make at Budget time, and I have no doubt that he will be looking for a cut in income and other taxes. There is no certainty that such increased purchasing power will lead to increased expenditure or that if such expenditure did take place it would not take the form of increasing imports rather than a stimulus to the British economy.

We must look to international co-operative action for the crucial decisions in the period ahead. The Louvre accord and the Plaza agreement have had great success in achieving a managed realignment of currencies and a successful and major devaluation of the dollar against the deutshmark and the yen. I am sure that the Chancellor will wish to sustain and reinforce those beneficial agreements. I hope that we shall hear confirmation of that from the Minister in his reply to the debate.

Exchange rate and interest rate policies, although extremely helpful, are not enough in themselves. It is essential that the economies of the Western world should better co-ordinate their policies of economic growth than they have in recent years. World economic expansion cannot now be left to the United States alone. The burden has to be taken up by other major industrial countries such as Britain and France, but most notably by Japan and Germany. I hope that the Government will put their full weight behind that essential aim.

6.46 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on his excellent and extremely interesting maiden speech. He spoke not only with great gusto but with considerable authority. We are not just mouthing words when we say that we look forward to hearing similar contributions with similar authority in the coming weeks and months. He did extremely well.

The difficulty that has faced the Labour party was well described in an article about 10 days ago in the *Financial Times*. That newspaper is not always a paid-up supporter of the Government. However, a political correspondent pointed out that the Labour party would be unable to say anything intelligent or sensible about the economy as long as it was unable to recognise what had happened in the economy. If it persists in asserting, against all the evidence, that everything is hopeless and that difficulties are worse than ever, and if it is unable to see that there have been fundamental improvements in the structure of the economy, such as those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry, it will continue to make banal and unconvincing contributions to the debate. I am afraid that that is the problem that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr Smith) was caught up in today, and it almost sunk him completely when he tried to put forward his ambiguous position.

Whatever the dangers in the world — they are considerable — the reality is that this vessel, the British economy, is extremely seaworthy and in much better shape than it has been in the past. That does not mean that we will not be rocked about, but it is in good condition, and credit for that goes to my right hon. and hon. Friends, especially to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has supervised the recreation and rebuilding of a more seaworthy British economy than in

[Mr. David Howell]

the past. The London stock market took an enormous buffeting. It was greater than many people expected, but it was paying the price of being a truly global stock market. When it was the one market in which people all over the world could sell their shares rapidly, they naturally chose London. That does not mean that the United Kingdom economy is not extremely sound and in excellent shape. There should be no ambiguity about that. If Labour Members want to join in the debate on how to handle the difficult world conditions, they should get away from their blind dogma that everything is disastrous, recognise the achievements and learn how to build upon them.

During the past two years my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has led the way in international co-operation. He has taken a substantial lead. He has been able to do that because the British economy is sound and is no longer weak and in debt as it was under the Labour Government. That has helped greatly to steady the international situation. I am predisposed against currency intervention. It is very difficult, it works only if it moves with the market, it can cost a great deal and it can be highly ineffective. However, we must face the fact that with vast capital movements around the world that have nothing to do with currency requirements for trade a degree of cushioning and moderating of currency volatility is desirable. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has recognised that and, with his international colleagues, has moved urgently and constructively to meet the need.

Having said that, I suggest to my right hon. Friend that there could be a limit to the usefulness of what might be called America-bashing. The United States deficits are very swollen. However, the plain fact is that even if it is wrong that they should be so large — and there are reasons for that which have not yet been mentioned — there will be no change overnight. If the world's policy-makers wait for miracles to happen in Washington, and for major cuts in the budget deficit to be achieved by big tax increases or expenditure cuts, there is a danger that they will be disappointed. As the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) said, the American constitution, from its inception, was constructed and designed to prevent rapid Executive action. It is certainly not designed to overcome the gigantically powerful spending lobbies in the United States. Therefore, while I hope that we shall hear credible statements from Washington, it is unwise to depend solely on some magic being worked overnight in Washington to correct the fundamental difficulties and imbalances in the American economy. They will take a long time to put right.

It is important that while we wait for that to happen we consider urgently the two immediately identifiable areas in which policy went somewhat awry in Western economies in recent months. We should see whether, by repairs in those areas, we can achieve an early restoration of confidence in the world economy.

Of those two aspects of policy, the first is the Louvre accord, which hon. Members have mentioned. The Louvre accord was the second agreement in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor took a leading part. Earlier he was one of the architects of the Plaza agreement, which was extremely skilfully timed and which was able to influence, stabilise and handle the dollar decline very successfully. The Louvre agreement was reached with rather different ambitions in mind, and we need to consider whether those ambitions should now be modified substantially.

The apparent stability of currencies within pre-set ranges that existed in the summer months of this year covered up the pressure that was building up for the dollar to decline further. People say that the dollar should decline further, but it has already declined. Now the Louvre agreement has momentarily broken down — unfortunately amid open abuse on either side of the Atlantic. Mr. James Baker and Mr. Stoltenberg, for example, have said some unnervingly robust things about each other. When that happened, the seeds were sown for the very substantial dollar decline that has taken place in recent days.

It is essential that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who has taken the lead as an architect of international co-operation, should come to the fore and apply his enormous talents to building a better system that can deal with crises such as that which developed when Japanese and German interest rates momentarily rose and caused the Americans to grow angry. That is precisely the sort of crisis that should have been handled by a sensitive and flexible Louvre accord, based on discreet and close understanding between finance Ministers and central banks. Many people thought that we had such arrangements in place, but it turned out that we had not. I believe and hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is now putting his talents to rebuilding such arrangements, because that is the first requirement if we are to begin to see confidence restored. It is no use waiting for the miracles in Washington, which will take much longer. We must move on that front now, and I think that my right hon. Friend pointed in that direction in his speech in the City last night.

The second change that is immediately required, and immediately possible — in contrast to our longer-term hopes — becomes clear when we turn our eyes to Japan. Like the American deficit, the Japanese surplus will take a long time to go. There is no more chance of turning the Japanese into a high-consumption, low-saving society overnight than there is of curing the United States budget deficit overnight. In the meantime, the Japanese have a duty similar to the duty that fell to this country in the 19th century when we dominated the world with our exports. That duty is to maintain massive capital outflows from the economy to finance and stabilise the rest of the world. That is what has happened in the past two years, with the Japanese financing the United States deficit. One could argue that there was some justice in that because the United States deficit was driven, at least in part, by defence expenditures incurred to assist Japanese interests. That uneasy settlement seemed to work for a time.

When the Japanese withdrew from the United States bond market and ceased to finance the United States deficit some spotted the danger signal and others did not. The Japanese withdrawal in April led to the gradual unfolding of the crisis. At this stage, pressure should be exerted, not so much on the United States, but on Japan, which should be urged to fulfil its role of maintaining its capital exports. I do not much care how the Japanese go about that. Perhaps they should go back to the United States bond market. Perhaps they should massively increase their grants to developing countries. Perhaps they should make a more direct contribution to the world security system. There are many ways in which they can maintain a massive capital outflow. Unless the Japanese do that, the lack of confidence and misery of recent days will continue.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) is very experienced and has lived through and served in Governments through many crises. However, I do not share his view that we should all deliver good lectures to the Germans and Japanese on how to expand their economies. For one thing, I do not think that would have very much effect, and for another, careful examination of the evidence shows that the Germans and Japanese have done a considerable amount. One does not get a clear impression of that because German official rhetoric is designed to disguise the fact that the German economy has expanded or has been accommodating in any way, but today, with the cut in the Lombard rate, that has become very evident. The Japanese, too, have increased their imports vastly in recent years. Japan is a conservative society, but it has moved to meet the situation, not only by its standards, but by anyone's. We should not be bashing Germany and Japan. Instead, we should move forward with a new and modified Louvre agreement.

Opposition Members will not share my view that by far the wisest course for any one country to follow is to do what we are trying to do against the coming storm— batten down, maintain sound public sector finance as far as possible, and concentrate in every way on improving the flexibility and the supply side of the economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry suggested that we should expand Jaguar and other volume car sales into other markets and that is how we shall achieve that aim. We shall do so, not by throwing higher public spending at problems, but by improving the capacity of our economy to operate in the new and much bumpier conditions ahead.

Perhaps we should relax a little on monetary and fiscal matters, given that the world inflation risk is now very low and that the price of oil will fall in the new year, albeit not dramatically. There is no world danger of inflation. However, the idea that we should answer the problems of the coming storm by piling on more sail in every direction and waiting to be blown over—or urging the Germans and the Japanese to do so—is absurd, dangerous and irresponsible.

I must tell my right hon. Friends something that I suspect they know already — that another financial earthquake could happen again if we simply sit around waiting for something to happen in Washington that will not happen in the short term. In dealing with past policy mistakes that must be put right it is far better to concentrate on what is within the Government's capacity to achieve than to wait for developments in either Washington or Japan that are concerned with the fundamental imbalance of the world economy. That imbalance has developed over many years and will take many years to put right. Let us instead concentrate on a modified Louvre agreement, with the Japanese resuming their capital support and capital exports, thereby giving the world at least a breathing space to restore world stability and growth, and then build on that.

7 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As one of the 1987 intake, I add my congratulations to those already expressed to the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on an exceptionally coherent maiden speech. I think that Opposition Members would be about 80 per cent. in agreement with him. The hon. Gentleman represents a constituency just north of the great dividing line—often described as running from the Severn to the Humber— as I do in representing Cardiff, West. It is a part of the country that is familiar with adversity, so we can speak with a great deal of sense about the real world in which we live and the problems that the country faces in trying to adjust to the events of the past eight years.

In that spirit of inter-party co-operation, I think that we all agree that tonight we are discussing the death of Reaganomics. As we know, that comprises seven or eight elements: the obsession with tax cuts, depressing levels of benefits in the welfare state and the attempt in initial years to raise the currency to artificial levels— which were intended to apply a cold shower to manufacturing industry that was thought to have outdated practices, strong trade unions and dependence on smoke-stack industries, creating what, in the north eastern part of the United States, became known as the Rust Bowl — union bashing, popular capitalism, supply-side economics, enterprise culture, deregulation, particularly of airlines and financial markets—which led to takeover mania— and a huge expansion of credit. Of course, the Opposition accept that, happily, none of those factors applies in this country—they play no part in this Government's policy; they are purely American phenomena. Therefore, we are glad that the Government are trying to dissociate themselves from Reaganomics. They are ditching President Reagan in his final year of office, and they claim that the problems in America are not ones that this country could ever face.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the problem in America does not revolve around the items that he listed — some of which are admirable—but has happened because America tried to apply those policies before it had brought its deficit under control, unlike this Government? That is what has given our Government so much flexibility but has caused the problem in America.

Mr. Morgan: I could add further items, such as military spending. Indeed, the way in which the British economy has developed shows remarkable similarities to the American economy. An example of that is the level of manufacturing investment. It is one area on which I disagreed with the hon. Member for Boothferry. He claimed that the British economy was now more efficient than it was in 1979 and, therefore, was far better placed to weather the storm.

However, we know that manufacturing investment, even at the height of what the Chancellor likes to call the great boom economy, is 7 per cent. below its 1979 level. That poses certain problems in weathering the storm. Indeed, at the gathering last night the Governor of the Bank of England—and I am sure that the Chancellor heard him — said that he was worried that the crash would affect the recovery of industrial investment that is essential to sustain non-inflationary growth. The recovery of industrial investment has not yet returned to its 1979 levels, and the crash may depress its current level that is already 7 per cent. below that of 1979.

I think it fair to say that we are currently somewhere near the top of the trade cycle, but with a downturn very likely, what will next year's industrial investment be compared with 1979? It makes us wonder how we can have

[Mr. Morgan]

that boom economy when industrial investment is so low. It is a distorted economy because it has been run on similar lines to the American economy. There has been far too much union bashing, caning of the traditional smoke-stack industries, deregulation and takeover mania. Financial investment has become more important than capital investment. The Government have deliberately encouraged the enterprise culture and popular capitalism, which have taken precedence over the encouragement of industrial investment, infrastructure, education, research and development and all the other matters on which the Government should be concentrating.

We do not have a more efficient economy, only a smaller and more distorted economy — not a healthy position with a likely downturn next year. The Opposition are not alone in predicting that downturn—it is widely predicted in the London Business School forecast published this week. Indeed, most commentators agree that it will be extremely difficult to maintain our levels of exports, especially to the dollar areas, during the recession that is bound to happen as America does exactly what the Chancellor told it to do through his megaphone of international co-operation last night.

What have been the effects of the distortion caused by encouraging deregulation in the financial markets and the "anything goes" atmosphere that has applied equally to both the City and to Wall street? We have closely intertwined financial markets—indeed, they are almost as intertwined as our stocks of Trident missiles, as was announced two weeks ago, much to the amazement of the Opposition. Furthermore, so intertwined are they that the flurry of arrests and the attempts to correct the excesses of the City following the Guinness takeover of Distillers would not have happened but for American corrective action of its takeover mania on Wall street.

If I understand it correctly, District Attorney Giuliani of the New York district court became bored with Mafia bashing and turned his attention to the revelations of insider traders Dennis Levine and Ivan Boesky about City misdoings. The Opposition heard the evidence of that with a feeling of great alarm. It is the product of the attempt to inculcate an "anything goes" atmosphere and takeover mania, which themselves were brought about by excessive concentration on deregulating financial markets and the neglect of industrial investment. That had distorting effects on the real economy and has created the inability to weather the storm next year. It leaves the United States of America and the United Kingdom with far too little manufacturing industry and Germany and Japan with perhaps far too much for their own health. It certainly leaves Britain with too little to solve the problems of 2·75 million or more unemployed and the prospects of a recession next year.

The attempts to inculcate popular culture reached a further ludicrous level one week ago today, with the decision to proceed with the BP share sale. Such sales have become an important part of the Government's philosophy. They maintain that we must get more like America, that we must spread share ownership among the people, and that we must—in this case—pour troubled oil on the troubled waters of world financial markets. A top American stockbroker — not Goldman Sachs — referred to it as the charge of the Light Brigade. Opposition Members watched with great alarm the Government's extraordinary decision to proceed. Obviously, they suffered from indecision about it as they decided to suspend the advertising campaign.

How narrowly was disaster averted? If the BP share sale had been one week earlier, or the crash had been one week later, how many small shareholders would have been dragged into a stock market which they did not understand but had entered because they believed every word of the £20 million advertising programme. Conservative Members have to concede that that would have been the end of popular capitalism in the stock markets in this country, and of any prospect of wider share ownership for at least a decade. All hon. Members would concede that that would have happened if the timing of either the crash or the BP share issue had been altered by one week. I think that I am being fair to the calendar and to the sequence of events last week.

When the Chancellor decided to proceed with the share sale one week ago, there was a wonderful explosion of enthusiasm from Conservative Members. Coming from the Principality, I was reminded of those odd occasions at Twickenham when England scores a try early in the game, and takes an early lead, and a section of the crowd who bear more than a passing resemblance to Conservative Members realised that it may be their only opportunity to let some air out of their lungs. Knowing that the final score will be pretty dire, they decide to take a little comfort.

In the few moments before the Chancellor said, "However, in order to avoid unstable markets", Conservative Members availed themselves of the opportunity to cheer. We have seen the extraordinary debacle, the real BP share price continuing to drop and the buy-back option being extended by a further two weeks, if I understood correctly the Chancellor's statement. The stock markets have failed to respond to the buy-back option and to yesterday's half point cut in interest rates. Share prices continue to slide.

I do not know where the Chancellor will attempt to put his sticking plaster next. He has been rushing around blaming the Americans, cutting interest rates and providing a buy-back option to prevent BP and other share prices from falling. I am not sure what other options he may have in mind, but if people believe that such tinkerings will solve the problem of the world economy they probably believe that bicycle clips are an effective cure for diarrhoea.

The problems are deep-seated. Conservative Governments are in charge of seven of the major countries of the Western world and their tendency to blame each other increases daily. The problems in our economy which has been distorted by borrowing ideas, though not money, from Reaganomic America is becoming more serious as we go over the top of the trade cycle and down into the recession that all independent commentators are expecting next year.

Far be it from me after the events earlier today to suggest that in the remainder of his political career the Chancellor may be thinking of taking up non-executive directorships with BP, N. M. Rothschild or anybody else. I am sure that he will be far too busy with his new post as chairman of "The Narrower Share-Ownership Council".

My hon. Friends and I want a less distorted economy, more industrial investment, more infrastructure investment, more research and development and more education and training because, above all, instead of selling our future as the Chancellor keeps doing, we should use the strength that we have to buy our future.

7.14 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I shall not follow too closely the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) because he went rather wider than I intend to. However, some of my remarks will follow the course of his, and I hope that my speech will not be altogether out of the context of his contribution.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), in his absence, on an admirable maiden speech. He spoke, not only with great clarity and style, but positively. I am glad that he paid such a graceful tribute to Sir Paul Bryan who was a special friend of all Conservative Members. However, I advise my hon. Friend that when he recounts a funny story he should at least acknowledge the author. I hope that on another occasion he will do so.

I pay credit to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his achievements, which many commentators have put down to luck.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) *indicated assent.*

Sir Peter Hordern: I notice that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is one such person.

There is no luck in consistently reducing the public sector borrowing requirement and removing many of the restraints that have handicapped our economy for many years and, at the same time, increasing public expenditure where it matters most. It is not a lucky chance that productivity is at its highest level for many years. At any time my right hon. Friend might have fallen victim to the siren voices of some of my hon. Friends or to the foghorn voices of Opposition Members, who still continue to urge him to spend more money and indulge in deficit financing. My right hon. Friend has resisted them all and has never fallen victim. Therefore, he has every right to claim that he has followed a most prudent and direct course in keeping public expenditure under control, although sometimes expenditure has gone a little further than was originally intended.

I think I am right in saying that, when my right hon. Friend was Secretary of State for Energy, the National Coal Board amassed substantial reserves of coal under his guidance before the strike and today we are in the strongest possible position to withstand a buffeting in the world financial markets. My right hon. Friend will know, because he is a complete realist in such matters, that there is certain to be a buffeting. Through no fault of our own, the outlook for the world economy is distinctly rocky at the moment. Stock markets everywhere reflect that. It is absolutely right to criticise the febrile nature of stock markets and the fact that they have fallen so far. However, on all past criteria they were far too high before the crash and it is by no means certain that the fall has finished. There is no just price for equities, only a relationship with bonds and the outlook for growth. That outlook is now in doubt because of the internal and external deficit of the United States.

We have all derived much benefit from the expanding market in the United States of America of the past five years. That applies not least to Japan, which until now has been quite happy to finance such expansion. Let us suppose that the United States acts to correct its deficit. What would we think if it withdrew some of its large strategic investments abroad, such as its 300,000 armed forces in western Europe? Only yesterday we had an assurance from the President that no such thing would occur. However, it would be tempting, to say the least, for Congress to look for means by which it could reduce its overseas deficit.

Mr. Budgen: I ask my hon. Friend to make a leap of the imagination. If he were, for example, a farmer in the mid-west who had been brought up with isolationist tendencies, and if, by chance, he happened on one occasion to listen to some of the advice that has been showered on America recently, might he not feel rather offended by that advice and even come to the conclusion that it would be a good thing to withdraw American forces from Europe?

Sir Peter Hordern: That is a risk that we should all be aware of. What would happen if Congress and the President enforced an Act to restrain foreign trade? I read Samuel Brittan's article in the *Financial Times* today, which stated that there was an agreement among senators to block any such move. It could well be a close-run thing, and pressures for trade restrictions are bound to grow. We should be willing to heed the concern of the United States about the effect of the common agricultural policy and the European Airbus, about which it feels strongly.

Let us suppose that the United States reduces its internal deficit by applying a petrol consumption tax. That would reduce internal demand and ultimately the demand for our exports and those of western Europe and Japan. However, let us suppose that the United States does none of those things. We have been urging the United States to reduce its internal and external deficit for a long time, but let us suppose that it follows a policy of masterly inaction. That is at least as likely as that it will follow the harsh regime that is proposed for it, not only by hon. Members here, but by many other countries. The United States might simply muddle on. What price the Louvre accord then? Keeping the dollar at more or less current rates is proving an extremely expensive business. The Germans are fed up with propping up the dollar, because of the effect on their money supply and, ultimately, on inflation. It is no use Mr. James Baker sounding off against Herr Stoltenberg. I have long admired West German monetary policy, and Germany cannot be blamed for not being prepared to import or risk inflation.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor says that there has been a substantial inflow into reserves, amounting to about $16 billion. That figure is recorded in the Grey Book. We have been supporting the dollar at great cost. As the House knows, to nullify that expansion at the cost of supporting the dollar, if we are not to have any monetary consequences, we will have to sell the exact equivalent amount of gilt-edged securities to the non-bank public, and that sum would have to be added to the public sector borrowing requirement. I have no idea what that would mean. It could amount to £5 billion or £6 billion. Therefore, although the PSBR is low, I do not think that it is quite what it seems.

I did not hear exactly what my right hon. Friend said, but he may decide that he need not fund that extra amount and the cost of intervention in various foreign exchange markets because the monetary policy could accommodate it. It is no longer any use trying to follow the formerly

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magic figures of M0 and M3. I like to think that there is no greater devotee of these matters than myself. Indeed, I often think that I am the last remaining monetarist. I have done my best to follow those figures, but it is no longer any use. If any hon. Member wants to know what monetary policy is, it is whatever my right hon. Friend says it is.

It is perfectly true that expectations about spending may have changed. I believe that that is the case. However, just a few months ago, at the beginning of August, so far as monetary aggregates were concerned, my right hon. Friend thought it right to put up interest rates. Of course, it is the shock from the stock markets that has now induced him to reduce, or cause to be reduced, those interest rates, not once, but on two occasions. Add to that the increase in the money supply that is likely to come about by continued intervention in the foreign exchange markets and I believe that there will be a substantial increase in monetary aggregates.

We should not spend too much time trying to support the dollar while the United States prevaricates. That is likely to be an expensive course. If there is a fundamental imbalance, there is nothing to be gained by such a game.

I recall the words of Sir James Callaghan when he was Prime Minister. He mentioned a convoy of countries, setting off, not only in perfect harmony, but with engines going rather faster than they were designed to go, steaming to the promised land of eternal growth.

I recognise that the comprehensive discussions with other countries are necessary. No doubt they will proceed. I hope that no one thinks that the result of the discussions will lead to a massive growth that will be able to recover the American deficit. I do not believe that. There is no future in such an arrangement. Perhaps that is not what my right hon. Friend has in mind. It will not work. We must take account of matters as they are. It will not be easy. It is better to allow the dollar to fall to the level at which its payments may balance—whatever that may be —than to prop up a system with increasingly reluctant allies to support a rate for the dollar that cannot be justified.

We can do something about the situation. It does not consist solely of lecturing Japan and West Germany about expanding their economies against their will. Ages ago we should have reduced the tariffs that we mounted against United States exports. Of course, it can rightly be said that the United States has a most protectionist regime, but we cannot claim that western Europe is blameless in that respect. We have only to look at the operation of the CAP and its consequence. It has raised food prices and costs generally for our own people. I have no doubt that that could happen in many other countries. It is all very well to tell the Americans what their duty is, but we have a plain duty to make United States trade exports substantially easier than they are at present. That is something practical that we can do. We should talk to our trading partners about how we can reduce existing tariff barriers. That would do more good than any amount of confabulation about the pace at which we should advance and how much money we should pump into our respective systems.

I do not know whether any hon. Member has woken up in Kansas City on a bright sunny morning. *[Interruption.]* Knowingly, that is. If, by chance, they have done so, they would have been offered some of those delicious American pancakes with maple syrup and a copy of the *Kansas City Star*. If they had looked at the *Kansas City Star*—there are about 32 pages of it—they would not have found a single word about any event outside the United States, and precious few about events outside Kansas. The idea that Americans will be lectured by us or other responsible countries in western Europe demonstrates an active imagination. They will not listen.

What is the real state of the United States economy? What will happen? Suppose the dollar were to fall. Why should it not be a benign economic influence in the United States? There would be a reduction in the inflow of Japanese imports and, I regret to say, from us. The United State economy would be boosted, at least temporarily, until it could become competitive again. That is certainly an attractive course for America. I hope that nobody thinks that America may not favour a marked decline in the dollar rather than adopt policies, even if they are practical and we urge them upon it, which it does not like.

I urge my right hon. Friend, however desirable it may be, not to think that the Americans will take early notice of lectures and rhetoric telling them what to do. They will not listen. We are in a relatively strong position, and we shall need to be during the weeks and months ahead. Above all, I hope that, in concert with our partners, we shall try to take the opportunity to remove the trade barriers that have existed for far too long. We can make a good start with the common agricultural policy.

7.29 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): Black Monday 19 October 1987 may well mark a watershed in post-war history; a watershed in the trading relationship between advanced western industrial nations, a watershed in industrial relations between Britain and other countries, and a watershed in relationships between different groups and classes within our society.

One thing is certain: the events of the past three weeks cannot be passed off as some form of temporary aberration, as an absurd reaction or an example of late autumnal madness. The Chancellor may refer to events in Wall street as the big dipper effect and to subsequent City of London collapse as a grotesque reaction, but some hon. Members might be forgiven for believing that such events are a reflection of the real state of the world economy and markets.

Let us examine the figures. There has been a fall of a trillion dollars in the value of world shares. On Black Monday 1987 there was a fall of almost 23 per cent. on the Wall street stock exchange, compared with a fall of only 13 per cent. on Black Tuesday in 1929. There has been a £146 billion cut in the value of shares on the London stock exchange. Such startling events cannot be dismissed as lightly as the Chancellor would suggest.

Last week, I directed a question to the Chancellor and referred him to remarks in *The Wall Street Journal* and the report from the National Bureau of Economic Research in America which showed that each of the post-war occasions when shares fell sharply had been followed eight or nine months later either by a recession or at least by a severe slowing down in world economic growth. The nub of the question which faces the House, all Western nations, all political parties and the lives and realities of millions of ordinary people throughout the world is this: why should the latest stock exchange collapse be any different from the eight previous post-war collapses? This is by far the most severe. This is the first post-war stock exchange fall to be compared with the events of 1929. It is true that the 1929 collapse was preceded by a drop in investment and production, and the recent collapse occurred during a relative boom—a boom which has been labelled by some economists in their peculiar jargon as a growth recession. Perhaps Chancellors of the Exhequer, economists and I might find that term better explained by Tommy Docherty. When he was manager of Manchester City he was asked to explain his feelings after five successive defeats. Bold Tommy said, "We are rolling along on the crest of a slump." They were brave words from Mr. Docherty. He did not keep his job. The Chancellor's brave words to various stock exchanges and business organisations during the past fortnight will not alter the course of developments that are taking place throughout the world.

It is also true that, compared with the situation in 1929, banks, especially those in America, are not as directly involved with stock exchanges. The collapse of the banks led to the major recession and associated problems in America. Nevertheless, there is a new problem facing the banking world: the Third world debts which will not be recovered over the next few years.

On the other hand, the growing development of the world as a single market, the growing division of labour on a world scale, the scouring of the remotest corners of the world market by investment managers in search of successful investment and the computerisation of stock exchange equipment have led to a much more generalised fall than was experienced on a world scale in 1929. Perhaps we should recall the graphic words of John Foster Dulles who coined the phrase the "domino effect" in respect of the political situation in south-east Asia. Today, the fall of one stock exchange rapidly leads to the fall of others.

I wish to deal with the development of the capitalist economy in the post-war period. Between 1949 and 1973, national output grew by 9 per cent. per annum in Japan, 4·5 per cent. in Europe and 3·7 per cent. in the United States. That post-war boom led to rising profits, reaching a peak in the 1950s and still at about 17 per cent. during the 1960s. It then began to fall, culminating in the first post-war world recession of 1974-75. That recession was followed by a short boom from 1976 to 1979 and by an even deeper recession between 1979 and 1981.

Growth rates between 1982 and 1987 have been significantly lower than those of the 1960s. Japan achieved a growth rate of 3·8 per cent. compared with its earlier rate of 9 per cent., the EC a rate of 2 per cent. compared with 4·5 per cent. and the United States a rate of about 2 per cent. Profits, which fell to as low as 3 per cent. in 1981, have recovered slowly to about 9 or 10 per cent. This is not particularly attractive for investment in the private sector, when investors can receive similar rates of interest from the banks.

The growth rate between 1924 and 1929 was higher in percentage terms than it has been during the five or six years of the present so-called boom. The world came out of the last recession in 1981 on the basis of the demand for goods and labour created in the American economy. That demand was led by the tremendous expansion in American arms expenditure, which is a colossal $300 billion dollars per year, compared with Britain's £18 billion, which is the highest figure of any nation in the EC and far higher than that of Japan. There were false hopes in the United States that an arms drive would lead to increased manufacturing production and success in that country. Without that arms drive, there would not have been even the modest improvements which the Chancellor has attempted to claim over the last few years. Without the American boom and the American arms drive, there would have been no progress and even greater unemployment for the people of Britain and western Europe.

That arms drive, which has led to a deficit in the American economy of between $160 billion and $170 billion, was financed by attracting investment in the American economy from Germany, Japan and other nations, on the basis of interest rates which at one time reached a staggering 19 per cent. That enormous rate of interest explains the present crisis and led to the overpricing of the dollar, the lack of competiveness of American industry and to the twin dilemmas of a budget deficit of about $170 billion and a similar trade deficit as imports poured into America from Japan, West Germany, the EC and, to a limited extent, from Britain.

Two years ago, faced with the collapse of non-armaments manufacturing in America and with the growing tide of demands from those manufacturers for tariffs and restrictions on foreign trade, American policy was reversed. There was a rapid cut in interest rates to the present level of a little under 9 per cent.

Although that reversal did little to stimulate general manufacturing in the American economy, it led to a dramatic fall in the price of the American dollar—an overall fall against other leading currencies of 40 per cent. and a fall of between 48 and 50 per cent. against the deutschmark. Faced with dwindling returns on their investments in American industry, West Germany and Japan moved their investments from dollars into other currencies. That increased America's problems.

It is all very well to talk of world economic co-operation, but, in spite of both the Plaza and the Louvre agreements, the decision of the West German authorities—later withdrawn, it is true—to increase interest rates was the single item which represented the final straw that led to the Wall street crash of 19 October.

The problem in the United States is not as simple as the Chancellor and Prime Minister would have us believe. It is very easy to deliver pious lectures to the American Government about cutting their budget deficit, but how will that be achieved? Will wages be cut or will social wages—welfare payments to the American population—be cut? Such cuts would restrict the ability of the American working people to buy back the goods that they produce. It would lead to a downturn in the American economy and the rapid onset of recession. The Chancellor has called for higher taxes in America, but that would mean a cut in business profits. In America, as in Britain, the vast majority of investment in industry comes from banks rather than the stock exchange or from the profits taken from the labour of working people. An increase in taxes would lead to a fall in investment in American industry and to recession. Of course it may be true that tax increases would mean that the onset of the recession would be slower.

I do not believe that people appreciate the magnitude of the problem. A trade war could develop. I believe that it is ironic that, once again, the Chancellor has poked fun at the Labour Front Bench today. He said that the Labour party has changed its position and is now calling for America to cut its deficit. In anything there must be a sense

[Mr. Pat Wall]

of proportion. I am sure that most people would realise that there is a difference between a lake and an ocean, even if both are manifestly composed of water. It is ironic that the Chancellor who, par excellence, has been the Chancellor of "solve-all" by cutting taxes is now lecturing the American Administration on the need to increase taxes to solve its deficit problem. Indeed, he is also a recent convert to the cutting of interest rates.

A world trade war, sparked off by a recession in America, would have enormous repercussions for other countries. At the moment America takes up 25 per cent. of total world imports and exports only 6 per cent. of its production. Britain exports 33 per cent. of its gross national product, as does West Germany. Holland, Sweden and Belgium export 50 per cent. of their produce. In a trade war, the American economy, because of its continental nature and, even today, its enormous strength, would certainly suffer, but Britain, West Germany, Europe and Japan would face a more devastated future. The Americans demand from the Japanese a 20 per cent. share of the Japanese market. In fact, at present, the Japanese have a 13 per cent. share of the American market. Japan imports only 5 per cent. of its total needs. It is ludicrous to expect the Japanese Government and Japanese big business to quadruple their imports from America. If they did so, a similar demand would be made by other nations of the EEC.

By definition, politicians have a certain amount of ego. There is a certain amount of satisfaction for anyone to go before any body and say, "I told you so. I told you what would happen." Some of us have, for some time, predicted a further world recession in the lifetime of the Government. We feel ourselves vindicated by the collapse that has taken place in the past three weeks on the stock exchange. Indeed, it is a forerunner of the events that are about to take place. However, we witness these events with no pleasure.

Recession means increased unemployment, increased economic misery and increased turmoil among the various populations of the world. There is no joy in poverty and there is nothing noble about it. Many Labour Members, and, I suspect, even a few Conservative Members, have known what poverty and unemployment mean. They may know that through personal experience, or through their families, friends, neighbours or their communities. Poverty is a narrowing, restricting process. It drives people to despair and causes enormous problems.

The folklore of the American 1929 crash — the popular picture — is that of millionaires, jobbers, brokers, company presidents and ex-rich investors throwing themselves from the windows of the stock exchange. Now they have built that building so that that is impossible. Those deaths represented a tiny handful of people, but many more people died as a result of the 1929 crash. In the years of depression that followed 1929 and the massive unemployment that occurred in Germany, in Britain and throughout the world, many people in ordinary families committed suicide. Many people died prematurely because of inadequate diet. Many people died prematurely because of diseases that could have been cured if they had had the money to seek treatment at that time. Many infants died in the first weeks and months of life because they lived in the appalling slums that existed in the cities of the world at that time. Therefore, nobody on the Labour Benches and no Socialist makes the prediction of the coming recession with pleasure.

In recent weeks the Conservative party, officially through the Prime Minister, has said that Socialism is dead. It has been claimed that Socialism is an outmoded philosophy and that its support among the people of Britain will soon die. However, with the pressure of the stock exchange collapse, part of the Socialist ideals have been accepted by the Conservative Government. It may be argued that the stock exchange is of no relevance to the real economy and that is true. More than 90 per cent. of the transactions that take place on the world stock exchanges have absolutely nothing to do with commerce and industry. They are concerned with gambling and speculation in shares, futures and currencies. They have nothing to do with the creation of wealth on a world scale. Wealth is created by the labour of working people in productive industries.

It is on the basis of the wealth created in the productive sectors of the economy—as the Tory amendment partly recognises—that we can pay for the civilising parts of our life: health, education, sport, culture, the arts and all the things that make life richer and more noble. The belief that that is the role of the stock exchange shows that it is not Socialism that is old fashioned, but capitalism, which has gone back to the same old process of the inter-war years.

There have been two old-style recessions since 1975, with two weak booms in between them. We now stand on the eve of an even more devastating recession in the world economy. As we have already seen with the BP farce, much of the gloss has been taken off so-called people's capitalism. Socialism stands for collective decisions and ownership of wealth, and the direction of industrial production to the needs of people and not to a handful of stock exchange speculators who benefit the most. Such Socialism is needed. It is a system of society which will become more attractive.

We are moving into an era of people's Socialism, not people's capitalism. It is necessary, and although we have perhaps not said it very well in recent years, what we are trying to do is to build a plateau — not for the underwriters of the BP claim, but for millions of ordinary people. I refer to a plateau of decency and reasonable living standards, on which people can develop their personal talents, personalities and more satisfactory lives.

Today is 5 November. On this day throughout the world millions of women will spend four hours collecting water and fuel — an economic activity that is not recorded anywhere in world statistics. How ironic that people are forced to that back-breaking labour in a world of yuppies, sunrise industries, space travel and enormous technological development. What sort of system are Conservative hon. Members defending when, in times of recession, only 70 per cent. or less of human productive resources are in use and, in boom times, it is only 80 per cent.? 19 October marked the end of people's capitalism and the beginning of a popular people's Socialism.

7.52 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The House should be grateful to the Opposition for promoting today's debate because Opposition speeches, the Opposition motion and an article in *The Sunday Times* last Sunday, written by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) — I believe that he is to reply to the debate—all show how badly the Opposition have misunderstood the present economic problems. I shall quote one sentence from the article I have mentioned:

"The casualties of the crash have been spectacular. The first has been confidence in the soundness of the government's economic strategy."

If one thing has emerged clearly, it is that the House is not really concerned today with the soundness of the Government's economic strategy, or the British economy.

We confront some extremely difficult financial problems, and it is certainly right to ensure as much international co-operation as soon as possible. The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) said that this was a time in which the speculators on the stock exchange were making large profits. I doubt whether that is the case. The hon. Gentleman also referred to the crash of 1929, but it is important to remember that the Wall street stock market crash did not cause the recession of the 1930s, which was the result of the mistaken reactions of Governments around the world to that event. That is why I believe there are big differences between the two crashes, and it is important to analyse what needs to be done in the present circumstances.

The Opposition motion, and the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), laid particular stress on saying that excessive priority had been given to finance at the expense of the real economy. It is strange that Opposition Members should draw that dichotomy. The reality is that the way in which the Government can influence the real economy is largely by financial means. Of course, they are not the only means, and the Government cannot themselves create wealth. That is done outside the House. But to say that one should concentrate on finance or wealth creation is to create a dichotomy that suggests that one must distinguish between the two. They are intimately related. If one analyses the one wrongly, there will probably be disastrous effects on the other.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East seemed to concentrate on the problem of the United States' external deficit, and suggested that that was a problem for us. However, the fact that the United States is exporting too little and importing too much—much of it from this country—is not the immediate problem. We must spell out the relationship between the fiscal deficit and the external deficit of the United States. Recently the reality has been that the growth of the American fiscal deficit has resulted in higher interest rates, which were necessary to fund it. That, in turn, has resulted in an inflow of funds from abroad, because savings in the United States were not enough to fund the deficit, even at those high interest rates. The effect of that has been to raise the dollar exchange rate, which has made American exports less competitive and imports to the United States more competitive, with a resulting balance of payments problem.

So the crux of the matter must be the United States deficit. That is the root of the problem — not the external deficit, on which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East concentrated.

It is important to be as symmetrical as possible about this issue. Much of the problem arises from the position of Japan and Germany, to which many hon. Members have referred. That is a real problem. For decades, we have found that it is much more difficult to get countries with strong currencies to take corrective measures than countries with weak currencies. That applies all the way from the scarce currency clause of the Bretton Woods agreement. Even so, we must seek to persuade the United States to take effective action, especially on the fiscal deficit. We must also recognise that it is much more difficult for the United States to take that type of action than it is for the British Government. We have a marvellous invention — I am always surprised that no one else has copied it — the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968. It is possible for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to have a discussion in Cabinet one morning, to come to the House in the afternoon and to announce that taxes will change in a matter of hours. It is vastly more difficult for the United States to do that.

Also, the division of powers in the United States between President, Congress and the Federal Reserve creates real problems. Nevertheless, it is urgent that action be taken on the deficit but, for the reasons that I have mentioned, that will mean, in the first instance, a clear statement of intent by the United States. We all know that it is never popular to say that taxes must go up. I do not believe that any declaration of intent on reducing public expenditure in the United States will carry sufficient conviction to restore confidence, which is badly needed in the international community. However, a pronouncement about taxation would have an immediate effect.

We must recognise that there is still a real danger of what the Treasury Committee said in its report as long ago as September 1985. That report spelt out the danger of a hard landing for the dollar if something was not done. A sudden downward slide in the dollar exchange rate would have obvious inflationary implications and would create other problems about the confidence of people from abroad who have invested money in the United States. That could result in a considerable rise in interest rates to offset that fall. As the Treasury Committee said, that would create a serious situation. That is one of the main reasons why it is important that action should be taken on the fiscal deficit in the United States.

It is also important for us to take effective action. The response of the Chancellor in reducing interest rates following recent events was the right one. We must certainly welcome the fact that there has been a similar move in the United States in contrast to what happened after the 1929 Wall street crash. However, there is still further scope for us to reduce interest rates against the background of a situation that is not the same as it was a month ago.

The original medium-term financial strategy set out very clearly why it was intended to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. It was said that that was to be done in order to lead to a reduction in interest rates. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been extremely successful in reducing the PSBR—even if one allows for the fact that to some extent the reduction is due to the proceeds of asset sales. Therefore, we ought to be getting the benefit of that success. We were subsequently told that it was necessary to keep interest rates up because that would have a favourable effect on the United Kingdom's exchange rate. However, we all know that our exchange rate is now very healthy. If anything, from the exporters' point of view, it is rising to levels that are disadvantageous rather than advantageous. That restraint has gone.

The third reason which might justify high interest rates is that the economy might have been overheating. It is

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

extraordinary that the Opposition motion complains that there will be a downturn in the economic growth rate. Of course there is a downturn from the unexpectedly high growth rate of 4 per cent. last year that was set out in the Autumn Statement. Allowing for the fact that the growth rate forecast in the Autumn Statement includes oil, the growth rate in the non-oil part of the economy should still be 3 per cent. The Opposition cannot reasonably complain about that. It is now at a level which, given the events of the last few days and their depressing effect, has taken some of the dangerous froth off the top of the economy which might otherwise have inhibited the Chancellor from taking a more relaxed attitude to interest rates.

As some hon. Members have said, we owe a great deal to the United States for the growth that the world has enjoyed in recent years. I hope that in a spirit of friendly persuasion we can get the United States to do something positive on the lines that I have suggested. In turn, we can respond with a further change in interest rates. That still leaves a problem in terms of the Germans and the Japanese, and we must hope that that problem can be solved by negotiation.

The suggestion by the Opposition that we should have a G7 meeting to sort out the problems is not the right answer. It would be extremely dangerous to have a meeting at this stage unless we were absolutely clear that it would produce positive results. Nothing could do more damage than a G7 meeting that broke down and was seen to have broken down. It is right that my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Prime Minister should continue to seek to persuade our international trading partners to learn the lessons of the 1930s. I think that they have learned those lessons, and if that is so then not only our strong economy but the other economies of the world will manage to weather this financial storm and go on to an improving rate of rapid economic growth.

8.4 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I echo the congratulations offered by my hon. Friends to the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on his maiden speech. I am sure that he will deliver many more interesting speeches. I would be less than truthful to the House if I did not say that my admiration for that speech was enhanced because, due to Committee work, I heard only one other speech in the debate — the speech by the Chancellor. After that speech it was almost inevitable that the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Boothferry should be received in glowing terms.

I listened to the Chancellor in amusement and amazement. It put me in mind of the famous last words of Douglas Fairbanks senior. Before he died he said, "I never felt better in my life." The whole of the Chancellor's speech was complacent, and either he does not or he will not understand the threat of the crisis in the City. I agree with the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) who said that the financial catastrophe might hit us again and that we could not just sit around and wait. The problem facing the right hon. Member for Guildford is that that is exactly the Chancellor's policy. Is it any wonder that Sir Nicholas Goodison, the chairman of the stock exchange, said last night at a dinner which the Chancellor attended:

> "the fall in share prices over the last three weeks demonstrated a massive loss of confidence in the judgment of the world's political leaders."

To whom do the Treasury Ministers think Sir Nicholas Goodison was speaking? Was he speaking about the leadership in the Soviet Union, or China or Taiwan or was he — as he must have been — speaking about the Tory leadership of the seven major industrial powers of the Western world?

I suppose that we should be thankful for small mercies, because the Chancellor has moved somewhat in the last week. When the crisis started a week ago, the Chancellor argued that the stock exchange was acting in "an absurd way" and that it would not affect the real economy. He has now had to admit that the collapse in share prices and the events in America are likely to have a recessionary impact on the economy. It is all the more puzzling that, even though he has moved that distance, he still retains a policy of doing absolutely nothing.

We know that the Government have a 4 per cent. growth rate this year and they say that next year it will be only 2·5 per cent. We know that the inflation rate this year is 4 per cent. Next year it will go up to 4·5 per cent. For nationalised industries, it will probably be 6·5 per cent. and in the housing sector it will be 7 per cent. The Government admit that the trading deficit will be worse next year — up to £9 billion for manufactured trade goods.

There is fear of a fall in growth and an increase in recession, the threat of an American spin-off in the recession and fear of increased unemployment. In that situation, is it not amazing that the Chancellor is without policies? I was tempted to use the simile, "the king with no clothes" but I thought that the image might horrify the House. The Chancellor has no international policy because he will not take a lead in calling a meeting of the major industrialised countries. He has no national policy because he will not take the precautionary or preventive measures that are necessary to protect and to raise public investment.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my other hon. Friends have outlined an alternative. We have called for regulation of the financial markets and for international action. We have also called for a further fall in interest rates and for an injection of public investment into the British economy to prevent a downturn and further unemployment. That is the way to match economic sense and social conscience. I shall dwell on that for a moment, because under the Government those things have been separated and remain poles apart. In one compartment there are the economics of the mad house as they are so often called, and the other compartment contains the philosophy of the poor house which governs the social reality and the social policies of the Government.

Conservative Members have confined the debate to the City of London as though it sits in a little crystal glass unrelated to the outside world. The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) asked that we link the financial and industrial sectors and that we link the debate to the realities of the real economy. We should also link the debate to the realities of the real world, not only the economic realities but the social realities. If we do that, we shall find that the contrast between the Government's treatment of certain sectors becomes all the more stark.

I am not surprised that the Government want to keep their colleagues in the City isolated from any outside reality, because the Government are the party of the City, are paid by the City and are driven by the City, for the City. The past week has illustrated just how far that bias has gone. We have seen the Government running around trying to stop City investors losing their proverbial shirts. The BP share issue proved that, despite all the proclamations of adherence to free market economics, the Government are prepared to intervene in the economy. They are prepared to intervene to avoid hardship and poverty, but tragically only when it is hardship and poverty affecting their friends in the City.

When was the panic when those on the poverty line increased to 18 million? When was the House greeted with hushed statements when the number of people on supplementary benefit increased by 119 per cent. under the Government? When was the midnight oil last burnt by civil servants in Whitehall or the Treasury poring over a solution to the 3·5 million unemployed? When were civil servants paid overtime to work through the night to find a solution to the problem of the 1,200 Caterpillar workers in my constituency who tomorrow will probably lose their jobs?

There was no panic, no statements and no burning of the midnight oil over those issues. For eight years the Government have shown an indifference to growing impoverishment and increasing deprivation among millions. However, they went scuttling back to their drawing board when their City friends faced the grim prospect of having to sell one of their Picassos, while the really deserving people do not have Picassos to sell. They do not have millions to shuffle between frontiers. They do not take their savings bank deposits and deposit them in South Africa because it will earn an extra 0·5 per cent. interest there since that country is guarded by guard dogs and barbed wire. That is the real scandal of the financial crisis.

There used to be a saying that God helps those who help themselves. We should rephrase that. This Government help those who help themselves. They help those who help themselves to the rich pickings of privatisation at the taxpayers' expense. Having helped themselves, those poor Oliver Twists of the City time after time come running back with their big begging bowls demanding ever more. The big, bumbling beadle of a Chancellor is ready to dollop out ever more of the taxpayers' money to bale out those poor Oliver Twists.

That philosophy has never been better illustrated than by the conflicting actions of Government Departments last week. While officers in the Treasury were working their shirts off to save the investments of the rich, the Government were presiding over more than half a million householders who pay tax on incomes below the poverty line. There are three times more on the poverty line than when the Government took office. While the Treasury mandarins worked late into the night to hatch a cunning, expensive plan to bale out the Government's City friends, just down the road their colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Security were beavering away just as hard in an attempt to freeze and eventually to abolish child benefits, despite the fact that 4 million children are now in poverty. While those Treasury mandarins did their utmost to protect the institutions that underwrote the privatisations, they could not find it in their hearts or in their heads to devise a scheme to help those 4 million children in poverty.

When it comes down to it, the City is the friend of the Chancellor. The Chancellor, in an astonishing statement today, said that when he used the word "poppycock" last week he was referring to some of the brokers in the City, yet last night he sung their praises. The peddlers of poppycock of last week have become the cockleshell heroes of last night. For the Tory Government, I suppose that that is how it should be.

The basis of a strong economy is not how loud the Chancellor can shout about cuts in public spending or how often he can lecture the United States on economics; it is the sensitivity of the Government's fiscal policy. By that standard, their record has been one of unmitigated failure. They have shown no sense in their approach to our national assets. They have undervalued them by £2·6 billion so that they could be sold off painlessly to the lucky few. They have shown no sensitivity because, at the same time as they helped investors and their friends in the City, they have abolished the maternity grant and the death grant, income support for young people is being cut by about £6 per week and those who look after elderly or sick relatives will lose their long-term rate of benefit, and will not receive a premium to compensate.

It is difficult to believe that the Chancellor could come to the House full to the brim with self-satisfaction and smug to the point of overflowing when so many people lack the ability to feed their families, to care for their elderly dependants and to educate their children to a standard that one would expect in a civilised country.

Regardless of what the Chancellor claimed this week, the economy is not strong because no country is strong unless it can protect its weak and its most vulnerable. The Government have deliberately followed policies that have hurt individuals but helped big City institutions. They have made millions suffer while a prosperous few have made millions. Now that the Government Benches have some knowledge of the poverty and hardship faced by those outside the City of London in my constituency and the constituencies of other hon. Members, we demand that the Chancellor withdraw the absurd comments he made on Tuesday about the unsoundness of the policies that the Government have been following. He ought to have the guts and the sense to admit the nonsense that he has been speaking and the insensitivity of those policies, and support the Opposition motion.

8.16 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): This evening the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has spread gloom and prejudice with much greater cheerfulness than did his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall). The whole theme of the Opposition's argument has been one of rejoicing in gloom. I think that it was the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) who used a rugby analogy that reminded me of the key match at Twickenham where the England wing three-quarter was carried off on a stretcher. Dai turned to Taffy and said, "Oh, Taffy, I do hope it is nothing trivial." The Opposition really have enjoyed wallowing in gloom. The right hon. and learnd Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) got so intoxicated with the exuberance of his own verbosity that he was caught out in a misquotation. That is something that we shall remember for quite a long time.

We all know that what markets dislike above all is uncertainty, and the uncertainty is over what will happen

[Sir Anthony Grant]

about the United States deficit. I am certainly not going to offer any advice to the Americans. They are overwhelmed with advice and are unlikely to take the smallest notice of me or of any other hon. Member.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Including the Chancellor.

Sir Anthony Grant: Indeed, including the Chancellor. I do not think that they take much notice of him. It is for them to sort out. In seeking to resolve their problems, I pray that they will not resort to an increase in protectionism. I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) in his condemnation of protectionism, and the protectionism that we indulge in. As he implied, it is often the case of the kettle calling the pot black when we pontificate on the issue. Protectionism is very tempting to politicians, especially when one is coming up to an election. It is very attractive, but it must be resisted. I hope and pray that the United States will resist it as a means of resolving its difficulties.

I shall confine my remarks at this hour to one aspect that has not been debated. Nothing that has happened in recent weeks in the upheavals that we have seen in world markets should halt the move towards wider share ownership in our society. I believe that in recent weeks we have had a salutary lesson that wider share ownership is not short-term stagging. If people want that, they had better go to Newmarket or Epsom and gamble. Share ownership means long-term investment. People have learnt that there is no such thing as on and on and up and up. That view has rather dominated thinking in recent years. One of the best things that the Government have done is to encourage the spread of ownership of all kinds, including property, and more recently of shares in British industry.

More than 25 years ago I was a founder member of the wider share ownership movement. I rejoice in the fact that wider share ownership has become fashionable. We have been through some bleak periods. We used to be an all-party movement and great contributions were made by Lord Lever and Lord Houghton, who are both now in another place. That period was followed by the rise of the hard Left and a lack of encouragement from both Labour and Conservative Governments. The concept of wider share ownership fell into disfavour. I am now happy to say that wider share ownership is fashionable again. Indeed, it has even been espoused by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and one cannot be more fashionable than that. I believe in the spread of ownership.

Mr. Gould: I concede that I shall speak later in the debate, but as the hon. Gentleman has mentioned me now perhaps I should make it clear that I have always said that the form of share ownership that I advocate is the employee share ownership scheme where shares are held collectively and not traded on the stock exchange. That would constitute a form of popular socialism rather than popular capitalism. However, I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman is so much in favour of my views on that subject.

Sir Anthony Grant: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is on his way towards supporting wider share ownership. I would go further than the hon. Gentleman's limited view. I encourage employee share schemes within the wider share ownership movement. The hon. Gentleman is well on the way.

I have never understood why it is somehow more moral for ownership to be vested in vast state monolithic bureaucracies than in many individuals. Wider share ownership promotes independence, thrift, provision for the family, support for industry and stability in the nation. Equally, it increases knowledge of our economic and commercial affairs. It was encouraging to see that the chairman of the Trustees Savings Bank received a lot of questioning and heckling from quite humble shareholders at a recent meeting. That is healthy and encouraging. Above all, wider share ownership is a bulwark against the ever-encroaching tentacles of the state in our society.

Ownership takes many forms. Privatisation is just one example that I wholly support. It also embraces the rise in the unit trust movement, investment trusts and the large increase in pension funds, which has benefited many people. Wider share ownership and industry need efficient markets to raise the capital and investment that they require. The City has always provided that with an efficiency and honesty that have been the envy of the rest of the world. We should not forget the development of the unlisted security markets. This is extremely helpful for industry. The third division for even smaller firms is also helpful. They represent a thoroughly healthy aspect that is extremely helpful for industry.

Sometimes I agree that the City's view or the investor's view is perhaps a little short term compared perhaps with Japan, which has an entirely different system. Sometimes the City is a little remote from industry. Therefore, I welcome the work of the CBI-City task force. It is always encouraging to find market makers in the City taking the trouble to go out and meet representatives of industry to find out exactly what is happening on the shop floor, instead of staring at computer screens.

I have spent much of my life working in the City in one form or another, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Paymaster General is on the Government Front Bench. I said earlier that there was a tendency for people to come to the City who were long on cunning and short on morals. If some of those people said, "My word is my bond" one might be well advised to take their bond. However, that applies to a minority.

The City is overwhelmingly populated by people of dedication, honour and ability, and they are unique and admired in many countries. It is entirely wrong to portray the City—as the popular press is inclined to do—as composed of computer-crazed yuppies feverishly buying and selling Porsche motor cars. That is far from the truth. Young and old in the City work exceptionally hard. Indeed, in the recent crisis I went to see the market makers operating, and they were working exceptionally hard to maintain the market. They were certainly answering telephones. They were responding to the needs and worries of their clients and customers in a manner that is to their eternal credit.

I believe that the City will weather the storm. Having given that praise, I want to make one or two observations on what the market should bear in mind. In the City we should remember that commerce and trade flourish more readily and speedily by word of honour than by litigation. The City should realise—most people in the City do realise this—that the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law in City transactions. Creating wealth is just as important as redistributing it. It should be just as rewarding, profitable and prestigious in a free capitalist society to start a small business or manage a medium one as to arrange mergers and takeovers within the square mile. People are very much aware of that. The strength of the economy is such under the management of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his colleagues that we can weather the storm and disregard the gloomy prognostications implied in the Opposition's motion. We can spread share ownership for the benefit of our people and of our nation.

8.26 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): It seems that we are really debating either whether intervention in the market is practical and possible or the way that we should proceed. The Chancellor was saying that it is not a matter of whether, but of when we intervene.

The reality of the Government's policies over the past seven years is that the Government have been preaching —and I did not want to use that word—that we must leave everything to the market. They have said that the market will look after everyone and we should trust the market. What have we learned about the market in the past seven years? What have people learned in my constituency? What has been the experience of people over the past seven years? People in my constituency have heard the Government extolling the virtues of the market. Workers have been told that for the sake of efficiency the market demands that the work force be trimmed and, for example, the thousands who worked at British Steel in Consett were told that the market demanded that they should lose their jobs. The Government said that they could not, would not and must not intervene. The market must be allowed its freedom.

As consumers, people have been encouraged to spend, spend, spend. The market encouraged that. Family credit has been extended to a crippling level. The Government may have been concerned about public sector borrowing, but they have been happy for the markets to encourage private borrowing to record levels.

Many people have been left with serious problems of personal debt. They have also been encouraged in recent months and, indeed, years to invest in the stock market —such investment being in the guise of the reconstruction of ownership of British industry. That is part of the apparent crusade, as the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) has said, to spread control, share ownership and the receipt of profit.

During the past few weeks, those few private investors who were encouraged to invest have found that, far from entering a sane and stable market, they have entered a casino. Again, they were told that the markets would work on their own.

Throughout their recent lives, people in my constituency have been offered that view. For most of their lives, they have contested it, because the details of their daily lives have demonstrated to them that the free market has no humanity, and no respect for liberty or dignity. The market is out of control, and, if I may quote the Chancellor, it is absurd. People have struggled with those views in recent times, because they have been told that they are wrong; they have been preached at. What price have they paid for holding their view, and for the Government's sticking to their view?

I am not one to spread gloom or revel in misery, but we must face the facts, and they are that the number of manufacturing jobs in my constituency has declined by over a third since the Government came into office. In the north, we still have the highest level of unemployment in mainland Britain. We still have the frightening position that half of the unemployed men in the north have been out of work for over a year, and that half of those have been unemployed for more than two years. However, perhaps the most distressing fact of all is that 40 per cent. of all unemployed men in our region are under the age of 30, and 60 per cent. of registered unemployed women in the north are also under 30. It is very difficult, when we face such facts—that is not a nice word, but facts they are—to believe that we are on a sound and growing economic base.

For the past few weeks, we have been controlled by indices: the *Financial Times* index, the Dow Jones index and the Japanese index, which I shall not attempt to pronounce. Those indices have been the news. They have been debated here, they have been gossiped about, they have dominated the newspapers. They are a bit strange to the folk in Durham, North-west, but they, too, read the newspapers, listen to the news and try to deal with what is going on. When I saw some of them last weekend, they said, "What is going on? What has changed? For all these years we have been told that no-one can intervene in the market; that it is not right; that the Government cannot do it." Suddenly, the Government have found it necessary to intervene, have worked hard at finding out how they should do so and, through the Chancellor, have put a floor on the losses that might be experienced by the underwriters in the BP share sell-out.

Some of those people asked, "Why is intervention possible for them but not for us? Why is it possible for the City and not for the folk of the north? Why is it possible for the *Financial Times* index, but not for manufacturing industry?" People, authorities and public bodies in the north have worked hard, and have begun to claw their way out of the recession that the collapse of manufacturing industry brought. Now, however, there is a fear that the storm of the stock exchange will push optimism and growth down again. We looked everywhere for help. We even looked for it in the Autumn Statement, but the Chancellor gave us little hope. He said that, even with his boundless optimism, he could see unemployment falling only to 2·6 million by 1991.

We believe that a sound economy must be based on sound industrial development, with investment in manufacturing, research and development and proper education and training, so that young people who are among the masses of unemployed in the north feel that they have a real opportunity to contribute to our society. The Government have sacrificed those things to their doctrinaire belief in the free market. For us, the message of the past few weeks is that the economy is far too important to leave to chance.

The Chancellor was not prepared to leave the BP share issue to chance. The increased prosperity that he has preached to us has missed nearly half of Britain's population. A truly successful economy would spread the benefit of prosperity to all of our people, not just half of them, and we await anxiously the commitment of the Chancellor and the Government to securing a strong, prosperous economy for the benefit of all our people. However, we fear that the Government are not interested.

8.37 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this point, because, as I drove to the House this afternoon, I had the great pleasure of hearing a programme in which the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) took part. I noticed with what charm and independence she spoke of her distinguished and much-revered father, and how well she came over, and I was interested, therefore, to listen to her speech. Sadly, I do not feel that I can comment on all that she said, but I am sure that she will be a doughty proponent of her Socialist views and supporter of her constituents.

I am sure that you will agree. Mr. Deputy Speaker, from your many years of listening to speeches in this place, that, whenever a great event occurs, everyone says, "That is an illustration of why my particular nostrum ought to be adopted." No matter what the event is, those who have been in favour of growth at any time are in favour of growth; those who have been in favour of devaluation at any time say that this is an illustration of why there should be devaluation; those who are rising men or would-be retreads suggest ways in which they might assist the Government in the circumstances.

It is all very predictable. My hon. Friend the Paymaster General, the new chairman of the Tory party—he used to be a nark with me and he is now before me in his role as the nark — used to be good at reflecting upon Victorian novelists. My recollection is that in Surtees there was a splendid character who believed that the nation's ills would all be cured if more baronets were created. I suppose that one could put forward a respectable argument even for that; that as the thrust towards material advancement dies, so a second injection of energy should be put into our industrialists, so that if, when they get to 50 and are fat and rich, they could know that by working for another 10 years they might finish up as 60-year-old baronets, they would create wealth for themselves and those dependent upon them. That is a nice combination of Tory paternalism and Conservative materialism.

I want to make two points. First, when the crisis occurred people reached for their recollections of what happened after the 1929 crash. Almost everybody in the House was brought up in the Keynesian consensus and we were all told that after 1929 what went wrong was that credit was dramatically reduced. So we heard immediately from the Chancellor that he would make liquidity available so that the mistakes of 1929 would not be repeated.

I took the trouble to look up some of the figures for the period between 1922 and 1929. After the first world war there was a period of inflation which was corrected by monetary means. It used to be thought of as raising interest rates by slamming down on credit. The position between 1922 and 1929 was entirely different from the present position.

I do not want to bore the House at length, but there is a useful book by Mr. D. Sheppard on the growth and role of United Kingdom financial institutions between 1880 and 1962. That shows that between 1921 and 1929 the money supply was consistently contracting. Also, during that same period the gross deposits of all United Kingdom commercial banks were consistently contracting.

The 1929 crash did not come against the background of London houses increasing in value by 25 per cent. It did not come against the background of sterling M3 increasing by 20 per cent. It did not even come against the background of a high rate of growth of 4 per cent., much higher than we have ever consistently been able to achieve in this economy. So to pretend that it is now necessary to ease liquidity because of the lessons of 1929 is just wrong.

If the Government wish to ease liquidity for other reasons, that is another matter. If they want to go for growth, if they think that 4 per cent. is an inadequate level of growth and if they think that it would be in the interests of social cohesion that London houses should increase in value by, say, 50 per cent. per annum, that is one thing. Let them argue it on that basis. But let them not argue it on the basis that the lesson of 1929 inexorably forces them to increase credit in the present circumstances.

Secondly, I underline my support for the splendid speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). He expressed, in a most elegant way, the scepticism that I feel towards the international agreements that have been such a feature of the Government's economic policy these last two years.

It is a bit rough for the Opposition to table a motion censuring the Government for a market collapse resulting

"from failures in international economic co-operation".

There has been the most enormous change in the Government's policy towards international economic policy. The Government are doing everything they possibly can to follow the policies of Mr. Callaghan in 1978. What more can the Government do? The Government used to follow strict monetarist lines. They used to say that the way in which other nation states manage their economies was nothing to do with them. They used to say that all that stuff about the convoy system was dangerous and irrelevant. Now they have been converted to the 1978 policies, yet the Opposition are rough enough to complain about it. What can the Government do to get a good word from the Opposition?

The policy surely will not work. First, we want most of all to demonstrate that our economy is different from that of the Americans. If that is so, why do we want to get into the same boat as the Americans? Why do we want to say that our economic salvation is dependent upon the Americans doing something that they are unlikely to do? After all, if the Americans fail to curb their deficit, which, as everybody in the House fully understands, is fairly unlikely to be done, at any rate quickly, surely the proper answer to investors who may be looking to the Government for guidance will be that the British markets are tarred with the same defects as the American markets. Surely we want politely to dissociate ourselves from the ructions of American markets.

Moreover, is it really likely, if we believe that our salvation comes from economic changes in America, that the American electorate is likely to be vastly influenced by rather impertinent suggestions from foreign politicians. If, for the sake of argument, Mr. Reagan offered a great deal of advice to the electorate in Wolverhampton, I cannot think that they would be grateful for it. I am not saying they would be grateful for my advice, but they might be even less grateful for President Reagan's advice.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor used not to be a great believer in international economic co-operation, but he said this afternoon that these measures were now possible because of the worldwide reduction in rates of inflation. Next year, we shall have 4·5 per cent. inflation. What does my right hon. Friend the Chancellor think that looks like from the point of view of some of our generation brought up in Germany who know the social effects of Weimar? Somebody whose family may have fled from Germany believes that Weimar played an important part in the creation of the social instability which preceded the rise of Hitler. Such a person is not likely to think that 4·5 per cent. inflation is a great triumph over inflation. When such a person hears that the British economy will be substantially relaxed at a time of 4·5 per cent. inflation he may well say, "OK. Get on with inflation if you want to in your economy, but, thank you very much indeed, we have nil inflation in West Germany and that is how we want to keep it."

I hope that we shall learn from the failures of the 1978 experiment and will pursue a policy of decent diffidence in the advice that we give to other nation states, and that we shall not pretend that anything that has gone wrong with the economy has been caused by other nation states or that our salvation will be achieved by impertinently pressing our views on them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I understand that the Front Bench spokesmen will be seeking to catch my eye at 9.10 pm, which means that there is little time left. I hope that it will be spread thinly.

8.49 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) on his paradoxical path, except to observe that the Chancellor in his 1979 guise would have been better at replying to such arguments than he is in his 1987 guise. Therein lies the flaw in the argument, because in his 1979 guise he produced the disasters of 1979 to 1982—thanks to the deflationary policies that the hon. Gentleman was espousing.

We have come to the small print in the Government's prospectus—"not to be read until after the election," and "what goes up must come down." The Government have lived by the markets, and they will now die by them. Their contribution to the real economy has been disastrous. Our manufacturing output still has not reached the level of the second quarter of 1979. Investment is still 7 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. Then we had a surplus in manufactured trade—£2·7 billion in cash terms or £8·8 billion on a unit value basis—but we now have a deficit of £9 billion which is a turnround of £18 billion in adjusted terms. Our growth has been based on a North sea bubble, a consumer boom and asset inflation. One has compounded the other by the continuous creation of collateral, with no substance to it. Tragically, it has sucked in imports. They have been rising in the past three months twice as fast as exports, and even those manufactured exports have become heavily dependent on the United States market, which will become much more difficult to enter as the dollar declines.

To end this fundamental disequilibrium in the world economy, the dollar must decline and probably by about 20 per cent. if the American economy is to pick up. It is no use trying to shore it up by measures such as the Louvre agreement, which then causes distortions in the economy.

As the dollar declines, it is essential that the pound declines with it. The Chancellor's key mistake in recent months has been to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. The devaluation in sterling that stimulated the economy has been totally reversed. Thanks to high interest rates—our interest rates are historically high in real terms, and high compared with our competitors—there has been an appreciation in our exchange rate of 18 per cent. since last September alone. That spells disaster. The terms for manufactured trade are now higher than they were in the disastrous year of 1981. It is essential for the Chancellor to get down the pound by bringing down interest rates. Why, when he has such a low borrowing requirement, are interest rates so high? Clearly the answer is to reward money and his friends.

The present expansion in the economy is good only in contrast with a deflationary Europe, where it is appallingly bad. The Government dare not risk the sort of expansion that would bring down unemployment, because they cannot face the social strains of growth or the improvement in the power and strength of working people and trade unions.

We need some protection for the small investor—the small saver or small pension buyer—who has been lured into the financial market. There was an interesting contrast in the BP shares issue. Some 250,000 suckers were conned by a £20 million advertising campaign into paying an inflated price for BP shares. Yet the Government have not rushed to help them—they will be prosecuted if they do not fulfil their commitments—but they help the underwriters and speculators. Yesterday a massive number of shares were traded on a bed-and-breakfast basis to establish a tax loss for capital gains purposes, which will be supported by the Government buy-back scheme for those shares. Somebody is able to make a killing thanks to the underpinning that the Government have introduced. Yet they have conned the small investor, who has been lured into a financial jungle, where, to change the image, the bears will now be turned loose, and where institutions and firms will be at greater risk and more likely to dip into the small investor's funds without giving him any effective protection.

The Government have not announced the implementation of section 62. The compensation schemes are not being introduced as a matter of urgency. Nothing has been done about the complaints procedures and there will be no special protection for personal pension schemes. The independent representatives on the regulatory bodies have no backing and are pathetic compared with the power of people from the big companies that are regulating themselves. So this has been a disastrous blow to an economy that is becoming a jungle, into which the investor has been lured without effective protection. The weather is now turning cold and hard and there will never be a glad, confident morning again for the stock exchange or the Government—just at a time when the real economy will be facing all the difficulties produced by the over-valuation that the Government have generated.

8.56 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Time and consideration for hon. Members who wish to contribute to the debate do not permit me to answer all the points raised by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who spoke with colourful journalistic rhetoric.

It is a travesty to suggest that the Government do not wish to pursue policies that will lead to higher employment because they are frightened of a resurgence in the power of the trade unions. In their economic and employment

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policies the Government are creating a resurgence in employment. They are determined to ensure that people's labours are usefully used and that the full potential of our economy is realised. I welcome the success of the Government's policies in that regard.

I do not regret the purge that the financial markets have been through. On a slightly pessimistic note, the markets may be in for yet more falls. There is a case for further correction; the dollar is still high, as are some stock markets. The point to which we should apply ourselves is not whether the risk-takers involved in the market may have lost or gained but the impact of it on the economy. In the short term, the effect may be salutary and in the long term it may be beneficial.

Despite what hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, have said, we should have the right to talk to our American allies about the extent to which their economic policy will have an impact on us. Whether America listens or not, and whatever our limited impact may be, we are influenced by what happens there and by the economic policies the United States pursues. A large part of its federal deficit, as well as its trade deficits, must be financed out of Eurodollar markets internationally. A large part of its financial requirement of capital for industry is funded through the United Kingdom stock and bond markets, which are still the largest international markets in the world for raising funds.

I believe that that gives us the credentials to enable us to say to the United States that we look to it to reduce progressively the budget deficits beyond the Gramm-Rudman requirement and that a net reduction of $2 billion over the $23 billion provided for under the Gramm-Rudman rules will not be significant in the totality of world markets or influential in restoring confidence. The longer the Americans wait and the less they do, the more international markets will demand. The longer they prevaricate, the deeper they will have to cut.

Even if it has been forced on the Government by events, I welcome the reduction in interest rates. All hon. Members should recognise that there is no better way of feeding cash flow into companies that employ people and produce wealth for the country than by reducing interest rates. That helps the companies' working capital and margins far more than the most imaginative schemes of employment and industrial support that any Government of any political persuasion could dream up.

We have to bear in mind that, just as much as tax cuts, reductions in interest rates, if they feed through to reductions in mortgage interest rates, help people's propensity to spend. It feeds directly into the net money in people's pocket and should, we hope, sustain us next year, not into a recession but into a period of continued growth, demand for products and investment in British industry.

I believe that there may be a more limited scope for tax cuts in next year's Budget than many commentators and hon. Members believe. If I may say so, the Chancellor and Treasury Ministers should be cautious and circumspect about saying too much or hoping for too much. Circumstances may change if the withdrawal of about a trillion dollars from international markets has an impact on levels of demand in the economy. I hope for further reductions in taxation, but we may have to be more cautious than some people have led us to expect.

I agree with a point that was well made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He emphasised the importance of export credit for our industry. If the exchange value of sterling is high in the next few months and rises further — my professional judgment is that it will rise considerably further—British industry will need even more support.

I would expect Labour Members, many of whom represent areas with substantial manufacturing and industrial companies such as shipbuilding, car industries and so on which need industrial credit, to urge the Government, as some Conservative Members are doing and I am doing now, to look again at the expenditure proposals on export credit and at the proposed reduction in the cover provided for in expenditure next year. We will have to look much carefully at our export performance and ways of boosting our trade to get the sort of growth that will carry us through the storms ahead.

My last 30 seconds gives me an opportunity to mention the lessons of the market. We will have to look carefully at leverage bids, which have become an outrage and are of questionable economic and industrial significance. We should look carefully at the policies of the banks which have been prepared to lend billions of pounds to the smallest of companies to make takeover bids and at the other extreme have been prepared to lend £1 million to a man earning £6,000 a year. At the very least, there are questions that the banking industry should ask itself about the quality of its credit policies. We should also look at the margin dealing and some of the salaries that will inevitably come down in the City.

Those are salutary and purging effects of what has happened in the market and they will not be bad. However, to suggest that what has happened will be fundamentally deleterious to the prospects for the economy or should turn the Government from the path they have set would be an error of judgment. For all those reasons, I hope that the Government will not heed the siren voices of those who would turn them away from the path on which they are set.

9.4 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): I listened carefully to the Chancellor's speech and to those of Conservative Members. The speeches contained many proud, indeed smug, boasts about the supposed strength of the economy. We have heard, not just the Government's fine words, but, apparently, industry's too. We listened to the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) read out all sorts of declarations of confidence and buoyancy from the Teesside chamber of commerce. However, it is odd that at the same time as we hear those smug and confident words it remains the case that investment in manufacturing industry is still 7 per cent. lower than in 1979.

I regard that figure as not merely superficially odd but extremely significant. It provides a real index of the confidence of manufacturing industry — or, more appropriately, its lack of confidence—in the future of the British economy after eight years of Conservative government. British industry's action — or rather inaction — through its failure to invest speaks much louder than its words or those of the Government. Manufacturing industry is not putting its money where the Chancellor's mouth is.

Why is manufacturing industry failing to invest? The captains of industry see very clearly that underneath the glitter and gloss of the casino economy, and the hype of the stock market, the foundations of the real economy are crumbling. That point was made by the director-general of the CBI last Saturday in Glasgow when he contrasted the investment of the United Kingdom with that of Germany. He said that the Germans were spending

> "£2,000 per worker more on fixed investment and twice as much on research and development, graduating 40 per cent. more engineers and scientists and training 3,000 more young people".

Education, training, research and development are the essential foundations of a modern economy, and they have been utterly neglected by the Government. Nothing in yesterday's Autumn Statement or in the Government's programme for this Parliament will remedy that neglect. That explains the mysterious fact that while the Chancellor claims that the British economy is in its strongest state for years — it was described as "seaworthy" by one Conservative Member tonight—our economy is, in fact, moving further and further into deficit on its manufacturing trade. The failure to invest, both public and private, explains why the manufacturing trade deficit will reach a staggering £9 billion next year and why, most revealingly, the Chancellor himself predicts that our manufacturing exports will grow by only 2 per cent. next year, while our imports will grow by 5 per cent. In my constituency we know something about boats, and I must say that I do not find the word "seaworthy" at all apt to describe that state of affairs.

The Government's inaction in tackling the problems of the real economy contrasts markedly and sadly with their readiness to bail out the lame ducks of the City. Why is a lame duck in the City more meritorious than what used to be called a lame duck in industry? Why is it right to intervene to prevent a "disorderly aftermath" of the market in the City—in the Chancellor's delicate phrase —but not in industry? Why is it right to intervene to rescue stockbrokers from losses, but not to give people jobs? Those are the questions that the Opposition ask tonight, and the Government's lack of an answer serves only to expose their hypocrisy.

9.7 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I realise that I shall have to be extremely brief, but we have ranged far and wide in this debate and in the closing minutes I want to take us to another country. On the day of the crash I was in New Zealand talking to a conference of managers. New Zealand is a very interesting country right now. It is going through some fundamental economic changes. Management is eager for new ideas of how to develop business confidence and managerial confidence.

When I arrived in Auckland, I changed flights on to a new airline called Ansett New Zealand — a private operator that has been allowed to break the public monopoly for the first time. The new competition is shaking up the standards of the complacent national carrier. Meals are being served for the first time and terminals are being smartened up—a vivid reminder of the power of competition.

Until 1984, New Zealand was one of the most inefficient economies outside the Eastern bloc. Now, far-reaching deregulation is leading to the emergence of many successful entrepreneurial companies. The new free trade policy means that much of manufacturing industry is facing competition for the first time, and managers in newly corporatised industries are coming to terms with economic reality. As the Government turn their attention to efficiency in social services, managers in many other sectors are having to face fundamental changes. Already much dead wood has been shaken out of New Zealand industries.

On my brief visit I discovered that New Zealand is facing economic realism for the first time in many decades and that it is learning lessons similar to those that we have learnt in the United Kingdom. While I was in New Zealand the country received another, very distinguished, visitor from this place. He is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench and is to reply to the debate in a few minutes' time. He is something of a disciple of economic realism —certainly a good deal more so than many of his hon. Friends. If New Zealand press comment is to be believed, he said that he had gone there to learn and not to advise. That is probably just as well, because his advice, if it followed the Opposition's beliefs, would have been unlikely to have been taken. He could have learnt a great deal more by staying at home and listening to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Unlike the British Labour party, the Labour party in New Zealand has discovered a little economic realism. It is amazing that it has implemented with such vigour policies generally associated with the Right.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) quoted from *The Sunday Times*. I shall quote from last week's edition. The leader stated:

> "A student of O level economics could have produced a better essay on the crash than the Shadow Cabinet's statement."

The wealth of any nation is determined by the commercial activity of its organisations. Any Government's job is to create the economic circumstances in which businesses can survive and succeed. What irks the Opposition so much is that we have achieved that so successfully. It is why so many overseas Finance Ministers have increasing respect for the United Kingdom.

We need only to look around the world to see examples in the number of so-called Socialist republics now introducing capitalist principles. China, the oldest civilisation in the world and with 25 per cent. of the world's population, is now experimenting successfully with capitalist principles. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about the time?"] I know that the debate is drawing to a close, and I am about to conclude my remarks. The reality is that if the Governments of other countries had been as prudent as this Government, there would not be a world financial crisis.

I must repeat that *The Sunday Times* said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down."] Opposition Members may not like it, but I remind them that *The Sunday Times* said:

> "A student of O level economics could have produced a better essay on the crash than the Shadow Cabinet's statement."

I will not go quite that far, but I do believe that the Opposition would be as qualified to handle our economy as King Herod would be to act as a babysitter.

9.12 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): It is pleasant to begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on an excellent maiden speech. He spoke in a fluent and attractive manner and his speech had the additional

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merit of containing much with which I agreed. He will certainly hear an echo from the Opposition Benches of his tribute to his much respected predecessor.

Much has been heard following the week of the stock market crash, both in this debate and outside the House, of the supposed parallels between this crash and that of 1929. Fears have been expressed that, unless a proper response is made, the crash could presage a recession on the scale of the great depression of the 1930s. Of course, it is important to avoid the sort of response that monetarist precepts — those at the heart of the Government's economic policy until recently — would dictate and that would plunge the world into a new recession. Memories of the great depression have burnt deep into the public consciousness. There is no one who would not agree that a repeat of that experience should be avoided at all costs. Even the Chancellor, as his Mansion house speech last night made clear, finds it difficult not to pay at least lip service to that proposition.

Oddly enough, the Chancellor does not need to face that problem in precisely those terms—but for reasons that, perhaps, he would not find entirely welcome. Far from being poised on the brink of recession, as we were in 1929, we have actually already experienced it. The true parallel with 1929 is 1979, and the eight years since then offer the closest match with the great depression in the 1930s. It was in the years following 1979 that the Government made the mistakes in policy that the Chancellor now castigates.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No.

No one listening to the Chancellor's complacent, not to say boastful, performance during the last few weeks, in marked contrast to his uncertain and confidence-sapping performance today, would get any clue that on the issues that matter our experience from 1979 until now has been far worse than during the eight-year period from 1929 to 1937, the years of the great depression.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Gould: Perhaps if the hon. Gentleman listens he will learn something.

During the great depression manufacturing output in Britain rose by 38 per cent. In the eight years to 1987 manufacturing output had barely clawed back to where it was in 1979. During the great depression — the great unemployment of popular memory — the jobless total rose by 219,000. The equivalent during the past eight years is no less than 1·7 million. From 1929 to 1937 manufacturing employment rose by 10 per cent., whereas during the eight years of this Tory Government it has fallen by 27 per cent. Those figures, which are dramatically worse than those for the great depression, illustrate all too well why Opposition Members believe that the Chancellor's performance during the past few weeks has been nothing more than a confidence trick. Those disastrous figures for the real economy not only give the lie to the Chancellor's boasting; they also give us an important clue to why the stock market crash has occurred.

In the wake of the stock market crash, the Chancellor, true to form, has not been slow to cast the blame on others. The markets, whose sagacity he has hymned for so long, have now been condemned as absurd; the Americans, whose performance on inflation and unemployment has been so much better than our own supposed success, as vouchsafed to us, have been told that their budget deficit has caused all the difficulties; and the Germans, with by far the strongest economy in Europe, have been lectured by the Chancellor and told to cut interest rates which are less than half the level of ours. None of the Chancellor's excuses explains why the British equity market has collapsed and crashed further and faster than other major markets, nor does it explain why the response to the Chancellor's bullish pronouncements has been a thumbs down from the City.

The truth is that the crash is the eminently predictable result of the constant priority that Governments around the world, led by the Chancellor and the Government, have given to the money economy at the expense of the real economy. The whole thesis of monetarism, of which I believe I can claim to be the longest standing political opponent, is, after all, that only monetary measures matter, and that the real economy will look after itself. We know, and even the Chancellor knows, that our experience has been the reverse of what monetarist theory led many to believe. Monetary policy has proved to be capricious and difficult to control and has had only a marginal and delayed effect on monetary objectives such as inflation, but its impact on the real economy was immediate and devastating.

The Chancellor has professed himself unconcerned at the truly appalling figures for British manufacturing output, investment, employment and trade under the Government. He has blithely assured us that we can rely on services to make us prosperous and he even had the gall to tell the House that the £13 billion turnround in our manufactured trade was "neither here nor there". This callous and foolish disregard for the real economy and of those who live and work in it has been matched by his rejoicing at the successes of the financial sector. The Porsche-driving City whizzkids have now passed into popular mythology, but the phenomenon and the sense of resentment and injustice which it engendered are real enough.

The financial sector has prospered at the expense of the real economy because the Chancellor's policies deliberately made it so. The Chancellor created a huge money-go-round, on which the financiers enjoyed the ride, while the rest of us were taken for a ride. Money which under more sensible policies would have been invested in our industrial base has instead helped us to soak up a huge degree of asset inflation, of which the long bull market and soaring house prices in the south-east of England have been the most obvious signs.

The growth in the value of assets has been artificially inflated by an over-valued exchange rate and that has attracted yet more money. Overnight capital gains were a much more attractive prospect than the uncertain returns from manufacturing investment. We were well and truly launched into a vicious circle. Personal incomes in the City soared. Banks and other City firms became hugely profitable on the back of high interest rates, a spiralling stock market, a rash of takeover bids by firms that would rather buy than invest, and the easy profits from the Government's privatisation programme. Short-termism, so lucrative for the money men but so damaging to those who try to sell their goods in international markets, became the only game to play.

High interest rates hurt industry, especially investment in capital equipment, research and development, and training on which our future prosperity depends. The real economy, and those whose jobs and livelihoods depend on it, has also suffered grievously from the over-valued pound that high interest rates have produced. Perhaps the most telling indicator of the damage that has been done is that, while exports of manufactures have risen by 20 per cent. since 1979, imports of manufactures rose by no less than 70 per cent., or three and a half times faster over the same period.

The disparity between the real and the money economy could be sustained. In the long term, the money economy cannot follow a different course from the real economy, which is lagging behind. The long-awaited bear market simply had to happen. The only question was——

Mr. Higgins *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I am sorry, I shall not give way.

The only question was its speed and timing. In market terms, it was clear that the longest bull market ever known was bound to come to an end sooner or later.

Mr. Higgins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I shall not.

In case Opposition Members did not recognise my earlier words, may I point out that they came from the speech that the Chancellor made last night. It is a pity that he had not thought to warn small investors in the BP share issue about that possibility.

Mr. Higgins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. However, in plagiarising his own article from *The Sunday Times* of last week almost word for word, has he not overlooked the fact that it was a bad article? It was hopelessly and entirely inconsistent. The hon. Gentleman cannot accuse the Chancellor of being a monetarist and at the same time say that he is pumping too much money into the economy.

Mr. Gould: I was afraid that it might be a mistake to give way to the hon. Gentleman. Whatever the merits of that article in *The Sunday Times*, it certainly made a great impact on him if he can recognise it so clearly.

If the stock market crash was an inevitable corrective for the mistakes and excesses of economic policies here and in other countries, which is what the Chancellor is now, in effect, admitting, where do we go from here? In many respects, the Chancellor has now renounced many of the mistakes that did so much damage. Thankfully, the theory of monetarism has now largely been abandoned. Apart from the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who now pays any attention to the monthly sterling M3 figure? Who among the array of hon. Members on the Conservative Back Benches can tell me the current annualised level of growth of sterling M3? How many takers are there? How many Conservative Members understand it?

Sir Peter Hordern: The annual growth is 18 per cent. of M3. The hon. Gentleman will recognise, as my right hon. Friend explained in the Grey Book that was published yesterday, that that was because of the liberalisation of the financial services that my right hon. Friend has brought about.

Mr. Gould: That was a brave attempt by the hon. Gentleman to save his colleagues from embarrassment. Even then, he did not quite get the answer right. The answer is 19·5 per cent. in the year to September. That answer and Conservative Members' inability to answer are the most telling possible indictments of how fundamentally and thoroughly they have cast away what was once the bedrock of the medium-term financial strategy.

Even the Chancellor's ideological objections to public spending seem now to have been mitigated, since he is now inclined to boast about its increase. The Chancellor even boasts now about public spending, at least on a selective basis. He overlooks the fact that he has been forced to abandon his objective of cutting public spending in real terms, and, when that proved impossible, of even simply holding it steady. He has also demonstrated that he will understand the damage that his policies cause. We know that because we have seen his readiness to abandon them —surreptitiously, of course—to produce a pre-election mini-boom. The relaxation of monetary policy, the boost to public spending and the depreciation of sterling at the end of last year all played their part, but, once again, they have now been reversed.

The difficulty is that the Chancellor, although having substantially recanted in many respects and having abandoned monetarism and its theory, still lives in the shadow of monetarism. He is rather like a pagan worshipper whose idol has crumbled but, for want of anything better to do, still goes through the old rituals, shuffles through the old steps and bangs the old drums. That makes the Chancellor's analysis of the current process so fatally flawed. His monetarist attitude leads him to focus, almost exclusively it seems, on the American budget deficit as the cause of all our problems. If the Americans were to follow the Chancellor's monetarist advice, and if interest rates and taxes were to be raised or social security benefits were to be cut, it could only bring the threat of world-wide recession so much closer. The Chancellor's lectures to the Americans about their budget deficit suggest that he has failed to learn any lesson. It is not even clear that he understands the problem himself. At one point in his Mansion house speech last night he said that one of the factors which had provoked the crash was

> "doubts . . . about whether the United States had the political will to hold interest rates at whatever level was necessary, not merely to maintain dollar stability, but also to ensure that the deficit, so long as it endured, was soundly financed."

That and other passages in his speech last night sound suspiciously like advice to the Americans to raise interest rates. How does that square with the passage later in his speech in which he warned against the contractionary policies which had plunged us into recession in 1929? If the Chancellor's public message is so garbled, it is no wonder that the Prime Minister felt constrained to send a private message to clear up the confusion.

The Chancellor remains preoccupied with the monetary policy which caused our problems in the first place, and he risks precipitating a recession if the Americans take his advice to reinforce financial orthodoxy. The real economy is the key to the solution to our problems. The American trade deficit, not the budget deficit, threatens the stability of the world's economic order. There can be no stability until a new balance is struck between surplus countries such as Japan and Germany and those countries such as the United States and United Kingdom which have used

[Mr. Gould]

excessively high interest rates to prop up their currencies and have accordingly got themselves into difficulty. The extent of the dollar overvaluation——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman should know that I shall not give way.

The extent of the American overvaluation is so gross as to be unmistakable. In 1986, the value of American exports had fallen 18 per cent. from their 1980 level, whereas the value of their imports had risen by no less than 104 per cent. Their balance of payments had moved from a surplus of $6·3 billion in 1981 to a deficit of $141 billion in 1986. There is no way in which that trading problem can be overcome by indirect signals to the markets, such as increases in interest rates—indeed, that would make it worse — increases in taxes or cuts in social security payments. There is only one solution to the problem, and that is to get American interest rates and the exchange rate down.

Similar conclusions must be reached in respect of our own economy. If the Chancellor's prescriptions have been so successful, and if our economy is in such good shape, why are our interest rates more than twice as high as German interest rates? The Government always said that the key to lower interest rates was to bring public sector borrowing under control. If that control has been established, why does the Chancellor still have to hold interest rates at such a high levels? Can any Conservative Member, including the Chancellor, give a straight answer to a simple question: why must we hold interest rates at their present level?

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman does not have an answer to that question.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give an answer to a straight question?

Mr. Gould: I gave way on the always risky assumption——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has given way, he has given way and that is that.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give an answer to a straight question? Would he advise the President of the United States to veto the trade Bill which is currently going between Congress and the Senate? That lies at the root of many of his questions.

Mr. Gould: Despite your intervention, which I understand, Mr. Speaker, I repeat that it was a risky business to have allowed the hon. Gentleman to intervene on the assumption that he would answer my question.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I may get an answer this time.

Sir Peter Tapsell: If I may give a personal response to the hon. Gentleman's question, we do not have to hold our interest rates at their present level. We can reduce them again and will do so.

Mr. Gould: That is a very encouraging answer, but the true answer is that we shall not reduce interest rates and they will be held at an excessively high level for one simple reason. The hon. Gentleman knows that reason, and the Chancellor would also concede the point. Unless interest rates are maintained, the pound will fall. The Chancellor claims that he has introduced a strong currency. It is a strong currency which has to be sustained by record interest rates and by 3 million unemployed. So much for a strong currency. If interest rates were reduced, who could doubt that the pound would fall substantially and that the impending balance of payments deficit would be virtually impossible to manage, if it were not for the immense benefit of North sea oil?

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Gould: The Chancellor is in the position of a small business man who, having won the pools, congratulates himself on his business acumen because he has spent every penny on keeping his business afloat. He has done nothing with North sea oil to strengthen our industrial base. He has done nothing to prepare for or invest in our future. Even the assets which have been built up abroad are no more than a pension fund for what he clearly foresees as a geriatric economy when the oil has run out.

Interest rates are the crucial determinant of the policy stance. Interest rates will show whether the Chancellor continues to reinforce past mistakes and to favour the money economy at the expense of the real economy. If interest rates are kept high, the City will applaud, but the real economy will be damaged. Unfortunately for that economy, it is already clear that the Chancellor has again opted for the money men and the financial establishment. Yesterday's feeble 0·5 per cent. cut did no more than complete the reversal of the mistake of August. We already see the consequences of the Chancellor's post-election strategy in the 18 per cent. loss of price competitiveness suffered by British industry over the past year.

It is little wonder that the CBI, despite its brave talk, shows in its latest Quarterly Trends survey that the outlook for exports and manufacturing output is now much gloomier. It is little wonder that the Chancellor is now compelled to forecast a substantial dropping-off in the rate of growth and a worsening of the balance of payments deficit.

The casualties of the Chancellor's mistaken policies, of which the stock market crash is only a symptom, are many and varied. They include any residual confidence in the Government's economic strategy, the future of their privatisation programme and the exaggerated lifestyles and incomes of the money men in the City. No one needs shed any tears over them.

As always, the real casualties will be ignored by the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Conservative Benches. The unemployed will have their hopes dashed all over again. The regions and the inner cities will be condemned again to de-industrialisation and deprivation. Families in poverty will have their precarious living standards further eroded. Those who try to create this country's wealth will lose out to those who merely manipulate it. Only the Labour party speaks up against a policy that is so technically and morally wrong. Only the Labour party speaks up for the national interest and for a society that will be condemned to yet more bitterness and division. We shall continue to speak up until the next election gives us the chance to correct the mistakes that have been so damaging to this country.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you give any time to make allowances for the Liberal and—Oh, I am sorry, there are no Liberal or SDP Members in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order.

9.35 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): First, I join the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on his excellent maiden speech. We all appreciated his tribute to his predecessor, Sir Paul Bryan, who is much respected in this House. I believe that both sides of the House appreciated my hon. Friend's plea for the need to avoid a global recession. I certainly also appreciated his conclusion that the economy was well placed to weather this storm. It was an excellent speech and we look forward to hearing him again.

Although this has been a debate on an extremely serious matter, some hon. Members seemed to herald the crash of the financial markets with a degree of glee, not to say relish. Indeed, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) displayed a degree of relish, although he made his speech with some charm. The hon. Gentleman displayed that relish because he felt that two things were consequential to the collapse of the markets. First, he hoped that the collapse meant the end to privatisation; and, secondly, that it would put a stop to the growth of wider share ownership. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the privatisation programme will certainly continue, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor——

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: In a moment. In his Autumn Statement my right hon. Friend made it clear that we are planning on the proceeds of £5 billion this year and for the two years following that. No doubt it could be argued that the state of the market can affect prices, but, when the time comes, I see no reason why we should not proceed. Indeed, we shall certainly proceed with the privatisation of water and electricity.

Mr. Morgan: I should like to correct what the Minister has said. I said that had the BP shares sale been timed for one week later, or had the crash in the stock market been one week earlier, it would have put an end to privatisation—I am sure Conservative Members would agree—for at least the next decade.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening.

The hon. Gentleman also argued that the collapse of the financial markets would lead to the end of wider share ownership. However, we certainly intend that that policy should be pursued, and why not? Wider share ownership is something that is industrially and educationally desirable. We believe that it is wholly in the interests of this country to encourage people to have a stake in the great British companies. We have always said that there are risks as well as benefits involved in wider share ownership. I believe that the people understand that and accept those risks. I do not believe that the appetite for wider share ownership and for privatisation will be diminished.

We had hoped that the hon. Member for Dagenham would join us in the cause for wider share ownership. After all, it was he who, not so long ago, in *The Times* on 16 September, said:

> "The idea of owning shares is catching on and as Socialists we should support it."

It is true that the hon. Gentleman's idea of shares is a little different from that held by everyone else. One is not allowed to pay money for them, or to own them direct, or to sell them. When the hon. Gentleman exposed his views to the Labour party conference he was, of course, jeered and he received a rough reception. It is no wonder that his hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) said that the only casualty of the crisis was Bryan Gould. The hon. Gentleman has been putting forward his alternative to popular capitalism—something that he calls popular socialism, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) said, is an idea that is not catching on. It seems about as paradoxical as the idea of boiling ice.

Mr. Gould: As the right hon. Gentleman was kind enough to mention me, he gives me the chance to make clear, as I always have done, that what I advocate as a form of share ownership is employee share ownership schemes in which the shares are held collectively and not traded on the stock exchange. That would provide us with an additional means of extending social ownership, and offer a form of popular socialism which I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) would endorse. I am also grateful for the endorsement and interest of the Minister.

Mr. Lamont: Even employee shares go up and down. If they are not allowed to be traded, I do not know how the hon. Gentleman will establish any value for them, or how they will benefit employees. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman knows either.

Much of the debate has been about whether a recession is now inevitable. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, perhaps supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), has taken a pessimistic view, which is not that of the Government. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear last night that it is our view that a recession is not inevitable and can be avoided provided that the right policies are followed. I am glad to see that I have the support of the hon. Member for Dagenham in this, because he made an interesting and prophetic speech, issued by Transport House on 29 September, one month before the stock market collapsed, amazingly entitled,

> "Gould speaks on stock market collapse".

If the speech was really issued on 29 September, the hon. Gentleman should be a rich man, and he is certainly a prescient one. In it he said that he did not believe that the stock market crash meant a recession——

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: —provided that the correct policies were followed.

My right hon Friend has made it clear that what turned the 1929 stock market crash into a recession was the inadequate response of the authorities and the drift to protectionism that followed in its wake. My right hon. Friend has responded in a different way this year with a cut in interest rates, and has said that it is incumbent on other counries not to pursue overtight monetary policies.

[Mr. Lamont]

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches cannot wait for the moment for deficit spending to begin. They do not understand how the recovery has happened. They want to anticipate the recession. They say that they do not want it to occur, yet they want to go deep into deficit spending now. I am certain that nothing would have undermined the confidence of the market more than if my right hon. Friend had abandoned his policies on public spending. That would have been received with a shattering lack of confidence by the markets.

The key requirement is to ensure that industry and business do not overnight lose the confidence in our economic prospects that has been building up so strongly in recent years, here and overseas. If confidence is retained, the other effects of the share fall can and will be contained.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) called on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to take industrial action, to participate in international discussions. He was not very specific about what he wanted my right hon. Friend to do. He was not very specific about anything, including the slur that he cast on my right hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Dagenham has made it clear what he thinks should happen. He says that we and the United States and everybody else should devalue together. The hon. Gentleman is being absolutely true to form, because he has believed for years that the answer to every problem is to devalue.

Mr. Gould: Quite apart from any question of whether the exchange rate should go down, what does the Minister say about the fact that over the last year British industry has endured an 18 per cent. increase in the real exchange rate? Presumably the Minister believes in market forces. Does he not accept that an 18 per cent. increase in prices is at least likely to be noticed by some of our potential customers?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman's facts are wrong, and he has repeated word for word what he said in his speech. There has not been an 18 per cent. loss in competitiveness. I shall give the hon. Gentleman a percentage, but it is not 18 per cent. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no point in hon. Members shouting from sedentary positions.

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East paid my right hon. Friend a compliment when he said that because of the great strength of the British economy my right hon. Friend should play a leading part in international discussions on these problems. Nobody would have asked the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), when he was Chancellor, to summon an international conference, because nobody would have come. If some people had come, they would have left their cheque books at home because they would have thought that the conference had been called to bail out the British economy.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was extremely unfair to my right hon. Friend, who played a leading part in the Plaza agreement of 1985. That agreement was designed to deal with some of the problems that we still face. As a result of the agreement we saw a 50 per cent. appreciation in the deutschmark and in the yen. We also saw the acceptance of a commitment by the United States for a reduction in the United States deficit. Since the Plaza accord of 1985 there has been a reduction of about one third.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) emphasised that it is essential and extremely urgent that the United States should go further than is implied by Gramm-Rudman II. This is an extremely important analysis, although it is disputed by some, though not all, Opposition Front-Bench Members. However, it is widely accepted in the financial community.

During the speech of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor there was a most extraordinary intervention by the Leader of the Opposition. My right hon. Friend clearly said that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was criticising the Government for not doing enough about the United States deficit. However, not once, twice or three times, but time and time again, and year after year, the Opposition are on record urging us to follow the same path as the United States and have ever more borrowing. The extraordinary thing is not that they urged us to do that, because that is what we expect them to do and are running true to form, but that the Leader of the Opposition intervened in my right hon. Friend's speech to deny that they had ever urged this course upon the Government.

I shall put on the record what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, because it could not be clearer. This is one of a series. He praised America and said:

> "Having . . . taken the advice of the Labour party, and not being afraid of borrowing, the President of the United States has created 5 million new jobs and a growth rate of 8 per cent. per annum."—[*Official Report*, 31 July 1984; Vol. 65, c. 298.]

The right hon. Gentleman talked about

> "not being afraid of borrowing,"

yet the Leader of the Opposition denied that that was the course——

Mr. Gould: That is wrong.

Mr. Lamont: Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps I am doing the right hon. Gentleman an injustice.

The hon. Member for Dagenham takes a completely different line. In his September speech he said that the great danger was that the United States would correct its deficit far too quickly. What a message for the Labour party to send to the United States. At a time when the whole financial community is of the view that the great danger is the deficit of the United States, we know that Labour speeches are not just listened to in the United States but plagiarised. We know that they are closely followed. We do not want any plagiarism of the fear of the hon. Member for Dagenham that the deficit will be reduced too quickly. When the whole world wants that deficit reduced quickly, the response of the Labour party is that the danger is that it will be reduced too quickly.

When the proposition that the deficit might be reduced too quickly was put to Mr. Volker, he said:

> "That, at present, is not a problem that is keeping me awake at night."

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that over the years many Labour Members have argued that we should follow neither the United States nor any other capitalist Government?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is always consistent in his convictions. I am sorry that he was not able to intervene in the debate and give us his view, which I know is shared by some of his Friends, that the day that they have been waiting for all their lives has arrived; the collapse of capitalism is upon us. That view is not even shared by his right hon. and hon Friends on the Front Bench.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): We have had 16 minutes of claptrap. Will the Minister now tell us what his Government intend to do?

Mr. Lamont: I have explained what the Government will do internationally. I reaffirm that the Government will continue with the policies that my right hon. Friend outlined last night at the Mansion house. I am perfectly entitled to reply to the points made by the hon. Member for Dagenham, especially when they are so feeble and so easily knocked down.

One respect in which the debate has differed from the discussion in the newspapers is that I have not read one article or comment that has implied that what happened in the financial markets was the fault of the Government. The only person who has expressed that view is the hon. Member for Dagenham. He thinks that what has happened in the financial markets is all the fault of monetarism. The trouble is that he cannot make up his mind whether my right hon. Friend has abandoned monetarism or whether he is a dogmatic monetarist. Most people will not be too worried about those arcane points, because they know that the policies of my right hon. Friend have worked and have been outstandingly successful.

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: No, I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Dagenham thinks that it is essential somehow to link the Government to the crisis. He has produced the most extraordinary reasons for this. I could not have been more amazed when he repeated, not just the content, but word for word what he said in his extraordinarily prescient speech of 29 September, one month before the stock exchange crashed. He revealed a remarkable sentiment. He said that monetarism had produced

"the overvalued currency, the product of excessively high interest rates"

and he repeated tonight that

"the product of excessively high interest rates artificially raised the value of assets at the expense of the real economy."

That is extraordinarily interesting. It shows why Opposition Members endlessly talk absolute nonsense. I would have thought that the hon. Member for Dagenham must know that if interest rates rise that lowers the value of assets on the stock exchange and lowers the value of bonds and monetary assets. If that really is the hon. Gentleman's view, I thoroughly understand why he has been totally puzzled by the Government's timely response in cutting interest rates in the light of world developments. The hon. Gentleman does not know whether he is coming or going on interest rates.

The hon. Gentleman painted a harsh picture of the economy. However, he perhaps forgets that when he came back to the House after his personal triumph of co-ordinating the Labour party's third consecutive unsuccessful election campaign he showed signs of getting to grips with economic policy. During the debate on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill he said:

"I do not think anyone need to be too alarmed. No major crisis is in prospect. I would argue that the prospects for our own economy depend very much on our own efforts rather than on the impact of the development of world economic factors."

I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman's lack of foresight over the stock market crash. He made up for that later.

The hon. Gentleman then said that he wanted to envisage a position in which this country was being completely privatised. He said that if a prospectus was being drawn up for the country it would state that the

"prospect was not entirely unpromising."

He said that output was rising "relatively fast" and that unemployment appeared to be falling.

With regard to the balance of payments, the hon. Gentleman spoke of a

"deficit of the size that is likely over the next year or two . . . is likely to be manageable."—[*Official Report*, 8 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 364-65].

Ms. Armstrong *rose*——

Mr. Gould: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute. The picture painted by the hon. Gentleman was perhaps a little grudging, but it was completely different from the picture that he painted in a most opportunistic way today.

Mr. Gould: The Minister really cannot get away with the dishonesty of partially quoting from my speeches and statements. If he had the honesty and gumption to complete the quotations—he does not have the time now—he would know that I concluded my speech by saying that if this country's economy was privatised the shareholders would sack the directors. That remains my view.

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman says, time does not permit. However, I would have been happy to read out what the hon. Gentleman said about the economy, because it was extremely different from what he said tonight.

The hon. Gentleman always talks about the divergence between the money economy and what he calls the real economy. The real economy is doing extraodinarily well. Instead of talking about the real economy, the hon. Gentleman should give the real facts about the real economy. The real facts are that industrial production is at record levels, export volumes in 1987 are 9·5 per cent. up on last year's figures and unemployment is falling sharply.

The hon. Gentleman betrays his positive dislike of the financial services industry. He seems to believe that the financial services industry and the City are not part of what he calls the real economy. However, the City, which he has attacked and criticised tonight, has generated more than £9 billion of invisible earnings. The City and the financial services industry employ more than 2·25 million people. Do they not count as working in the real economy? Surely the hon. Gentleman is aware that the City serves, not just the needs of British industry, but the needs of industry worldwide. It is one of our most outstandingly

[Mr. Lamont]

successful industries. It contributes to real wealth in this country, and it has every bit as much claim to be included in the real economy as everything else that the hon. Gentleman describes.

The Government have two advantages. First, we have taken difficult decisions in the past, and the British economy is strong. Secondly, we have been re-elected, and we therefore have the mandate, the authority and the freedom of manoeuvre to continue with the policies which have brought us success, and which we shall continue to follow.

I urge my hon. Friends to reject the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 333.

Division No. 40] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alan Michael.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John

Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on restoring the public finances to such strength and soundness that the British economy is growing faster and unemployment falling more rapidly than in any other major industrialised country while inflation remains low, thus enabling the United Kingdom once again to play a major role in international financial discussions and providing sufficient resources, despite the halving of the nation's oil revenues, to enable them to increase spending on the National Health Service, education, law and order, and other priority programmes above previous plans, while ensuring that public spending as a whole continues to grow more slowly than national income and while public borrowing, even without any benefit from privatisation proceeds, has been reduced to its lowest level for 17 years.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Ordered,

That Mr. Roy Beggs be added to the Public Accounts Commission.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 10th November, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to House of Commons (Services) have not been disposed of before Seven o'clock, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the main Question or the main Question, as amended.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Underground Fire (Dronfield)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.15 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is appropriate that we should be discussing this subject on Guy Fawkes night in the House of Commons on a motion to adjourn the House. I hope that we are not tempting fate too much. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the Dronfield fire was not started by gunpowder. However, the way in which it did start is something of a mystery. The speculation is that there was a surface fire that moved underground.

The fire was on a private industrial estate in Dronfield, Derbyshire which was built in the 1970s. It was established from a tip in an area where there had been industrial waste from an iron and steel works and former railway sidings. It started two years ago on the south-east embankment of the industrial estate at a firm called Cronite Alloys Ltd. The embankment is 40 to 45 ft high and the fire started to develop at the lower regions of the bank near the river below it. It moved over 100 yards in two years, gathering momentum and threatening buildings at Henry Toole Ltd, which has since had to move to Chesterfield, and at Butler Die-Casting Ltd., which owns the land on which Henry Toole was located. All the time it was gathering in ferocity and speed. If it had not been stopped it would have been heading for the major gas supply into Dronfield and parts of south Yorkshire.

The problem was fully discovered only in February this year when there was heavy snow, which meant that the problem areas could be seen. The fire has since been diverted by a firm called Waddingtons, which was next in line for the fire. It built a barrier and grouted the area. The fire has now turned and moved towards Armeg Ltd and Fusion Ltd.

A magistrates court in July determined that the district council should take action to put the fire out. The North-East Derbyshire district council does not own the land, but it has been taking action since then. It has attempted to deaden the fire by grouting. It is providing an inert protective barrier around the fire and excavating heated areas of the embankment and sealing them off.

One problem is that the temperatures are much higher than were estimated. The body of the embankment is 700 deg C above the level estimated. It is giving off greater steam and dust emissions than were imagined, which is producing problems for the workers and residents in the neighbouring area. The residents have this week been involved in problems created by the work being done there. That slowed up the process.

According to the initial court ruling, the process should have been finished by now, but it will not be completed until January. The work has been much more expensive than was envisaged initially because of the time involved and the amount of grouting that needs to be done. It was originally estimated that it would cost the district council £300,000 to put out the fire but on present estimates the work needed will cost £500,000.

How is that money to be found? At the moment, the work is being paid for by a small non-metropolitan district council whose total budget is only £4·8 million — a council which the Government would describe as prudent, because it operates within its budget and has never been subject to any penalty clauses. If the council takes action to recover the money from the firms concerned, as is its statutory duty under section 99 of the Public Health Act 1936, the firms will become bankrupt and jobs will be lost on the estate. If the council has to spend so much money without being able to recoup it, it will suffer grant penalty losses and will have to pay the interest charges on temporary loans. If that happens, an 8p increase will be required in respect of the district precept, which represents a 25 per cent. rate increase.

We have to add to those problems the fact that valuation losses will be suffered because of firms moving out and the fact that valuation and revenue losses will be incurred in my constituency if Renisham park pit is closed and in the district if Arkwright pit is closed. Early-day motion 231 opposes that move, but the development is being pushed hard by the coal board. If those pits close, the district council will be in serious difficulties.

The council is in the unenviable position of having debts relating to remedial work on land that it does not own when the general body of its ratepayers cannot benefit in any way from the expenditure. Representations have been made to the Department of the Environment but have led to no offer of financial help. We received a letter from the Under-Secretary which states:

> "You will, I know, be disappointed that your campaign on behalf of the local authorities and the industrialists should not have secured Government assistance for them but you may be assured that the case you have made has been considered most carefully and sympathetically."

We require more than tea and sympathy. We need financial assistance to handle our problems.

What measures could the Government and the House take to meet all or part of the costs involved? Several possibilities are open to us. First, section 1 of the Derelict Land Act 1982 could perhaps be used as the land concerned was used for tipping and now requires reclamation before it can be of any benefit to the area. It will need landscaping and tree planting. We shall need to improve the appearance of the estate for residents and for those using the main Sheffield to Chesterfield road. The embankment, which supports the industrial estate, is now subject to subsidence because of the burn beneath. The application of the Derelict Land Act would therefore seem appropriate. However, the Department of the Environment interprets the matter differently and does not see that as a possibility.

The second possibility would be to amend the Derelict Land Act. At the moment, the fact that the area is occupied or partly occupied means that the Act cannot apply.

The third possibility would be for the Department of Trade and Industry, through an amendment to legislation, to make available to councils funds that could later be recouped by those councils under the Public Health Act 1936. We do not want the issue partitioned between Government Departments so that we fall foul of that divide.

The fourth possibility would be to waive all grant losses and penalties, so that the sympathy described in the Minister's letter could be expressed in hard cash. The fifth possibility would be a special grant to the council because it cannot recover money from the firms involved. That could be done by means of a private Bill.

The sixth possibility is the Bellwin scheme — something frequently mentioned in the House in recent days in connection with the storm damage in southern England. A circular from Lord Bellwin on 14 April 1983 shows that a wider interpretation of the word "damage" can be made. It states:

> "It is to provide special financial assistance to local authorities who, as a consequence of emergency, would otherwise incur an undue financial burden in providing relief and carrying out immediate works to safeguard life or property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience to affected communities."

I think that under that definition funds could be made available to my council.

A further circular issued on 21 October concerned the recent storm damage. It said that, after an initial rate payment, 75 per cent. of the remaining costs of district councils would be met by the Department of the Environment from central funds, and the remaining 25 per cent. which would have to be paid by the district councils would not be subject to rate penalties. It may not be known generally that district councils, as distinct from county councils, cannot levy a penny rate initially, but only a rate of 0·15p in the pound.

There is a seventh possibility, which shows the lesson to be learned from Dronfield, and that is to provide funds that could be applied to wider areas. Would the Department of the Environment respond favourably to a Bill to set up a general disaster fund system so that central contingency funds are available for storm damage and other emergencies such as underground fires? I am referring not only to the fire in Dronfield, but to the coal seam that caught light at Oakthorpe colliery. Much of the burden of the costs there were carried by British Coal, although it had disclaimed responsibility. The fund could also be used for floods. A deputation from Strabane district council has visited the House today, and will visit it again tomorrow to tell us about its flooding problems.

The fund could cover the emergency that nearly occurred at Killamarsh, when there was an explosion at the chemical reclamation plant of Leigh Environmentals. That caused all sorts of problems in the area. The Minister is well aware of that case because in his previous office he had responsibility for small firms and he received a deputation from that company. Indeed, he wrote a sympathetic letter saying that an inquiry should be undertaken. Unfortunately, in his new position, he has now refused to set up that inquiry.

Such a general disaster fund would have all-party support in the House, especially after the storms suffered recently in the south of England. That has all-party support in Strabane, where, perhaps amazingly for this House, the representation from the district council is presented by a delegation made up of independent, Sinn Fein, Democratic Unionist, Social Democratic and Labour party and Official Unionist councillors. Perhaps a similar arrangement of Labour and Conservative councillors who are affected by the problems at Dronfield could be brought about.

I ask the Department of the Environment seriously to consider action and not just issue sympathy to my constituency, so that the avenues that I have mentioned, or some combination of those avenues, are used to prevent the district council from being placed in an embarrassing financial position.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful for the

[Mr. David Trippier]

opportunity to assure the House that I am fully aware of the anxiety of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) about the underground fire at Callywhite lane industrial estate in Dronfield in his constituency. I am also aware of the concerns of the local authority—north-east Derbyshire district council—and the local industrialists at Callywhite lane.

I should like to thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing a deputation of those directly affected by the fire to meet me in July this year. It was helpful to hear, at first hand, about the problems at the industrial estate. I have also had the opportunity of watching a television report about the fire which was kindly loaned to me by the district council. As a result I feel that I know a great deal about the fire and the problems that it has caused.

I fully understand the financial implications of dealing with local emergencies such as this underground fire. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's clear explanation of the difficulties involved. I can assure the House that the hon. Gentleman's requests for central Government financial assistance have been carefully considered.

It would be foolish of me to catalogue the events that have led to the position in which the local authority now finds itself as the hon. Gentleman has accurately dealt with that. However, it is important that I should emphasise that the industrial estate was privately developed and is privately owned.

It is also important that I stress that, although at first the fire progressed slowly and experts considered that the best action would be to monitor the fire to see that it burnt itself out, at that time the Health and Safety Executive advised that the responsibility for dealing with the fire lay with the occupiers of the land on which the fire started.

As the hon. Gentleman said, early this year there was clear evidence of the extent of the underground heating from vegetation coming into leaf on the embankment to the estate when there was snow on the ground nearby and from trees dying and falling. Some companies with properties on the estate beyond the extent of the fire undertook work to protect their premises. At their own expense, they inserted underground concrete screens to halt the progress of the fire, and I appreciate that.

Throughout, the North-East Derbyshire district council has taken the line that liability for the fire, and for any remedial action, rests with the landowners. The council's officers assured officials of my Department that the local authority would use its statutory powers to act against nuisance if and when necessary. It would then seek to recharge the owners for the costs of any action that they had taken. The recommendation in that report, and subsequent local discussions, resulted in the deputations to me in July to see if central Government funds could be made available to help deal with the underground fire.

In the meantime, two firms threatened by the underground fire complained to the local magistrates court. Their complaint was that the owners of the land on which the fire had started had defaulted on their legal obligation to put the fire out. That fact has not yet been mentioned. The complaint also cited two other firms on to whose land the fire had progressed, because they had

"failed to take major steps to contain the fire".

The magistrates found that those complaints were justified. Their ruling confirmed the line taken by the district council that liability rests with the landowners. The magistrates concluded that statutory nuisance existed and, "considering the practical circumstances", ordered the district council to abate the nuisance within 16 weeks. Clearly, the magistrates were determined to ensure that the remedial action needed was put in hand immediately. The district council did that, and action is now in hand to put out the fire. My information is that, to a large degree, that action has been successful. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman joins with me in hoping that that is so.

Under the public health Acts, local authorities have powers to take action to abate statutory nuisance and to recharge the landowners for the costs they incur in so doing. The authorities also have a duty to their ratepayers to seek to recover the costs of abating statutory nuisance. In this case, the district council has assured me that it will take whatever action is necessary to recover its costs. Clearly any such action by the district council could involve further litigation.

Mr. Barnes: Will the Minister estimate how long he believes that the litigation might take? The district council will be in an awkward position. It will act as the banker during the period before moneys can be recovered.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman will recall that at the meeting in the Department of the Environment I asked why steps had not already been taken against the landowners. That would have considerably cut the time. If litigation could arise, it is rather difficult for me to comment further on that aspect of the case.

From the history of events and the facts that I have provided, I am sure that the House will understand that it would not be appropriate to make central Government financial assistance available to help fund the remedial works necessary to put out the fire. Nevertheless, as I promised the hon. Gentleman when he brought his deputation to see me, I have investigated the possibility of using derelict land grant to help in meeting the costs of remedial works. He raised that matter again today.

I have advised the hon. Member that the engineering works, which are now well under way, are not eligible for derelict land grant. Quite simply, the land is still occupied and, therefore, cannot be regarded as derelict. Even if the land were derelict, it would not be open to the district council to apply for derelict land grant, because the land in question is in private ownership.

As the hon. Gentleman may be aware, the district council has not yet taken any steps to recover the costs incurred in the remedial work so far completed. It would, therefore, be premature to judge what the outcome of its attempts to recover its costs might be.

On the various questions that the hon. Gentleman has raised for my attention, of course it may be possible for the Government, through the Department of the Environment to bring forward to the House a change in the policy on derelict land grant. I ask the hon. Gentleman how long that would take. Is it necessary to change the criterion by which we use the derelict land grant? That brings into account much wider policies than we are considering tonight.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): That elaborate bureaucratic explanation was brilliantly drafted by the Under-Secretary of State's officials. A natural disaster has occurred. It is exactly comparable to the storm damage. The Government were able to move rapidly in that connection. To say that a fire on private property is not a matter of public concern — the magistrates took a contrary view — misses the point. Either the local ratepayers will have to pay an 8p increase—10 per cent. of their total budget—or, if possible, recover the money from the firm. Otherwise, jobs may be lost. In the light of that, surely the Minister could move with lightning speed if he wished to do so.

Mr. Trippier: The right hon. Gentleman must accept that it is perhaps a little strange that the district council has not taken action against the landowners. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman has heard his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East say that, in certain cases, a number of companies might be adversely affected financially if a case was brought against them. I am not qualified to comment on that. I dare say that the right hon. Gentleman is also not qualified to comment on it. In some cases those companies are subsidiaries of larger companies.

Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting for one moment that action should still not be taken by the district council against the landowners when that is the law? The right hon. Gentleman must accept that the district council does not appear to have taken much action in this regard. Under the law it is open to the district council to use legislation against the landowners, but thus far it has taken very little, if any, action.

Mr. Barnes: If the action is taken to recover moneys the consequence—based on the information available about the standing of the firms, particularly firms such as Butler (Die Casting) Ltd., which freely admits its difficult financial situation—is that the firms go bankrupt. Thus the workers lose their jobs and the district council is unable to recover the money. The Minister is encouraging people to respond in such a manner, thus, the creation of industrial dereliction within the area. Therefore, another problem is created regarding how things might be built up in the future. It might be that moneys begin to be available at some later stage so that someone else can operate in the area. We should like to ensure that those jobs are saved now and that, in the meantime, the district council is not placed in the extremely embarrassing position of not having adequate resources without putting the rates up by a considerable amount.

Mr. Trippier: The logical conclusion to what the hon. Gentleman has said is that he is suggesting—I am sure that this is not his intention—that the district councils placed in such a position in the future, whatever may have happened to the land on which businesses are working, should not go to great lengths to recover the costs from those people who are operating in those industrial areas. I am sure that he would agree that that is complete nonsense.

I would like to be a little more comforted by the action that the district council has been prepared to take against the landowners. Indeed, I implied that when the hon. Gentleman brought his deputation to see me. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that there is quite a difference on the site in question between those who are operating their businesses and those who own the land—I accept, not in all cases. However, I have said that there are some sizeable companies involved, yet there seems to have been little attempt by the district council to recover the costs.

The North-East Derbyshire district council has made representations to the Department of the Environment that the unrecovered expenditure incurred by the council in putting out the fire should be excluded from the definition of total expenditure for 1987-88. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take into account the points made to me by the deputation that the hon. Gentleman brought to me and the points that he has made tonight and will announce his decision in due course.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 6 November 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Crime Prevention

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

9.37 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I believe that it is often reasonably said that it is the refuge of a bankrupt politician to take as the theme of his speech that, in the end, Government cannot do much because society must ride to the rescue of what Government are trying to do. I do not think that that argument of intellectual bankruptcy applies to the specific case of crime and the prevention of crime, because I believe that the police cannot, and never will be able to, prevent crime without the full co-operation of the public and society, however many police there are and however much money we devote to law and order services in this country. That is one of my arguments and I hope that, on this occasion, the House will find that broadly acceptable, whatever its feelings otherwise regarding the Government's policy towards the law and order services.

If I have anything so grand as a text for what I intend to say this morning it is basically that the police in this country are not imposed on society; they grow out of society. If the police are not imposed on society—I do not believe I see anyone in the Chamber at the moment who would subscribe to that view—it is absolutely clear that the police grow out of the community. After all, the police live in the community in ordinary houses, in common with the ordinary members of society. Indeed, from time to time, their wives or husbands are victims of crime. Meanwhile, the police seek to prevent crime or do what they can to clear it up. We and, I am sure, all hon. Members pay tribute to them. If one at least partly accepts the argument that the police grow out of the community and are not imposed upon it, the logical conclusion of that line of thought is that the community must support the police in crime prevention and detection. The police may not always have to be in the lead in crime prevention efforts in this country. Obviously, they will always play a major part in such efforts, and will always have to be closely inter-related with any crime prevention methods that are being used by the general public. The police themselves recognise that. If one speaks to police audiences on crime prevention topics, as I do from time to time—they are often young policemen on the fast track to promotion—and tells them that they cannot do it all and that they sometimes need the public to be in the lead on crime prevention panels and neighbourhood watch schemes, such remarks do not elicit the kind of sharp intake of breath these days that they used to. There is a clear recognition of the role of the general public and of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department refers to as the active citizen, who is critical in our attempts to mobilise the battle against crime and do all we possibly can to prevent it.

I do not for one second accept — neither do the Government — that there is anything inevitable or inexorable about rising crime in this country. For the past 30 years, in good times and in bad, in times of feast and of famine, and under Governments of both political colours, crime has risen. The figures bear that out. It has risen on average by 6 per cent. a year. No one of any political party can afford to accept that as being inevitable. In the end, the only way in which we shall turn that rising tide of crime is through more police, tougher sentences, more retribution and deterrents and much more prevention than there has been in the past 30 years. Perhaps, if we devoted a little more attention to that—as many have at local and national levels—the rate of crime would not have increased in the way in which it has.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I would not disagree with the list that the hon. Gentleman gave. Would he not add social conditions as being one of the influencing factors on crime rates?

Mr. Patten: Social factors are certainly one of the things that affect crime rates. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong, but if he is saying that merely because someone is deprived he will, ipso facto, commit a crime, I could not accept that suggestion. In recent months the rich as well as the poor have committed crime in this country, and those from privileged backgrounds, who should know better, have, from time to time, been just as likely to commit crimes that affect many people in society as those who have suffered from social deprivation.

Wherever I go in western Europe to consider these issues, I find no one who has a simplistic model of crime that correlates social deprivation with rising crime rates. It is significant that there is a European-wide consensus about this. Crime prevention is a specific and important component in our strategy against crime. That is why the Government have given and will continue to give a high priority to it. We intend to make crime prevention an even higher priority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department mentioned that fact in his response to, and gloss on, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Crime prevention is now much broader in scope than many would have thought possible even a year or two ago. It is no longer only about locks on doors and bolts on windows. That is why we are trying to bring forward the most coherent crime prevention programme contemplated by any Government. For too long, crime has been regarded as inevitable and unstoppable. For many crimes that is just not true. I welcome the chance this morning to go into a fairly detailed analysis in support of this argument. Part of our approach to preventing crime consists in convincing people — some of them need convincing—that crime is not just to be accepted and coped with. It can have devastating effects on individuals, families, communities and the very fabric of society. Its effects can be long-lasting, and sometimes crimes that have a small financial value can still be devastating. When a few pounds are stolen from an elderly person, that person's property has been broken into and his possessions disturbed; sometimes mementos of his past life and family are taken, and that can have a devastating long-term effect.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I am sure that we all share the Minister's concern. We know that many elderly people find the loss of a small item, such as a purse, devastating. Will the Minister comment on the reports in today's paper that part of what he has said is that his new crime prevention campaign involves freeing police officers from clearing up petty crimes such as he is describing? Does he not accept that the police will have to give serious attention to problems that individuals treat seriously themselves?

Mr. Patten: I have not seen the article to which the hon. Lady refers, but I shall try to read it. I perceive now that it comes from *The Guardian* — always an accurate newspaper. What I have consistently said is that I believe the police should not have to waste so much time attempting to clear up minor crime if that crime can be avoided. I am not saying that once a crime has been committed the police should not do all they possibly can in all circumstances to clear it up.

Some 25 per cent. of all burglaries—about 130,000 a year, if memory serves aright — take place because a burglar has found a front or back door unlocked or a window unbolted, and walked in. We must send strong messages to society that it must be more responsible and lock its doors. A locked door will not always necessarily prevent crime, but in the end fewer burglaries will be reported to the police, so they will have to spend less time attempting to clear up burglaries and crimes that could have been avoided.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I am especially pleased that my hon. Friend mentioned the great personal loss and trauma that can be caused by an incident of theft or crime. Will he take this opportunity to give credit to the victim support schemes that have grown up so magnificently and addressed themselves to helping people come to terms with the shock of a crime, a shock that can last for a period of many months?

Mr. Patten: Yes, indeed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department made clear our strong support of the association at its recent annual general meeting. We are contributing about £9 million over a period to the victim support schemes in this country. They offer invaluable support and are one of the facets of British society that have all-party support and draw together people from all strands of society. I welcome that.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) gave me the chance to clarify any misapprehensions that may be contained in a newspaper article. I shall have read it by the time that I reply to the debate and will respond in greater detail then. But if any hon. Member believes that we should not point the finger at people who are careless of their property, do not bother to lock their doors and then go to the police to report a crime, and say to them, "Your carelessness is a form of contributory negligence to society as a whole", I wish that he would stand up in the Chamber and say so. No one is doing that, so the line that I have suggested must be generally accepted.

To a considerable extent, the pattern of crime is directly related to the pattern of the society in which it takes place. The types of crimes that are committed bear a direct relationship to the services and goods we produce. That is why reducing and preventing crime is not a matter for the police, the courts, and Government alone. That is how we have all seen it for far too long. But there has been a significant change in the approach to crime prevention and the development of our prevention initiatives.

May I remind the House of some important facts. First, 95 per cent. of crime is against property, not against the person. This includes residential burglary and thefts of and from motor cars. I have already said that about 25 per cent. of domestic burglaries happen because doors and windows are left unlocked, which is a shocking indictment of the way in which we treat our property. Home Office research shows that about 20 per cent. of people commonly leave their cars unlocked or with the windows down, which is another example of contributory negligence.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the Minister accept that there is some way to go to persuade people who live in rural areas of the need to lock their houses and their cars? Burglaries are becoming rife in rural areas, but people have never thought it necessary to lock their houses. They have always gone out and left the doors unlocked, because no one ever burgled their houses. Will he give special help to rural areas to encourage people to realise the necessity now?

Mr. Patten: The hon. and learned Gentleman has put his finger on an important point: that, in our efforts to prevent crime, we must not concentrate only on urban areas and the inner cities. Outer city estates are just as prone to crime. It has been a happy facet of British life for many years that in villages and rural areas people have looked after each other's property. There have been eyes on the village street, and people have not bothered to shut their back doors because it has not been necessary. But recent crime statistics from police forces in predominantly rural areas show that thefts and burglaries have increased greatly. The hon. and learned Gentleman has given me food for thought. As we develop our crime prevention strategy during the next few months, we shall make sure that we do not neglect the needs of rural areas.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I am still on my introduction, but of course I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Banks: I do not wish to divert the Minister too far with too much food for thought so early in the morning, but perhaps I could develop that point. When I was young in South London, we used to leave our doors open, too. In the 1930s, in the east end and all over London, doors were left open and people used to go in and out of each other's houses. The Minister should take that into account when considering the changes in rural areas.

Mr. Patten: To many of us in the Chamber, the hon. Gentleman still looks excessively young. He has worn very well, and his appearance belies his age.

Mr. Banks: It is very nice of the Minister to say so.

Mr. Patten: Yesterday, during Home Office Questions, I agreed with the hon. Gentleman about banning the sale of some offensive weapons. I am all for a bipartisan approach when it can be constructive, and if flattering the hon. Gentleman about his appearance is one way of making crime prevention work, it is a price that we shall pay.

The hon. Gentleman is right. There used to be urban villages as well as rural villages. There were eyes on the street. We remember the archetypal house with its kitchen on the street and with everyone looking into each other's houses. We do not want an introverted society, with people living behind barred windows and locked doors, looking inwards. We need all the hardware to make sure that homes are not broken into, but we also need people looking out from their homes, in villages and towns, with their eyes on the street and helping in crime prevention.

Active neighbourhood watch schemes, such as those in Battersea and Wandsworth which I visited recently, have exactly that effect. I am happy to announce to the House that there are 42,000 neighbourhood watch schemes, compared with a few hundred five years ago. The schemes have not just attempted — sometimes successfully and sometimes not so successfully—to reduce crime and the fear of crime, but have contributed formidably to recreating a neo-village atmosphere in the areas where they operate. Neighbours are getting together again and talking as they have not done for years about the issues that affect their local communities. That significant feature has been largely disregarded, but it is an important social trend.

Most crime is against property, and it is clear that a substantial amount of property is inadequately protected, with between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. of homes not having enough locks on doors or bolts on windows. We estimate that, for a cost of between £50 and £70, the average semi-detached house could be made secure against all but the most determined burglar. If the householder does it himself, the cost could be as low as £20 or £30.

Opportunistic crimes — someone coming along, finding an open door, going in, taking the video and walking out again—are more susceptible to prevention that to detection. That is because they are committed quickly and, sadly often by young males of school age. It is worth remembering that the peak age for offending among males is 15 and the peak age among females is 14. Much crime against property is committed by youngsters of 15 or under. That makes me reflect on a theme that I shall develop later: whatever crime prevention is about, it is not purely about locks, bolts and neighbourhood watch schemes. It is about trying to strike at the roots of criminality and prevent young people especially from getting into the habit of committing crime, getting into the criminal justice system and, all too often, returning to detention.

Against that background, we are beginning to see welcome evidence of an interest in, and a commitment to, preventing crime which goes far beyond the Home Office, the police and the criminal justice system. I shall discuss some of the initiatives that we have set up and which we will try to develop. We have a ministerial group on crime prevention, which I now chair. Its principal task is to ensure that the crime prevention potential in all Departments' programmes is recognised and acted on. It is sometimes said in Whitehall that setting up interministerial groups is a mark of complete despair and that they are unlikely to be effective. It is believed that they will simply be talking shops. That is not so. There is much evidence of the beneficial effects so far of the interministerial group on crime prevention. For example, it cannot all be led by the Home Office and by the police. Resources also must be applied to all sorts of other areas, for example, housing. We should look at what is being done by the Department of the Environment's estate action team. Out of the £50 million spent by estate action in 1986-87, approximately £21 million was devoted to crime prevention related measures to improve housing. This year again a substantial amount will be spent out of the £75 million that estate action is spending on helping run-down council estates in inner and outer urban areas. The Department of the Environment urban programme is spending about £10 million this year on various crime prevention activities.

Ministers such as my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning are becoming deeply involved in the Government's crime prevention work. My hon. Friends in different Departments, such as the Department of Education and Science, realise that it must be a collective effort, which we are spearheading. The Department of Education and Science is funding social responsibility courses in schools, with crime prevention elements, which are going well.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has his Department working with the gas and electricity industries on reducing the numbers of coin-operated meters, often a prime target for the opportunistic thief.

Some two years ago the Home Office and the Manpower Services Commission launched the community programme crime prevention initiative, which has gone from strength to strength. There are now some 300 projects involving almost 8,500 job opportunities. The work ranges from lock fitting for the elderly and the handicapped—it often involves voluntary societies and organisations such as Age Concern—and the development of neighbourhood crime prevention activity on housing estates, to the provision of leisure activities for young people——

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*——

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I must have said something provocative. I give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Mr. Pawsey: I reassure my hon. Friend that he was not being unduly provocative. He referred to education. Does he, like me, deplore the activities of certain councils that are actively preventing the police from entering schools to discuss with the schools — the authorities and the children—the importance of being properly law-abiding?

Mr. Patten: If councils are doing that, I should deplore it. It is important that schools give access to the police. In my area, the Thames Valley police force makes sure that every classroom is visited once a year by a community policeman to discuss with school children the issues of crime and crime prevention, "stranger danger" and taking care of themselves. That is very important. I give way now to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne).

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend rightly said how good it was that elderly people could call upon assistance in introducing security measures into their homes. Is he aware that in many areas, where the elderly live in council-owned accommodation, they cannot get that work done by organisations funded through the MSC because of the resistance of the trade unions? Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to deplore the difference between the elderly who live in the private sector and those who live in council property and who cannot get the same facilities?

Mr. Patten: In many areas councils of all political colours are co-operative, but there have been problems with some councils, as I recall from my days in the Department of the Environment. It is a sad reflection on them, as it is a sad reflection when councils indulge in regrettable and over-vigorous attempts — I choose my words carefully — to monitor the police with journals and newsletters that are circulated quite widely in some but not all cities. There is a big difference between cities. Some in the north under the same political control do it and some do not. It seems to me, as an outside observer, that councils that do it are under the control of the same part of the Labour party. That is a pity. It does not help police-community relations. That is not to say that the police are perfect any more than I am. The police have their role to play as well.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Allegations have now been made by three Conservative Members about the activities of Labour councils. So far, not one Labour council has been mentioned and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said that Labour councils are preventing the police from going into schools. I hope that the Minister will obtain information from his hon. Friend. I ask him directly: does he know of any local authority where that is so?

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, but before I do, and before the hon. Lady thinks that I do not have any recall this early on a Friday morning, let me refer to Manchester. I did my best to work with Manchester council when I was Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. I tried reasonably successfully, I think, to involve it in several important private and public sector joint funded urban regeneration projects, which are now reaching fruition. But that same council still has its own *Police Watch* magazine with some virulently anti-police material in it, which is a shame.

Councils should not do that, because it is not the right way to foster good community-police relations. If the city council thinks that the police are doing bad things, it should talk to the police and to us and try to sort it out, not attack the police or try to mould the perception of a generation of young children in schools in that way. However, not every northern city is like that. Newcastle does not do it. I do not know why, but I am glad about it.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I give way to my hon. Friend, who is pregnant with information.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way yet again. I hesitate to introduce a debate within his debate, but I must tell the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) that she doth protest too much. I did not use the word Labour; she introduced that word. It is significant that she chooses to interpret my remarks in a certain way. Perhaps we should look to the hon. Lady to justify what she has said—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has the Floor at the moment. Mr. Patten.

Mr. Patten: I am getting confused about who is giving way to whom, so I propose to move on, I hope with your approval, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the next issue.

The value of community programme places to crime prevention is about £38 million. Another important element in our crime prevention work at national level is the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention, which I also chair. It provides a forum in which representatives of many sectors, including Government Departments, local authorities, industry, commerce, voluntary groups and the police, can work together on crime prevention. The cutting edge of the standing conference, which meets again this year on 24 November, is its working groups, set up to examine specific crime matters and to make recommendations. As my right hon. and hon. Friends will know, those working groups are independent. At the meeting of the standing conference later this month we shall receive reports from working groups on juvenile crime, young people and alcohol, and on the tricky topic of publicity for the prevention of child abuse, a great problem that faces us.

The strength of the standing conference approach is that it embodies a crime prevention partnership. It is a partnership not just for discussion but for action. Let me give an example to show that that, too, is not just a talking shop. Following the report produced by its working group on commercial robbery, the Midland bank has produced a video designed to help banks, retailers and their staff to prevent robbery. The working group on residential burglary, so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), has followed up its work to raise public awareness of the part that everyone can play in preventing burglary.

Raising public awareness is an important part of our approach to crime prevention, because, after all, what is the use of having a lot of expensive anti-burglar kit on one's front door or windows if one does not use it? That is why, through publicity, we must help the whole community to realise that every sector and individual can play their part in preventing crime. That is one of the things that will be at the centre of our new national publicity campaign that will be launched in 1988 and will run for three years.

There is an overriding need to bring home to those who design, build and run our communities the impact of crime on all our lives. We must get crime prevention on the agendas of all those who are influential in the community. We need to create mechanisms that can bring local people together to prevent crime. This has been addressed by the national initiatives that I have mentioned and by others recently undertaken or planned for the future. For example, the last of a series of five crime prevention conferences is being held today. The great thing about those conferences is that they have been joint ventures involving the local authority associations, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives — that powerful and mysterious body that runs our local authorities — the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office. Today the conference is in Coventry, and over the last two and a half weeks the other venues have been Knowsley, London, Cardiff and Scarborough. Not only Home Office Ministers have addressed those conferences or road shows. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning addressed the conference in Scarborough earlier this week. Those conferences have been aimed at senior policy-makers from local authorities, commerce, industry and voluntary bodies throughout England and Wales. Their main purpose has been to emphasise the fact that reducing crime and the fear of crime is a task for the whole community.

On Wednesday of this week, I attended the design against crime conference at Tynemouth. Design is s crucial factor in preventing crime. This has been fully recognised by the National House-Building Council and the British Standards Institution, which have produced excellent, clear guidance for architects, planners and builders on simple inexpensive ways in which a reasonable standard of home security can be incorporated into homes and flats at the design and building stages. For too long even basic security and crime prevention measures have been regarded by too many people as some sort of optional extra that one bolts on rather than something that is fundamental and that should be built in. That attitude is wrong. Architects and firms in our great and successful building industry that still follow that line of thought should change their thinking, and should change it quickly.

On 2 December, together with my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and Mr. Rod Hackney, the president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, I shall be attending a conference in London which has the express aim of trying to bring about changes in the architects' profession and the building industry to ensure that we get simple security built in at the design stage and not bolted on later. There is no point in having bolts on one's doors if the doors are constructed of flimsy material, as alas they are all too often, so that it does not take a very heavy weight or heavily armed thief to go straight through the door. We see that all too often, not just on council estates but on some of the lower end of the market homes built in the private sector for first-time buyers. There is also no point in having a good lock on a firm door if the door can be pushed out because the door frame has not been set properly into the brickwork or into the concrete. As hon. Members will note, the two years that I spent as Housing Minister were not entirely wasted, as I can remember some of those central issues.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I do not disagree with the comments that the Minister has made. Does he recognise, when architects design new estates, that they should also avoid the small corners and hideaways that are so inherent in many modern designs as they cause old people, in particular, to have fears? People who commit crimes can hide in such areas. Does he agree that that is another problem that architects should look at and eliminate?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Member is quite right. What demonstrates that we have still got a long way to go in some parts of the building and architects' professions is that it is not just at the bottom end of the market— housing associations and councils — that we see such faults. We often see them in extremely expensive developments where homes cost six-figure sums. There are home layouts that are just designed for burglars and are as burglar-friendly as they could be because they contain areas where cars or individuals can lurk without being seen.

I would not for one second wish the House to believe that I am criticising all architects and builders. I suppose it is as invidious to mention one building firm in the House as it is to mention a private company on the BBC, but this week Bellway plc, which is very active in urban regeneration in the north, announced that it intends to make this a central part of its design philosophy in the future. It also intends to try to give everyone what is called in the trade defensible space — a front or back garden that people can call their own, which can be fenced, so that they are less likely to have intrusions from children or passers-by. In all its new housing developments it has said that it will not just encourage but sponsor the setting up of neighbourhood watch schemes. That is a good example of what can be done, and I congratulate that company.

Companies such as Wimpey are doing a lot to get better security designed into its homes. It would be a good thing if estate agents, as part of their marketing of homes, did not just say that one should buy a home because it is nicely designed or it has security built into it, but because a home is in a nice friendly area that has a neighbourhood watch scheme. They could begin to sell the fact that a house or a flat is in a secure neighbourhood. It is in those sorts of ways that all professionals involved can do their bit to have crime prevention much more on the national agenda.

The underlying feature of all those national initiatives is identifying the crime prevention potential across all sectors and trying to get people to work together. To provide a lead and to demonstrate that crime and the fear of crime can be reduced by local agencies working together, five local crime prevention projects, each of which was to last 18 months, were set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1986. The purpose was to bring together a variety of local agencies to consider the crime problems faced in the local community and to use their expertise and resources to devise measures to tackle those problems. Those projects were set up in diverse areas — Bolton, Croydon, north Tyneside, Swansea and Wellingborough. Each project was run by a local steering committee that comprised representatives of various local authority departments, the police, the probation and social services, voluntary organisations, local businesses and local schools. Each project also had a full-time co-ordinator to pull all the effort together. That person provided the steering committee with information about local crime problems, identified areas for action, implemented agreed preventive measures and monitored the success of the project.

It is interesting that the Home Office-funded co-ordinators were not always policemen. For example, in north Tyneside it was a policeman, Superintendent Hall, while in Croydon it was a lady probation officer, who was terrific in the way that she pulled people together. Each of the projects introduced a range of schemes aimed at tackling target crimes such as criminal damage, residential burglary and thefts from and of cars. As well as employing the traditional preventive measures such as neighbourhood watch schemes and property marking, the projects introduced a number of measures specifically designed to match local needs. For example, in the project area in Bolton it was found that two thirds of all residential burglaries involved thefts from meters. The regional gas and electricity boards got together and are pursuing the replacement of prepayment cash-linked meters. That is practical crime prevention in Bolton.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am interested in the Minister's comments about that area. Does he not agree that during

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this period burglaries and break-ins in Bolton went up by between 12 and 24 per cent.? The actual improvement was in a narrow area.

Mr. Patten: We are monitoring the results. Some schemes have not been as successful as others. These are genuine experiments and I shall come to some successes in a moment to balance the problems that the hon. Lady quite fairly mentions. She could well be right that in some places, although not in all, the concentration of a preventive effort such as the schemes in these five towns or on a smaller scale a neighbourhood watch scheme, gives rise to the possibility of what might be called the displacement effect. That means that the burglars go somewhere else and concentrate on another area. That is why it is so important that neighbourhood watch schemes should give maximum cover in an area as quickly as possible. I shall later give an example of a good case where that has happened.

In north Tyneside juvenile crime prevention panels were set up in a local high school to bring to the attention of teachers, the police and local adult panels the problems perceived by the pupils. The aim was to set up projects that were seen by the pupils to be of value. It was a genuine diversionary activity for young people before they had a chance to become involved in crime.

The project in north Tyneside has been very successful in achieving significant reductions in crime. Over the last 18 months residential burglaries in a big area of north Tyneside went down 23 per cent. Burglaries from commercial premises are down by an amazing 51 per cent. and thefts of vehicles were reduced by 23 per cent. Criminal damage is down by 18 per cent. Those figures are more impressive when viewed in the context of increases in these offences in the area generally. When I was there last Wednesday it was good to see the mayor of north Tyneside, a Labour borough, and the deputy leader of the council very enthusiastic about the results and wanting to broaden the efforts to cover the whole of the borough.

So keen is the Labour council on the results produced in co-operation with the police and the Home Office that on Tuesday week representatives are travelling to the Council of Europe meeting on crime prevention in Barcelona to explain why they think that have got it right. The message is that constructive work of this sort can be useful.

The reduction in crime is important, although as the hon. Member for Dewsbury says it is not uniformly successful everywhere. However, there are many good aspects to the Bolton scheme and the clear message emerging from the projects is that effective local crime prevention activity can be achieved when local agencies and residents work together. It is good to see that these experimental schemes are now being taken up in the local areas and are being funded on an ongoing basis by the private sector, local authorities and others. People are now prepared to put money behind these schemes.

One of the best things that happens is that when one goes to talk to people in those areas one is told about their change of attitude. I was in the Longbenton estate in north Tyneside on Wednesday. I went door-knocking on my own in a street where people had not been primed to expect me. It was a bit like general election days——

Mr. Tony Banks: That must have been a nasty shock.

Mr. Patten: I do not think that it was a nasty shock. I do not think that there are many votes in that street for me or for my party. Two ladies came to the door of a house and said they thought that what was going on was worth it. I asked them why they thought that and they said, "We feel better. We are not so worried any more about crime." To a certain extent the fact that crime rates have come down must be central to that feeling. The other important thing is that people's fear of crime, which is sometimes exaggerated, has also been diminished.

We are determined to give a greater focus to this kind of activity. *The Guardian* is an accurate and excellent newspaper and I have already given it a plug. I must do the same for *Today* in which there was a report about Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire, which has one of the lowest crime rates in Britain. That is because almost all of its 9,500 inhabitants belong to its neighbourhood watch scheme. In that small town there is almost total involvement in that scheme. The *Today* newspaper reports that almost every road has its own committee linked by a team of 15 co-ordinators. Mr. Beeching, who is the leader of the scheme, says:

> "One of the most important spin-offs has been to unite the community together against crime . . . It makes you feel much more part of the town when you are all busy working in the same system. As far as the police are concerned they never have to walk around in pairs here. It is real community policing."

I pay tribute to Mr. Beeching and to his scheme. That is a splendid example of the police growing out of the community and the community helping the police and the symbiosis between them.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The Minister mentioned community policing. One of the reasons for the considerable increase in crime in the United Kingdom is that we have lost community policing. We have lost policemen on the beat. Far too often people have to depend on the occasional glimpse of a police patrol passing through by car. I trust that the Minister will tell his colleagues who serve in Northern Ireland that we are anxious to have neighbourhood watch schemes there. I requested those a long time ago.

Mr. Patten: I listen with considerable interest to the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). When we first met I think he was mayor of Larne and I was a junior Minister in the Northern Ireland Office. I pay tribute, as do all hon. Members, to the excellent work carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about community policing, beat policing, neighbourhood policing—whatever one calls it. It is the whole drift of policing in Britain. I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I was just thinking of getting into my peroration, but I shall relax a moment.

Mr. Marshall: I accept in the context of southern England what the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) has said. Does the Minister accept that there is an increasing need for flexibility in recognising the problems that an airport such as Gatwick creates in terms of drug control in drawing police in? Police are also drawn in for state visits and so on. This calls on the system of community policing and that is why Sussex Members are anxious to have an increase in police numbers in that county.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) makes an important point. I know that there are local issues about policing in Sussex and I do not wish to be drawn too far into that. I know that my hon. Friend does not want me to have any inhibitions and would like to draw me right into this minefield. However, I am not up to date on the numbers in Sussex and on the problems involved. I know that the case for Sussex is very well argued by my hon. Friend and our other right hon. and hon. Friends. Of course the police have extra duties. In Thames Valley in my area they have extra duties because of royal protection work and the protection of others judged to be at risk and who are living in the area. The police are used to that sort of thing and have to be flexible. One must balance special needs against the ways in which better deployment and better operational measures can make sure that the police are used to the best effect.

I assure my hon. Friend that his point has been noted by the Home Office. His constituents can be assured that he and his hon. Friends are continuing to make the demands and needs of Sussex very well known.

In conclusion, let me say that for too long crime prevention has been too low on the agenda. For too long, it has been thought to be about the nuts and bolts—the target hardening of homes or cars, and better bolts and locks on doors and windows. But it is not just about that. It is about human behaviour. It is partly about the fundamental business of trying to persuade more people to bear their share of responsibility for crime prevention by using locks, and partly about the need to persuade more of them to be active citizens in their own areas, whether through neighbourhood watch schemes or through other measures.

However, crime prevention is about more than locks and bolts. It is about more than trying to persuade people to be more responsible, and more responsive, in regard to themselves and their neighbourhoods. We must also turn our attention increasingly to striking at the root of crime and criminality. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) has just come into the Chamber and has not heard the debate, which has been long and full. I wish that he had been here a little earlier; it is uncharacteristic of him to behave like this. I advise him to read the record of the debate, when he will find that we have already dealt with some of the issues that he wishes to discuss.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has just come into the Chamber. I would not treat him with such discourtesy, and I am surprised that he treats me so discourteously.

Mr. Randall *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I think that I had better give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I do not want to upset him.

Mr. Randall: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I accept that I have just come into the Chamber. There are fog problems, but I shall make no excuses.

However, I feel that my point is valid. Those of us who are hard-working constituency Members know that unemployment is a very serious matter. We have only to talk to our local chief constables to realise that Government policy with regard to unemployment, and the sense of despair and hopelessness that it creates among young people, is a source of crime. That consideration must be part of any crime prevention measures.

Mr. Patten: I accept the hon. Gentleman's apology, and I quite understand that he cannot always be in the House. I cannot either. However, I must point out two things. First, we discussed the matter to which he refers earlier; secondly, I said at the outset that one of the country's problems for the past 30 years has been a rising crime rate, in times of feast and of famine, under Governments of both political colours. I would regard it as a positive insult to the unemployed to suggest for one moment that they are more likely to commit crimes.

We must strike at the roots of criminality. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was right to raise the problem of social deprivation as a factor that can contribute to crime, although it does not always do so. But, if we are to strike at the roots, we must return again and again to the fact that the peak age for femal offenders in this country is 14, and the peak age for male offenders is 15. That means that crime prevention must be done in the home. It must be done by families, in the community, in our schools—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is very concerned about that—and by us all.

One of the most effective forms of preventive work, at the other end of the spectrum from locks and bolts, is to prevent young people from offending by cautioning them, or by diversionary activity. We must prevent them from getting into the criminal justice system, getting into detention, becoming stuck in the revolving door of crime.

We are trying, on a national scale, to pull the different strands together. I hope that the new national crime prevention body, of which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will give further details before Christmas, will give increased impetus to crime prevention in the country as a whole, because crime prevention is the focus of the badly needed second front in the battle against crime that we need to promote.

10.35 am

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Opposition welcome the chance of a debate on crime prevention. As the Minister said, crime prevention has for some time been too low on the agenda. His earlier tribute to the significant contributions of local authorities, including Labour authorities, adds up to an improved awareness of the need for new crime prevention measures.

We accept the Minister's main point that every individual can make a contribution to crime prevention. Obviously, by locking doors, windows and cars, and by not leaving property about in a way that can lead to opportunistic theft, we can all make a contribution. No one can dispute that. We also welcome the crime prevention conferences and the co-operation of which the Minister has spoken.

A disappointing aspect of the Minister's speech was his concentration on a single aspect of crime prevention, which cannot be the whole answer to the problem. The Minister is extremely foolish if he overestimates the

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contributions that the measures that he described can make to a reduction in crime. Concern about crime, and about law and order generally, is at a higher level now than for many years. More people are frightened of being personally affected by crime—of being mugged, robbed or worse—and their fears are not without justification. While we should not exaggerate or be alarmist about the likelihood of any one individual being a victim of crime, the simple truth is that under the present Government crime has risen to all-time record levels. Crime has been one of the few consistent growth industries in this country during the past eight years.

The Minister said that the trend had been apparent here before then and that the country had experienced rising crime for many years. I ask him to look at the facts. The increase in crime under his Government is shown in figures of which he has made no mention today. I ask the Minister directly: is he satisfied with his Government's performance on law and order? Is he satisfied with their record?

It may be useful to look at some of the facts about crime over the past few years. The annual number of offences recorded by the police has increased by 41 per cent. Violent crime has increased by 42 per cent., burglaries by 52 per cent. and vandalism and criminal damage by 73 per cent. A crime is now committed every eight seconds—a theft every 15 seconds, a burglary every 30 seconds, and an act of vandalism or criminal damage every minute of the day and night. Each family throughout the country now has a 30 per cent. chance of falling victim to a crime. Some of my colleagues from London will later explain that the capital is particularly badly hit by crime.

Mr. Alex Carlile: There is none present.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): If the hon. Lady looks behind her, she will see that not one Labour Member of Parliament for London is present. That shows how much Labour Members care about crime.

Mrs. Taylor: Some of my colleagues were present earlier and listened to a great deal of the Minister's speech, but they have been slightly worn out by its length. I am sure that many will return to the Chamber.

Mr. John Patten: I hope that the hon. Lady will not be unnecessarily critical. A reason why the debate has lasted as long as it has with only one and a bit speakers is that I gave way to every hon. Member who asked to intervene. We had full and valuable exchanges. Moreover, is it not the case that on Fridays we have the opportunity to debate matters more fully than at other times? That should be welcomed, not sneered at.

Mrs. Taylor: I welcome that, and I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that two of my colleagues who intervened in his speech have had to leave the Chamber for other meetings. I am sure that he will be interested to hear their contributions later. In case they do not manage to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, although I am sure they will, I shall remind the Minister of some facts about London.

When the Minister replies, will he tell the House whether he is satisfied with the Government's record on law and order in London? A crime is committed every 45 seconds, a violent crime every 26 minutes, a sexual offence every two and a half hours, a burglary every three and a half minutes, and a theft every 18 seconds. I shall be happy to give way to the Minister if he wishes to answer now. This is a serious matter and increases anxiety about the level of crime. We have heard a great deal of rhetoric from Conservative Members about this, yet the facts show that there is more crime in the country than ever before.

While the crime rate has increased—the Minister is not rising to dispute that—the clear-up rate has fallen dramatically from 41 per cent. in 1979 to 32 per cent. this year. That means that two out of three crimes go undetected. In some areas, the prime example being London, the clear-up rate is minute. In London, only 10 per cent. of burglaries and 11 per cent. of criminal damage cases are solved. That is a reason why so many crimes go unreported. The public have lost confidence in the ability of the police to do anything about crime. Even the Home Office research unit said in a bulletin:

> "it would now be agreed by most criminologists that perhaps as little as 10 per cent. of all crime appears in the official statistics."

That is a frightening fact, and the Minister must address himself to it if he is to have a comprehensive view of what needs to be done in crime prevention.

We must consider what the Government have done. Today we heard about the Government's initiatives on crime prevention, and I shall not criticise them. The Minister spoke about the co-operation that he has had from many Labour-controlled authorities. Many Labour documents published recently have emphasised the need for stronger attention to crime prevention.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Lady must not put words into my mouth. I mentioned one Labour-controlled authority that had been co-operative, North Tyneside, and I mentioned other Labour-controlled authorities—alas, Manchester and others—that had not been in the least co-operative. I am trying, as always, to be as balanced in my views as possible, and I wish that the hon. Lady would be a little more balanced herself.

Mrs. Taylor: I thought that I was being extremely balanced in acknowledging that the Minister had recognised the contribution of a Labour-controlled authority. There are many others, and only a short time ago we discussed Bolton. The Minister's knowledge of geography may or may not be extensive, but I am sure that in his travels he has noticed the political contribution——

Mr. John Patten: If I were allowed to say "Damn it all" in this Chamber I would, because I taught geography at Oxford university for 10 years and I have some vague idea of where Bolton is.

Mrs. Taylor: I must resist being drawn into an education debate and showing my views about education at Oxford.

The Minister's comments today about the Government's initiatives on crime prevention are woefully inadequate, mainly because they do not tackle the causes of crime. The Prime Minister has made her views clear. She believes that there is no link between crime and unemployment—a view not universally shared by all on the Government Benches. Indeed, the Minister said little about that this morning, even when tempted to do so by an intervention. All serious research shows that the commonsense view is correct and that the devil makes work for idle hands. Unemployed youngsters living in deprived areas in overcrowded accommodation, those caught up in what a former senior Minister, Sir Keith Joseph, called "a cycle of deprivation" and those without a stake in society, react as society treats them. They are more likely to be alienated from society and to offend.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research has given details of the link between social deprivation and crime. Last year the chief constable of Greater Manchester confirmed in his report that the burdens on the police there had grown partly because of the alarming background of unemployment. I hesitate to quote another unlikely source of support, but the Minister cited this newspaper earlier. The *Today* newspaper of Wednesday 3 June stated:

> "No matter how loudly Mrs. Thatcher shouts about law and order, her ideology and policies create lawlessness and disorder."

Crime prevention schemes, important though they are, will not solve our crime problem. They may seek to contain crime and, in some cases, as the Minister acknowledged, to displace crime from one locality to another, but they will not have the impact which they should and which we all want to see if the Government do not come to terms with, acknowledge and tackle the basic causes of crime. If the Government continue to increase the number of people who are deprived and alienated, they will push more people towards crime.

The first plank of any crime prevention programme should be to tackle the causes of crime and to create real jobs, not simply to conscript people into youth training schemes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): For 10 years I was a teacher in a working class area of Chatham. My experience was that those children who were most involved in crime were not the most deprived materially. Many lack moral education and training in the ethics of looking after other people in the community. Will the hon. Lady take that into account? The "If you are poor you are a criminal" approach is too simplistic.

Mrs. Taylor: I would not suggest for a minute that someone who is poor is a criminal. That is an outrageous suggestion from the hon. Gentleman. However, I agree with him that the general ethos in schools is important. I agree that we should try to teach people to care for the community, but I see very little sign of the Government encouraging teaching in that direction at the moment.

Generally, if we are to combat crime, we must create a better environment for people to live in. We should not cut the housing programme—the Minister knows that that has happened—so that more people live in overcrowded conditions and in squalor. We must create the conditions in which people—in particular young people—can feel that they have a stake in their community and are not just being left on the scrapheap.

That point brings me to the other main problem with the Government's proposals. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has been promoting crime prevention——

Mr. John Patten: I am the Minister of State.

Mrs. Taylor: I must offer my sincere apologies to the Minister. I have done a very good job of insulting him by challenging him over geography and now by demoting him. I offer him my sincere apologies.

The Minister has been promoting crime prevention significantly outside the House for several months, but in all that promotion he has not emphasised the Government's responsibility. Instead, he has shifted the onus on to the public and the individual. I do not know as much as the Minister about the cost of these things, but he is probably correct to say, as he said this morning, that the average house can be thief-proofed against the casual thief for between £50 and £70. The Minister went into that in detail this morning and reminded us that a do-it-yourself expert could do that much cheaper. Surely the Minister is aware that crime hits hardest, and is most prevalent, not in middle-class suburbia, but in rundown areas, often in the inner cities. Those areas display a range of social problems including unemployment, family breakdown, poverty and ill health. They are areas of poor physical environment, and they are often demoralised and lack communal facilities. The most disadvantaged communities are most vulnerable to criminal activity. People in those communities are least able to protect themselves. They cannot afford the amounts of money to protect themselves that the Minister described this morning. More than individual initiatives are required in those areas. Individual initiatives by home owners or tenants in those areas cannot make the difference described by the Minister.

The Opposition agree with the Minister's proposals in one area. He said that the design of many council and private estates is bad and promotes crime. I agree with that. Many people are paying a very high price for the faults caused by the planners in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of that price is the high level of crime. What can we do about that? The Labour party has been proposing for some time that we must design and build in security features in new buildings. The Minister laid a great deal of emphasis on that, and no one would disagree with him. However, what about the millions of homes and the many council estates that have design faults?

I am sure that the Minister will agree that much can be done to improve that position. I am sure he will agree that a whole range of items would make a significant contribution to crime prevention in many areas. I can offer a few suggestions. The increased use of caretakers in blocks of flats, and the increased use of telephone entry systems and television surveillance would be of assistance. In some instances, a change of design leading to the removal of connecting walkways would help. Improved lighting in corridors and stairwells would help. That is a very simple and inexpensive but very effective option. Better play areas for children, strengthening doors and windows, quick attention to necessary repairs and repairs to vandalism would also help. I am sure the Minister will agree that that list, which is included in a Labour party document on long-term crime prevention policy would help. Indeed, the Minister must be familiar with those options.

All those aspects would help to reduce crime. However, they all cost money and local authorities do not have that money. They might have had that money were it not for the £20,000 million lost in rate support grant through the changes made by the Government as part of their attack on local authorities.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): The Minister used to be in the Department of the Environment.

Mrs. Taylor: As my hon. Friend has said, the Minister used to be in the DOE.

Mr. John Patten: As a Minister of State.

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister had a very senior position, and I am sure that he is fully aware of the cuts that were made in housing during that time. The cuts and the ceiling on spending on local authorities mean that local authorities can provide fewer caretakers, that repairs take longer and that vandalism and graffiti cannot be dealt with as quickly as they should be, and more vandalism occurs. The Minister emphasised the problems that occur with crime among young people and the fact that 14 and 15-year-olds are becoming involved in crime. We need more facilities for young people. We need more youth clubs and community centres. How can local authorities afford to provide such facilities against the background of so much pressure and so many cuts by the Government?

The Opposition believe that the Government cannot seriously tackle crime prevention without reversing their attitude to local authorities. Local authorities could do much to help if they were given the resources, because as the Minister acknowledged, the will is there. Many other things could be done. I do not want to detain the House for quite as long as the Minister did, but we have seen some measures from the Government that have done much to promote crime. I urge the Minister to talk to his colleauges in other Government Departments. Many Government policies have made it easier for crime to flourish. For example, cuts in public transport mean that many people, especially women, are afraid to use public transport at night. The irregularity of services and reports of attacks —and more attacks were reported yesterday and women are fearful of using the Piccadilly line at night now— have a direct effect on the lives of many people.

We must also consider the relationship between alcohol and crime. I am sure that the Minister will not deny that there is a connection. Forty-five per cent. of all violent crimes are alcohol-related. I shall not anticipate next Monday's debate, but the Government cannot deny— and the Minister did not mention this—the strong link between crime and alcohol. Nowhere is that clearer than with drink and driving, but the Government are doing nothing to promote crime prevention in that area. They are doing nothing to crack down seriously on that problem. All that we have heard is a Minister at the Department of Transport talking tough about the problem, but he is taking no action. The Home Office should accept the link between alcohol and crime and act now. I suggest that the Minister should consider real crime prevention measures, possibly including random breath tests.

This is obviously a very serious issue. We are all potential victims of crime, and indeed many of us have experienced thefts and burglaries and we understand only too well the impact on victims. We all support any moves to reduce and prevent crime, and some positive action is being taken. The Minister emphasised the neighbourhood watch schemes, and we all accept that they have a role to play. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary mentioned yesterday that he is a member of such a scheme. Many have been set up with help from local authorities. However, many have been set up in middle-class areas, where crime is not always at its highest. We need an answer for crime in other areas in addition to neighbourhood watch schemes.

We often need a different relationship between the police and local communities before progress can be made. I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will discuss that further. We want, and need, to see more responsible neighbourhood policing. We believe that effective policing depends upon the consent and co-operation of the local community. One of the best hopes for controlling crime is building more confidence in the police. We need more police back on the beat. I think that that sentiment is echoed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We need community police councils so that local groups and the public can discuss their concerns and ideas.

Mr. John Patten: Will the hon. Lady enlarge on the community police councils? Does she envisage that the councils would have a measure of political control over the police and their operations?

Mrs. Taylor: No. That is not the suggestion. Community police councils, which have operated in some areas, are a good forum in which police, local groups and local elected representatives can discuss local concerns and problems and often make headway towards changes that need to be made in the locality. We are talking not about being in control of the local police, but about a forum for discussion to raise problems about policing in the local area. It will inform the police and the local community about what is happening and provide an important two-way relationship that will help to build confidence in those areas.

Mr. Wheeler: What the hon. Lady has just described is the present formula of the consultative police committee, which is very successful, as I am sure many of my hon. Friends will agree. However, will she explain to the House why the London Labour party will not participate in those bodies?

Mrs. Taylor: Simply because they are not as universally successful as the hon. Gentleman suggests. There has been experience in the past of a lack of willingness to co-operate. Some communities feel that the police have not always been willing to listen, so there is no recipe for communication. We have to get over the problems of the past.

Mr. Wheeler: So the London Labour party boycotts them all.

Mrs. Taylor: There are not all boycotted, and there is no suggestion that they would be. If one is to build better relations between local communities and the police, one must have the right atmosphere. One side alone cannot create that atmosphere.

Mr. Tony Banks: There is only one Labour-controlled council in London that does not have a consultative group. Indeed, discussions are still going on between that borough and the police so that a group can be set up. My borough, the London borough of Newham, established and announced the setting up of its group, after considerable discussion between the police and the local authority, during the course of last week. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, it is a question of making sure that we set the groups up according to the needs and wishes of the local community but there is no opposition.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for confirming my point from his experience of being a London Member. It is important that Conservative Members should acknowledge that there is a great deal of co-operation between many Labour councils, Labour-controlled areas and the police. Conservative Members are not usually willing to acknowledge that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We have not yet heard a clear view of the Labour party's policy on the matter. Is the Labour party in favour of giving local authorities the right to control police accountability in the sense of operations and other things? May I draw her attention to the words of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who until the election was the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on home affairs? In the document entitled "Protecting our People", published this year, he said that local authorities should be given the power to determine the

"policing policy, priorities and methods of their force."

Is that Labour party policy?

Mrs. Taylor: There has never been any suggestion that there should be political control of the operational aspects of the police.—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) does not know the difference between policies and operational control, perhaps he should go back to Oxford, or wherever he was.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mrs. Taylor: If Conservative Members want to initiate a debate on police accountability, I shall be happy to participate. However, there is a distinct and clear difference between operational matters, which we acknowledge and which we are happy to leave to the police, and the general framework, to which I would have thought all politicians would want to have some input. All hon. Members believe that elected representatives should create the framework in which policing in Britain is carried out.

The Minister mentioned the emphasis that he wants to see on individual initiatives to prevent crime prevention. He wants to see individuals spending their money, taking their own action and joining neighbourhood watch schemes.

The Government's emphasis on the prison building programme is relevant to the debate. The Minister has not dealt with some of the main issues of crime prevention, and it is important that we recall some of the Government's priorities on spending in the Home Department. So far the Government have shown that one of their main priorities for spending is to build more prisons. We have already seen an increase in the number of prisoners since the Home Secretary's emergency actions in July.

The Minister implied yesterday that sentencing policy was nothing to do with him. However, he is responsible for what goes on inside prisons. He is responsible for the atmosphere in our gaols, which for the most part ensure that prisoners only learn how to become better criminals when they are released. If the Minister were to devote as much energy and as many resources to alternatives to prisons as he has to prison buildings, he might do more to reduce recidivism and make a positive contribution to crime prevention.

At present our prisons simply encourage entrenched and bitter re-offenders. It is a fact—I hope that the Minister will acknowledge this—that six out of 10 prisoners re-offend. That figure goes up to eight out of 10 when we are talking about youths who have been inside. One of the reasons why so many re-offend is that they come out of prison and find very little support and have a small chance of finding any work. It is a simple fact, despite what Conservative Members were saying earlier, that unemployed youths are two or three times more likely to re-offend than those who manage to find work. If we are to have job creation, we should create real jobs for those people. It would be a significant measure towards crime prevention, but it is one, alas, to which the Minister has given little attention.

None of the measures that I have described will, by themselves, bring about a dramatic decrease in crime. If we increase public awareness of simple crime prevention, as the Minister is suggesting, it will be a step in the right direction, but it will be a significantly bigger step if it is taken in the right context. To promote crime prevention we must take action on many issues, including unemployment, deprivation and the appalling housing crisis. We cannot expect results from a crime prevention programme if the Government are still creating a grab-what-you-can environment that provides such a fertile breeding ground for crime. Crime prevention programmes would be a bonus if we had a Government who tackled the root causes of crime, allowed local authorities to play their full part in dealing with these problems, who were willing to take on vested interests, and who did more about alcohol abuse and drink and driving. Crime prevention programmes by themselves are a poor substitute for a real policy on law and order.

11.10 pm

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): I am pleased to follow the perhaps slightly ungenerous and accident-prone speech of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). All is not well in Lambeth. We have an excellent community police consultative group, which is more or less boycotted by the council and completely boycotted by local Labour Members. The council set up its own police monitoring group, which spends its time publishing anti-police propaganda of which the hon. Lady would not approve. It is also hostile to neighbourhood watch schemes. It is just starting to permit them on council estates, but it has not encouraged them and, for a long time, strongly discouraged them.

I wish to speak today about neighbourhood watch schemes. First, I want to tell my hon. Friend the Minister of State how pleased I was to hear the announcement of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department about the intended legislation to control the carrying and use of knives. My hon. Friend knows that it has been a matter of great concern to me for some time. I have been bombarding him and his colleagues in the Home Office because there has been an epidemic of knife carrying in south London, including parts of my constituency. The proposals of the Secretary of State are exactly as I had hoped and I am grateful for that.

Secondly, I wish to mention another constituency problem—that of prostitutes—about which I have been corresponding with my hon. Friend the Minister of State. Although this is a great problem in part of my constituency and a considerable number of kerb crawlers have been arrested and prosecuted, there is a simple flaw in the Sexual Offences Act 1985 that is inhibiting the police in performing their duties and arresting kerb crawlers. It is that a person must be shown persistently to molest or proposition women. When the case comes to court, it is virtually impossible to prove that somebody has been persistently molesting. I wrote to my hon. Friend the

[Mr. William Shelton]

Minister of State asking him whether we could remove the word "persistently" from the Criminal Justice Bill. Unfortunately, that would be outside the scope of the Bill, and I accept that. My hon. Friend said that he might support a private Member's Bill. I hope that the Government will rectify this problem in the law, but, if they do not, I hope that someone fortunate in the ballot will bring forward this issue. I intend to introduce a Ten-minute Bill to test the view of the House on this point.

Thirdly, there are some 30 or 40 neighbourhood watch schemes in my constituency. I was interested to hear the Minister say that there are 45,000 throughout the country. I am told that in London there are some 30,000. I am delighted to hear that. They are of great importance to the community. They vary a great deal in size and effectiveness. Some are very good, and others are moribund. Those which are moribund are more likely to have been imposed from outside by enthusiastic police. I support that, but, like everything else in life, those that work well are the ones run by jolly good people and those that do not work so well are those where no one is deeply involved.

There are many neighbourhood watch schemes in London and our next step should be to improve their quality, raising them to the standard of some of the best. One of the finest, if not the finest, in London—I may be partisan—is in my constituency. It is the Fontaine area neighbourhood watch scheme, the chairman of which, Mr. Richard Clifton, I respect very much. It is a microcosm of a good neighbourhood watch scheme and it covers about 600 houses, of which 90 per cent. are members of the scheme. It is a good model for others, and there are several reasons for its success. It has a good committee which organises regular activities. It has film shows and guest speakers and regularly meets the home beat police officer. It charges 50p per annum and has several hundred pounds in the bank. It has contributed from its funds to the victim support scheme and similar operations. It has a monthly magazine which is paid for entirely by advertising.

There was, for example, an old lady who was conned by a bogus gas board official. The police advised the Fontaine neighbourhood watch scheme and all the residents were quickly warned of the menace, so that, if they saw a gas board official, they asked for his credentials. The scheme is expanding well. A local garage offers discounts, and the local locksmith gives discount on home protection goods to scheme members. We must try to spread this good practice to the other 30,000 London schemes, and bring them closer together. Thanks to the sensitivity and intelligence of the police in south London, the sector working parties are already working extraordinarily well together, and their chairmen meet regularly. However, I want to suggest four steps that we should consider to spread the good practice of the Fontaine scheme, and others like it, to those which are not as alert and active.

First, if the police have not already done so, they should put on to a computer the names and addresses of the chairmen of neighbourhood watch schemes in their district. Secondly, there should be an annual get-together of neighbourhood watch representatives in each district. There are 30,000 schemes in all, so, if they all met together, they would need Hyde park. Who would fund this? We cannot ask the police or the Government to do so. Some of the schemes may have a few hundred pounds in the bank, so perhaps they could fund it, but I believe that such a get-together should be funded by sponsorship. I should be surprised if some of the big security companies—for example, Securicor—were not prepared to organise and sponsor such an annual event.

Thirdly, I should like to see produced a monthly London-wide news sheet specifically on behalf of and for neighbourhood watch. I am aware of the *Good Neighbour* magazine that is produced by the police. It is an excellent publication, but — I say this without criticism — it is written by the police and it is police-oriented. Unfortunately, only one copy is sent to each chairman of a neighbourhood watch scheme. I am suggesting that there should be something much more ambitious than that. The news sheet that I have in mind would contain articles and contributions from all local neighbourhood watch schemes, which would set out what they are doing. I have in mind, for example, what my friends in Streatham are doing in securing discounts from local stores for members of the scheme.

How would such a news sheet be financed? I do not think that there would be any difficulty in securing London-wide sponsorship from a security company or a newspaper. A local newspaper could well be interested in sponsorship. The police computer, to which I have referred, could be used, and if only 10 copies were sent to each neighbourhood watch scheme — we are talking about 30,000 schemes—there would be a circulation of about 300,000. I cannot believe that that could not be paid for by advertising and the sponsorship of a security company, for example.

What a wonderful way that would be to spread the good practice of the good neighbourhood watch schemes so that the less experienced schemes could learn from them. There are perhaps 10,000, 15,000 or 20,000 schemes where members are trying to re-invent the wheel. It is unfortunate that they are not in contact with other schemes that have invented it already.

I should like to see much more media coverage and interest in neighbourhood watch schemes. Very seldom do we read about the schemes in the press or hear about them on television and radio programmes. I was delighted a short while ago when I heard that the police had proposed to the BBC that it should prepare a film on neighbourhood watch for its "Open Space" programme. A video would have been produced that could have been used at meetings of neighbourhood watch schemes. Unhappily, for some reason of which I am not aware, the BBC changed its mind and did not proceed. I hope that it will reconsider its decision and proceed to prepare a programme on neighbourhood watch.

It is a tremendous community resource to have so many people working together and talking to one another. The friendships that are made extend far beyond neighbourhood watch. For example, help is available to old ladies when there are floods. It is very important to get the community together. There is a lack of the sense of community, because our society is now so mobile. That is one of the many reasons for the high crime rate. There are so many who do not know their neighbours and who do not have to worry about them. In days past we used to live in more of a village atmosphere.

Neighbourhood watch schemes have grown quickly in the past few years and we must spread the good practice. It is time that neighbourhood watch came of age with the establishment of good practice throughout.

11.25 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I, too, am grateful for the opportunity given to the House this morning to discuss, with perhaps the little extra leisure that Friday mornings give us, an issue of great importance. I accept much of the analysis presented by the Minister of State in his fair opening of the debate. I noticed with some concern, however, that he produced the all too political words "retribution" and "deterrence" during his speech. It is sometimes thought that there is an equation between greed and boredom, and retribution and deterrence. Retribution and deterrence may be the fiercer words, but I strongly suspect, on the basis of all the criminological evidence that is available to us, much of which has come from the Home Office, that retribution and deterrence have a much greater effect on white-collar crime than on the sort of crime that we have largely been discussing this morning. It is important that we should concentrate our efforts on the sort of practical measures that we have heard about from the Minister, as well as on tackling the root causes of crime.

I welcome particularly the success of police liaison committees. I attended recently a meeting of the Montgomeryshire police liaison committee in my constituency. I was delighted to hear—I am sure that the Minister will join me in commending this—of the initiative of the chief constable of Dyfed/Powys in introducing extended community policing. This will lead to us seeing more police officers on foot in the towns and villages of my constituency and throughout the two counties. This may have only a marginal effect in terms of sheer statistical police effectiveness, but it will have a dramatic effect upon the public's confidence and on the way that they feel that they are being policed.

During the meeting of the police liaison committee I welcomed, too, the decision to develop neighbourhood watch schemes, which are more relevant in towns than in rural areas, and the development of farm watch and rural watch. I hope that this latter initiative will reduce the disturbingly high levels of crime against farmers, many of whose losses cannot be insured against economically.

I welcome, too, the measures that have been announced for dealing with the problem of knives and certain other offensive weapons. When responding to Home Office Questions yesterday, the Minister passed a comment with which I agreed when referring to the survivalist industry that is abounding in Britain. I realise that dealing with survivalism represents a difficult legislative problem. It is so important to distinguish between excellent Outward Bound schemes that are available for both juveniles and adults—nothing could be better than a business man going to Ardmore to clear out his brain for the challenge of the rest of the year — and some of the quite astonishingly wicked survivalist courses of which I have heard.

One of these courses was taken up some months ago in the *Daily Mirror*, it having been attended incognito by a journalist from that newspaper. He described to me how he was trained during that course in a forest clearing, while in a militarist uniform, to charge at sacks hanging from trees with a rifle with a bayonet fixed to it. He was made to believe that he was charging against a human being. Young people paid money to go on the course. They were being trained in activities that must surely be regarded by all reasonable people as thoroughly anti-social.

Mr. John Patten: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that I entirely share his concern? Secondly, is he aware that I welcome his support for anything that we can do in this especially difficult area? Thirdly, is he aware that we hope that a start will be made, should the House so decide, by the banning of the importation, advertising or sale of some of the instruments and weapons of damage such as death stars and hand claws, following the enactment of the Criminal Justice Bill that is now in another place. Those devices are some of the sickest manifestations of the survivalist culture, which has little to do with personal survival and much to do with violence against the person.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: It is something that has practically nothing to do with culture.

Mr. Banks: There is obviously a deal of concern on both sides of the Chamber about the development of survivalism. However, why has there been such growth in the survivalist movement, or whatever it is called? What are the reasons that have led to this growth? Will the hon. and learned Gentleman bend his mind to assessing the background to survivalism?

Mr. Carlile: I think that the survivalist movement has grown for reasons that the hon. Gentleman might not advance. I think that it is based on the importation of attitudes from other countries where violence has been more acceptable than in Britain, perhaps for decades. I suspect that it is the development of easy communications across national frontiers that has brought survivalism into the United Kingdom.

I turn now to something else. I shall use what is perhaps an old-fashioned and fuddy-duddy phrase as a preface to my remarks — respect for the law. Although it is an unfashionable expression, it is not an aspiration we should abandon. It seems to me that there are two broad bases upon which respect for the law is founded. One is the rather more abstract basis that respect for the law is founded upon respect for the rule of law and the other is the more common practical view that respect for the law is founded upon respect for its fairness and effectiveness. I shall raise two specific issues, one related to the fairness of the law and the other related to its effectiveness, in which there are deficiencies which the Government can and should tackle. I look forward to the Minister's response on these issues.

The first, relating to the fairness of the law, is about bail. Those who are arrested by the police, but who are subsequently not proceeded against or acquitted, are, in many cases, living close to the margin of unlawfulness. They have not actually broken the law, but they are either closely connected with those who have, or they have come close to doing so. It is therefore important that those who come into contact with the police, and are arrested and remanded, but who are not proceeded against or acquitted, should emerge from that experience with their respect for the law enhanced and with the view that the law has been fair to them, even though they have been troubled and inconvenienced by it.

[Mr. Carlile]

Last Friday, the Minister gave me a written answer about the statistics for people of different racial origins who have been remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against. Those statistics revealed a disturbing—I do not want to say alarming—state of affairs. They revealed that a black person—that is, someone of Afro-Caribbean descent — who is remanded in custody is twice as likely to be acquitted or not proceeded against as a white person, and that a person of Asian origin is nearly twice as likely not to be proceeded against or to be acquitted. It seems, therefore, that black and Asian people are being remanded in custody in circumstances which would not lead to a white person being so remanded. That is undoubtedly disturbing. It is happening for many complex reasons. It is happening because the court which deals with applications for bail does not have enough information. I know that, and I welcome the initiatives now being taken to place social inquiry reports before the courts for the purpose of bail hearings. That will help, but will the Minister to take account of the view, which is based on some professional experience, that courts are more likely to remand in custody because of the weakness of the provisions of the Bail Act 1976?

There has been a great deal of controversy about people charged with murder, rape or robbery who have been remanded on bail, but in statistical terms that is not terribly important. The issue is how the Bail Act is operating in the vast majority of cases for which people appear before the courts. There is a presumption of bail in the Bail Act, but it is honoured more in its breach than in its observance. Will the Minister ensure that, at training sessions for magistrates, far more emphasis is given than has been in the past to the presumption of bail? Will he say that, if the figures relating to people from non-white ethnic backgrounds are not improved, something will be done to change the Bail Act and therefore improve the results?

The second separate issue is about the effectiveness of the law. Here I turn to the forensic science service, which has been neglected in Britain. The forensic science service, creature of the Home Office, is extremely important and it is increasing in importance because of the new discoveries which are being made. The use of genetic fingerprinting is a recent example for which the Home Office forensic science service has had the funding to get into the lead as compared with other countries. However, in areas of forensic science less glamorous than the development of genetic fingerprinting and other similar discoveries the situation has deteriorated.

It may be that some of the best scientists are going into the forensic science service because of their real interest in the subject. They are certainly not being attracted by the money. Only one forensic scientist employed by the Home Office receives as much as £30,000 per year. If we really want the best professionally qualified scientists to go into the forensic science service and lead that service in the effective detection of crime, thereby increasing public respect for the effectiveness of the law, and the criminals' fear of discovery, we should be operating a scheme which would attract scientists from universities who now go into industry, and some of the best scientists from industry. I now of a number of brilliant forensic scientists who have left the Home Office forensic science service simply because they could not afford to live on the salary, or could earn a great deal more elsewhere. The average Home Office forensic scientist is paid a very low salary indeed.

There is also a problem of the speed with which samples are dealt with in the forensic science service. This may have arisen because there has been a decrease in the number of people employed in that service. Between 1985 and 12 October this year there was a decrease of 8·5 in the number of forensic scientists employed in the Home Office. Between 31 January 1984 and 31 October this year there was a decrease of 15·5 in the number of forensic scientists employed by the Metropolitan Police. That means that as the demand on the service increased the number of forensic scientists decreased, and that seems absurd. As a result, when the police send a sample for examination by the forensic science service, they have to wait longer for the result. A typical situation is when the police interview a person, and they have very little evidence except for a shoe print in the soil outside a window. That has happened from time to time. The suspect's shoes, which are usually trainers with quite complex tread patterns, are sent off to the forensic science laboratory and a comparison is made between the shoe and the pattern of the sample of earth that has been taken and photographed. As a result the scientists can say almost certainly that the shoe was that of the suspect. The police then call in the suspect and re-interview him, but this time they have something to go on. The longer that process takes, the more time the criminal has to fix up a false alibi, sort out his defence, disappear or take all sorts of measures which reduce the effectiveness of the detective process. It is also important that cases go to court as soon as possible after an arrest.

I shall give two statistical examples, one from Wales and the other from London. In Wales in 1984 it took 35 days from the supply of samples to the north-western forensic laboratory at Chorley to the supply of results to the police. In 1986 it took 42 days. The figures relate to crime cases, not to drink-driving cases. The drink-driving figures are good.

In London in 1984, for cases involving chemistry criminalistics, the process took 45 days, but this year 65 days. In biology cases in 1984 it took 28 days but this year 41 days. The most alarming figures of all relate to the possession of drugs. In 1984, 28 days elapsed between the supply of the sample to the laboratory and the result. In 1987 the same process took 140 days—a deterioration of more than 400 per cent. The same process in firearms cases in 1984 took 58 days and in 1987, 70 days.

In the spirit in which the debate is being conducted I must say to the Minister that these statistics simply are not good enough. The delays hamper the police in the detection of crime. They reduce the confidence of the public in the police's ability to detect crime, through no fault of the police and through no fault of the forensic scientists themselves. I pay tribute to the skill and dedication of forensic scientists employed by the Government, but they are not being given a fair chance to make the impact which they could make.

A criminal who is minded to commit a burglary, to rob, or to assault should be made aware that there is a service which can detect fingerprints, match fibres, match footprints, match blood and do some imagination-defying feats in the detection of crime. The criminal should also know that that service operates quickly and ruthlessly to assist the police in detecting him in his crime. If the criminal knows that — particularly the professional or semi-professional criminal — it is at least as much a deterrent as a swingeing sentence.

11.43 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Devon, West and Torridge): All hon. Members who have participated in the debate this morning have spoken about rising crime figures. My particular interest is the increased crime in rural areas and the new initiatives that people have to undertake to protect themselves and their property. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) mentioned farmers. I am glad that he raised this matter, because livestock is being taken in my constituency. It is a difficult crime to detect, and the loss to the farmer is incalculable, particularly when he is fighting to go into profit.

Much of the debate has been about crime prevention and personal or community action to deflect the criminal. I want to deal with crime prevention by changing the attitude of those engaged in criminal activity. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) talked about the problems of the second and third offender. I am sorry that the hon. Lady is not in the Chamber and that Opposition Benches are so depleted when we are discussing this enormously important topic. The matter is of grave importance to me, because I represent those who inhabit Dartmoor prison. The prison holds 620 prisoners, 90 per cent. of whom have previous convictions. I remind the House that of those going to prison for the first time about 60 per cent. will return, and that 70 per cent. of those who return will go back for a third term.

I recognise that in many senses this is a small group, first, because police statistics relate only to recorded crime and, secondly, because many people who are convicted face non-custodial sentences. In addition, a proportion of the convicted do not go back to prison. None the less, the group on which I wish to focus attention is of vital significance in crime prevention because such people, if caught for two or three burglaries, might have a string of 25 burglaries behind them. They commit a disproportionate number of crimes from which people suffer.

If we are seriously thinking about crime prevention, we should work out ways of supporting the Government's initiatives to break that cycle of crime. If we can do that, if only in relation to those who commit three, four or five crimes, we shall be on the way to discovering how to deflect criminals before they even begin their criminal activities. We might be able to discover how to stop girls of 14 and boys of 15 from turning to crime initially. Although it might not be within the scope of today's debate, it must be remembered that education has a very important part to play. Perhaps training for parenthood could be brought to school for those aged five and over. Care for people in the community is the secret of a non-criminal life.

The difficulties involved in breaking the cycle of crime are enormous. Most criminals who offend once or twice go on until they either become too old or the prison service somehow manages to break into their cycle of criminality.

I am delighted that one of my female colleagues is in the Chamber, even though there are no hon. Ladies on the Opposition Benches. Hon. Members will have noticed that the word "he" is usually used when describing a criminal. I am at a loss to know whether my sex is less criminal by nature—as I suspect it is, because we are the good sex—or whether it is because we are neater at not being caught.

Mr. Tony Banks: I agree with what the hon. Lady has said. Next Wednesday my Bill to ban the sale of war toys comes before the House. Does the hon. Lady agree that from the earliest years we give our young boys war toys and reproductions of weapons but give our young girls much more peaceful products? I might be stereotyping women, but we start from the very beginning to create violence and latent criminality among males, while we encourage the virtues of the fairer sex.

Miss Nicholson: I am glad to hear of the hon. Gentleman's Bill, because in my constituency there is a school for significantly disturbed boys and girls. Recently those children were subjected to a mail order catalogue for martial arts equipment, which I imagine involves survivalism. The most repugnant material is featured. It is abominable to put that material before mentally and socially deprived children. I think that probably females do not commit as much crime as males because of the innate virtues of the female sex.

I should like to concentrate on how the prison service sometimes manages to break the cycle of crime, why it is successful, and how Government initiatives support that success and should be encouraged and enlarged. Where there are windows of opportunity, we should push them wide open.

When the cycle of crime is broken, it helps the prisoner get into a frame of mind whereby he can, at last, make a much more constructive decision about his life. That is the key. The prisoner himself must understand that it is his life and that it is up to him to make better decisions. The secret is to help the prisoner get into that frame of mind.

There is a whole panoply of activities in the prison service, loosely referred to as rehabilitation. In many ways such initiatives are extremely good. Many things, such as training and education, are very helpful towards rehabilitation. I should like to concentrate on two issues, the first of which is the way in which people can be helped to develop a social awareness.

A particular problem apparent among many prisoners whom I know is their unwillingness to come to terms with their criminality. They cannot face the fact that they have committed, not one, but a string of crimes. They find it extremely difficult to discuss their crimes, and they are wholly resistent to such discussion. They are averse to the therapy available to help them look at their own actions.

An initiative already undertaken by the prison service, which needs greater backing, is the opportunity that it gives to prisoners to work with other groups of disadvantaged people. It is important because, very often, the prisoner can relate more happily and therefore more productively to people who are disadvantaged in different ways from themselves; for example, the physically or mentally handicapped.

In Cardiff prison, for example, there is an excellent initiative whereby prisoners work with disabled people. In Dartmoor there are plans to bring mentally handicapped adults to the prison for physical education. The hope is that an enjoyable time will be had by all and that the prisoner will be engaging in an activity with a disadvantaged group that will help him understand his own actions much better.

In Bristol there is a craft training shop that has links with victims of crime. That shop is providing funding to help those victims. That is an interesting and constructive initiative. It does not necessarily provide funding for the

[Miss Nicholson]

victims of the crimes committed by the prisoners involved in that initiative, but in some cases that is so, and that is even more constructive. Once a prisoner starts work to provide funding for someone whom he has hurt, he quickly develops a perception of what that person felt and therefore why he should not commit crime again. In Dartmoor there is a scheme—it is at its development stage — for linking a craft and hobby shop with a residential home for disabled children.

I do not wish to pour cold water on or undervalue the current rehabilitation exercises in our long-stay prisons. In those prisons there are excellent education programmes and training courses for various trades. I should also like to pay particular tribute to the role of the churches in our long-stay prisons. At Dartmoor, for example, a Salvation Army officer lives just outside the gates and he is always available. Indeed, Dartmoor has a ministry team which includes a Methodist minister, a Church of England vicar and a Roman Catholic priest. The rehabilitation exercises and the presence of the churches are enormously helpful, but might it not be preferable to help develop social awareness in those who lack it?

Crime demonstrates a massive lack of social awareness. Those prisoners who have difficulty in coming to terms with their criminality manage to relate with less advantaged people. There are also practical results. If someone is involved in painting a telephone kiosk, he is 100 times less likely to vandalise a telephone kiosk when he next has the opportunity to do so.

The very experience of prison separates the prisoner from the home community, and that is an enorrmous problem. this is the second issue to which I wish to draw attention, because, although there is a Government initiative to deal with this problem, there is still more to be done. Of course, there is parole, but, with regard to the long-stay, high-security prisons more can be done within the framework of parole. I have one idea that I hope the Minister will consider.

In my home town I know of one prisoner who has recently come out of Dartmoor, a young man of 25, who has told me of the enormous difficulties of not re-offending. He has been a criminal since the age of about 12 and was a long-term, hard-core criminal. He has told me of the enormous difficulties that he and his friends experience when they leave prison. When someone leaves prison, his criminal friends at home are longing to have him back. They are perfectly willing and happy for him to join them in further criminal activities. A prisoner leaves prison with a little bit of money and goes back to his home community and — even though he is under the supervision of a probation officer—back into the arms of his criminal friends. He will spend that cash, and he may not have a job.

The young man told me that his secret was to leave his community and go away to a completely new area of the country. He was immensely fortunate, because he was offered a new home and the community managed to find him a job. However, few people are brave enough, bold enough or aware of their needs to be able to take that huge step. Indeed, we do not wish to see people leaving prison and going away from their home communities, because it is in that community that they have their families and, one hopes, non-criminal friends.

When considering post-release action for prisoners, I believe that there is scope for developing the parole idea. Of course, we should remember that some of the worst offenders do not get access to parole because of the danger that they pose to the community. Therefore, the highest risk prisoners are denied access to parole and are therefore denied the chance to return to their home community. I suggest that, because of that failure, they are even more likely to re-offend because they come straight out of prison with no linking period between prison and the community. I suggest that when dealing with those serving a sentence of over two years we should explore the possibility, during the last part of the sentence, say six months, of their having a job in the home community under instruction, and liable to be recalled, as a structured experience. They should undergo a training service or perhaps work on a community project.

I do not share the passion of Opposition Members for what they call real jobs. By that I suppose they deny the possibility of the reality of work being expressed through community service. I believe that community service is a way of feeding prisoners back into the community and making them understand the concerns and needs of that community. It is that lack of awareness of such needs that has brought them into crime. Therefore, I do not deny the value of someone working on a community project when he comes out of prison.

The benefit of such a scheme is that it would provide a bridge between prison and the home, but that bridge would be structured, under instruction, and the prisoner would know that he was under an obligation to perform properly and to work within the hours that he was told to work. He would still be within the prison service when working out the last six months of his prison sentence, and he would be liable to recall if he offended against the demands placed upon him.

It is nonsense to suggest that the Government have taken no steps to deal with the rehabilitation of persistent offenders. There is an excellent scheme in existence—the probation-sponsored community service orders scheme. I believe that this service, expanded and enlarged, might well provide the route for the rehabilitation of persistent offenders. Indeed, the expansion of that service by the provision of resources and the use of imagination might well provide, in the long term, a much happier solution and result in such prisoners not committing crime again.

That solution would be much more satisfactory to the community, because we could be confident that when criminals came out of prison they were on their way towards a non-criminal life. I do not share the obsession of Opposition Members—few of whom are present for this debate—with expenditure. It is not how much we spend that counts, but the way in which we deploy our resources, and I believe that this would be a much more cost-effective way of rehabilitating the offender into society.

Crime is a multiple problem. Mercifully, we have come far from the idea that prisoners' lives must remain as miserable as possible. We now believe that the loss of liberty is the punishment for crime. We must move ahead and embrace the concept that the task of society is to teach the criminal not to re-offend. We must enhance the much undervalued notion of rehabilitation.

I pay tribute to the important role played in all this by the undervalued prison officers and prison governors. They are in 24-hour contact with prisoners, and we depend largely on their skills to turn the criminal round into a non-criminal life. The 200 prison officers at Dartmoor, which is the only prison that I know in great detail, and its governor—in whom I have great confidence—believe that association with prisoners within the prison and rehabilitation during after the prison sentence represent the way forward. I support that view.

12.1 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I greatly appreciate being given the opportunity to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), and I applaud many of her comments. She has one of the most difficult prisons in her constituency, and I was impressed by the depth of knowledge and concern that she displayed.

I shall address many of my remarks to juvenile delinquency, with which I have been involved for some years. I welcome this debate, which reflects a changing attitude towards crime in general. At one time, we were preoccupied with what motivated or would deter the criminal. Those are still important considerations, but we are moving towards a more educated and enlightened understanding of crime. Difficult though it may be to accept much crime is opportunistic. For crime prevention, as in so many other areas, the Government's policy is that the individual has a responsibility. We have the right to education, health care and police services, but in all those areas, as well as in crime prevention, the individual citizen has a responsibility to explore the means at his disposal to improve his position.

We heard alarming figures from my hon. Friend the Minister about the vast number of cars that are left unlocked and houses that are left unsecured. Some of us share the nostalgic memories of leaving our doors wide open and our cars unprotected. In my case, that resulted in 26 break-ins in the London borough of Lambeth in about 15 years. Our house ended up looking like Fort Knox, although it was a little late. If the Minister had launched his initiatives a few years ago, we might have been spared that.

My constituency is served by the Surrey constabulary, which has one of the lowest crime rates in the country. That enlightened and flexible police force has warmly embraced the initiative of crime prevention. We have had local seminars with representatives of industry, commerce, local government and community groups. We have crime prevention panels. Some time ago, I visited the one in Godalming. We have a remarkable and impressive victim support scheme, which I welcome. It provides the means to consider the poor victims of crime, whose needs were almost entirely disregarded in our traditional juvenile and adult justice system. We welcome the additional £9 million of Government funding for victim support schemes, which will be put to good use. The schemes develop a partnership among the police, the local community and those who wish to become involved in public service.

Similarly, the creation of 42,000 neighbourhood watch schemes is an incredible achievement. It was a clever concept, but no one could have known that it would take off so remarkably. We have made good headway in my constituency. I have great hopes for neighbourhood watch schemes. They should not develop into vigilante groups, but they will help to reintroduce what hon. Members have suggested is a crucial aspect of maintaining law and order and preventing crime: the importance of rural and urban villages and of making people believe that they belong together, that what they do is noticed and that someone else cares. Often people are more afraid of crime than reality warrants. But that is no reason not to take their fears seriously, and by spreading authentic information, neighbourhood watch schemes can help to dispel fear and discourage potential perpetrators of crimes. I hope that the schemes will become more imaginative and will analyse the community needs. Is it a youth club for the wayward young? Is it a shopping scheme to help elderly people who presently live behind barred doors to get out? The scheme has made a dramatic beginning and it has a great future.

We have many more police officers than we had when the Government came to power, and they are now much better paid. The police should deploy their resources intelligently and flexibly, taking into account the areas of particular difficulty. They should have a problem-oriented policy and should encourage local groups to meet special needs.

This is a time when increasing legislation is inevitably putting additional burdens on the police—the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Transport Act 1985, the Crown prosecution service, the concentration on drug crimes and the Data Protection Act 1984 all place increasing burdens on the police, as we are all too well aware from our own constituencies. There is no justification for adding to the burdens of the police. Yesterday, I was interested to hear the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) about the number of prisoners held in police cells. Like many others, I deplore the action of the prison officers at a time when important new management initiatives are taking place in the prison service. They are damaging their own reputations and, more importantly, making the job of the hard-pressed police much more difficult.

I do not wish to speak at length about developments in housing; hon. Members have already spoken about the concept of defensible space. We do not want anonymous alleyways and areas of common land—features which, 10 or 20 years ago, were thought to be in the interests of the community. With the wisdom of hindsight, we can now see how so many of those communal walkways and common lands have become a muggers' paradise. Increasingly, we are trying to make people feel a sense of ownership of particular territories. We should not underestimate the extent to which policies such as the sale of council houses create a sense of involvement and belonging because of the resulting supervision of communal land.

The peak age for offending for boys is 15, and for girls, 14. The highest rate of offences for any age group is that for boys between 14 and 16. Two fifths of those in custody are under 21. At present, more than 2,300 youngsters under 18 are in prison institutions. Two thirds of them are awaiting trial. Compared with our European neighbours, we incarcerate many more youngsters. Clearly, education plays an important part. The social responsibility courses that my hon. Friend the Minister plans to introduce through the Department of Education and Science have a part to play, but the matter is much broader than such courses. What is needed is the development of basic skills. How many people have shared the experience of finding it rare for a youngster who appears in court to be able to read the oath? The lack of literacy amongst many juvenile offenders is notorious, despite the fact that youngsters are growing up at a time when more is spent per head than

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ever before on education and when teacher-pupil ratios are far better than ever before. But we are failing. Youngsters are emerging without the skills or the opportunity to make a contribution. These are the ones who most easily fall prey to crime.

It has been well said that crime is not exclusively to be found among deprived or disadvantaged children. There are many casualties of affluence—many drug and drink-related crimes throughout the country.

However, there is a particularly vulnerable group that does not attend school or get what it needs from the system. Its members have little to do and feel that they have little reputation to protect. They think that nobody values them, and they do not care about themselves, saying, "If I offend, what difference will it make?" The challenge for us all is to create an educational and social environment for those youngsters that will give them a sense of self-esteem and respect.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I have listened with great care to what the hon. Lady is saying. Would she care to consider the long-running experiment in Massachusetts in the United States, where criminality is taken away from the juvenile courts, and the concept of delinquent and rehabilitation is brought into play? Does she agree that there is considerable merit in that system?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman; I hope to come to that aspect in a moment. Now, however, I want to say a little more about crime prevention among juveniles, even before they have reached the criminal justice system. For instance, there are schemes in France under which increasing attention is given to vulnerable youngsters by trying to get the various agencies to work together. The whole point is that such youngsters slip out of the school system. They often slip through the social services system. Often it is the criminal justice system that picks up the youngsters at the end because somehow they slip through everybody else's net. They are interesting developments in France, many parallel to our experiments here such as estate action and developing inner cities, from which we can learn——

Mr. Wheeler: An example is the Nottingham experiment.

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed. Many of the voluntary organisations have set up schemes in many parts of the country. I refer in particular to the Children's Society, which has pioneered work in alternatives to custody in various areas, drawing together the different agencies to meet youngsters' needs.

It is too simplistic simply to say that the Government are uncaring because of the failure to produce jobs for those youngsters. The fact is that over the past year we have had the largest fall in unemployment in history. There is growth in employment in every part of the country and opportunities for school leavers have improved dramatically.

When we talk about that vulnerable group, none of us should underestimate the tremendous contribution by the Manpower Services Commission, now to be called the Training Commission, in the development of the two-year youth training scheme, so that many of the youngsters to whom I am referring have the opportunity to do practical work—based training after school age. It is interesting to see many youngsters participate and develop well in those schemes who failed to flourish or get on at all at school. That is crucial to crime prevention. We want people to avoid crime, to grow up with skills, self-esteem and self-respect and to feel that they have a useful part to play.

I now return to the remarks by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) about the Massachusetts concept. I believe strongly that penal custody for juveniles should come to an end. At present, with a troublesome youngster, it is all too easy to make a detention centre or youth custody order. That means that the Home Office kindly pays for an expensive placement at nearly £300 a week. There are no difficulties of allocation for those making the recommendation, the social workers or the probation service. It leads to a distortion in the disposal of youngsters. Often they are a troublesome group of individuals and alternative placements are usually costly. Only when we bring to an end the possibility of penal custody shall we focus our mind on more appropriate, alternative placements. That is not to say that those youngsters, many of whom may have committed serious offences, should be set free in the community. There is nothing against having secure placements, but one does not want to find that there is a financial incentive to starting a young offender on a serious criminal career.

It is extremely worrying that youngsters from detention centres stand a 75 per cent. chance of reoffending. Those in youth custody stand an 80 per cent. chance of reoffending. It must be in the interests of crime prevention, the community and appropriate and efficient use of resources to do all that we can to divert young offenders from the criminal justice system.

There have been many developments. We do a great deal of cautioning, although it is patchy in various parts of the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West referred to a project in her constituency. In Farnham, I have the alternative probation project, taking extremely difficult youngsters and providing an alternative to custody. Near Godalming I have Peperharrow, a famous community home for extremely disturbed youngsters which tries to equip them for life. We have much further to go if we are to reduce the appalling scourge of young offenders and offering them little but criminal careers.

Another aspect is the influence of broadcasting on young people. If we agree that the peak age of offending is in the teens, the other objective evidence we have is that those youngsters spend many hours a day watching television. We do not need to be convinced by the advertising authorities that advertising on television of baked beans, pot plants or whatever affects behaviour. They tell us that that is how they sell their advertising time on television. I would like the social scientists who are so adept at proving that connection to turn their minds to demonstrating the influence on the young of human misery and endless violence on the television. I welcome the suggestion of a broadcasting standards council as the IBA and the BBC governors, as well as protecting the public, are understandably rivals. This is an area in which we have to make progress and it is certainly an aspect of crime prevention that I hope my hon. Friend will be able to encourage.

In short, crime prevention is about punishment. None of us deny the importance of sentencing. It is important for the public to feel that justice is done and it is important for wrong-doers to feel that society will not tolerate their behaviour. Crime prevention is about people. It is about prison officers who deal with difficult and dangerous criminals, and it is about police officers, upon whom spending has already risen dramatically and who increasingly are meeting the challenges. However, above all it is about the practical forms of crime prevention that my hon. Friend has so clearly outlined. It is about housing, education and all of us in our communities taking steps to ensure that all that possibly can be done is done to ensure that opportunistic and situational crime is avoided.

I hope, in addition, that my hon. Friend will find time to look again at the plight of juvenile offenders, as they must be given further attention.

12.22 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) made a thoughtful speech in which she spoke with great authority. She brings a cerebral approach to the subject. I hope that one day it will infiltrate into the affairs and pronouncements of the Department of Transport, but she has an uphill struggle there.

The speech of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) contained a great deal of informed opinion. She spoke with great authority about porridge in Torridge. No doubt she should speak with authority, given the prison that is in her constituency.

Crime figures such as those announced last week are notoriously difficult to interpret. The game that is played when crime rates rise and detection rates fall is that the Government and the police are quick to stress their unreliability as a measure of police performance. When the opposite occurs they want the credit for it, and I suppose that that is rather natural.

Last week's statistics showed no absolute decline in crime figures. They showed that the rate of increase was slowing. In a London context, the 16 per cent. increase in muggings during the year is very worrying. I should like to put to the Minister a number of points about the prevention of that, because the problem cuts across departmental responsibilities, hence the point that I made to the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West. There is a link between crime statistics and one-person operated buses and trains in London, Because criminal acts are perpetrated on London buses and trains.

Recently there has been a great deal of publicity about gangs going up and down through the interconnecting doors in tube trains. One-person operated trains and buses tend to create an atmosphere, a climate, in which passengers feel more frightened about the possibility of criminal attacks, because the opportunity for such attacks increases. When the Minister looks at the crime figures for London, I hope that he will pay some attention to this in his discussions with the Department of Transport.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I raised this matter with the chairman of London Regional Transport about 10 days ago when he spoke to the Conservative party Back-Bench transport committee. Crime on one-person operated buses is a quarter of the crime on open platform buses. That is one of the main reasons for London Regional Transport going over to closed-door buses.

Mr. Banks: I take that point, but it deals with an aspect of bus design rather than with the person who is driving the bus. Quite clearly, buses with doors that close automatically make it much more difficult, not to say impossible, for someone who has just snatched a necklace from around someone's neck to jump off. The design of the bus, not its staffing, is important in that respect. One finds a big division of opinion here. The chairman of LRT is always saying that OPO, one person operated, buses are in favour and that it is extending their use throughout London, but the passenger consultative committee set up by the Government is bitterly opposed to the extension of OPO buses.

One-person operated buses cause delays because of the time it takes for people in the queue to board the bus. Buses of course are also subject to traffic delays. Most of my constituents do not like one-person operated buses as much as they like the open buses with two people, a conductor or conductress and a driver. By all means let us improve bus design, but more people responsible for the security and comfort of passengers should be on the buses.

In debates such as this it is easy to be diverted, and I am an easy person to divert. This is not a transport debate. However, transport safety is an important factor. Aircraft operators continually stress how many staff they have to look after the interests of the travelling public. When it comes to more mundane forms of transport, such as buses, we are constantly being told that they must be made more cost-effective and that we must remove people who are there to look after the comfort and safety of passengers. There is a class element there. Class is in everything. The Minister should know that, and I am the one to remind him of it.

Neighbourhood watch schemes have figured largely in the debate. The only independent study of such schemes was commissioned by the Home Office research unit from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge university. In March 1987, Dr. Trevor Bennett studied the effects of neighbourhood watch schemes in four areas of west London. He found no detectable differences between areas that had neighbourhood watch schemes and those that had not in terms of the prevalence or incidence of crime. Clear-up rates for the four crimes on which neighbourhood watch schemes should have an impact — motor theft, theft from vehicles, domestic burglary and criminal damage—declined. Dr. Bennett concluded his study by stating:

> "Overall, the strongest comclusion that can be drawn on the basis of the available evidence (taking into account all the problems noted). . .is that NW"—

that is, neighbourhood watches—

> "had no discernible impact on crime, its reporting or its detection."

Mr. John Patten: I do not wish to cast aspersions on the scholarly quality of the work, for which indeed, the Home Office paid the institute, but does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that that study was limited to one part of west London and to four neighbourhood watch schemes out of a total of 42,000—many of which are extremely successful and have demonstrable success rates?

Mr. Banks: Surely the Minister is not challenging the methodology used by Dr. Bennett. Perhaps, as part of the search for truth, the hon. Gentleman will announce that he is going to commission further studies. I am not trying

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to pour scorn on neighbourhood watches; I am merely suggesting that we look at them coolly and objectively, in the same way as we have approached the debate. If Dr. Bennett's conclusions are not happy news for the Conservative Benches, let us have further studies.

Mr. John Patten: I appreciate the tone in which the hon. Gentleman is conducting the debate. However, could not giving unnecessary prominence to a single study done of a limited number of neighbourhood watch schemes have the same effect on public perception as did, for instance, a single BBC programme about brain death on the transplantation programme?

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to smear the neighbourhood watch movement. In any case, one of the main tasks of the new national crime prevention body that will be set up by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be to examine the issues that he has mentioned. Nevertheless for every four neighbourhood watch schemes that the hon. Gentleman may adduce to the House as being not particularly successful, I can produce 40 that are extremely successful.

Mr. Banks: I do not wish to enter the argument too deeply at this stage. I certainly do not wish to talk about the problems of brain death, from which many hon. Members on both sides of the House appear to have been suffering for some years.

I emphasise that the report was commissioned by the Home Office. I am not going to draw any final conclusions from it, but, equally, the Minister should not try to dismiss it. Neighbourhood watches are one aspect of crime prevention, but, in the view of the resources that must be committed to mounting, organising and maintaining them, the Minister must ensure that ratepayers and taxpayers in London and in other parts of the country are obtaining value for money. I could not be more consensus-orientated than to say that to a Conservative Minister across the Floor of the House. The Opposition will not dismiss neighbourhood watch schemes, but nor do we wish to hear grandiloquent phrases about them. On this rare occasion, we are trying to think objectively.

Dr. Bennett concluded that neighbourhood watches had had a favourable effect on the fear of household crime. Several hon. Members have said that they create a feeling of security, although in many instances it may be a false security, and that brings me to one of the Minister's earlier comments. He said that, in the past, London had been a series of interconnected villages. In rural areas, people still leave their doors open. They used to do so in Brixton when I was a child, and in the east end, where I now live and have my constituency. In parts of the east end one can still see old people sitting on a chair in their front door. The only trouble is that every week the newspapers tell of young people attacking pensioners in their homes or beating them up in the streets. Naturally, a great fear then begins to spread throughout the community. All of us who have canvassed in urban areas know how difficult it is to get people to open their doors in the evenings. They are frightened, particularly elderly people.

Despite that, the Minister says that the Government want to restore a sense of community. I agree with him entirely, and I only wish that the Prime Minister also recognised the need to establish a sense of belonging throughout the whole country. I have another newspaper to quote to the Minister, and I hope he agrees that *The Observer* is as accurate as *The Guardian*.

Mr. John Patten: It is a fine newspaper. I buy it every Sunday.

Mr. Banks: Splendid. I am glad to hear it. In that case, in *The Observer* of last Sunday the Minister will have seen under "Sayings of the Week" that the Prime Minister was reported to have said:

> "There is no such thing as Society. There are individual men and women and there are families."

If that is not the complete antithesis of arguing for a sense of community and involvement one with another, I do not know what is. The Minister may understand the need to create a sense of belonging and to form relatinships, but the Prime Minister certainly does not. She thinks that we are effectively always alone, and the devil take the hindmost. That is the philosophy that unfortunately comes down from the top of this Government, and it is not surprising that it gradually works its way into the attitudes of all people in society.

We in the Labour party do not consider neighbourhood watches to be inherently evil or dangerous. *[Interruption.]* That is the sort of suggestion that we have heard from Conservative Members. Neighbourhood watches need to be examined carefully to see how effective they have been. We believe them to be a net drain on police resources. They are difficult to organise and maintain in inner-city areas, where the crime rate and the fear of crime are highest, and they fail to address the problems of those most vulnerable to victimisation — the poor, women and ethnic minorities.

The major problem in inner-city areas is that neighbourhood watches tend to grow up in middle-class areas of owner-occupation where people feel that they have invested more in their property and are more at risk. It is much easier to defend one's semi-detached or terraced house than one's flat in a tower block. We have many tower blocks in Newham, and it is possible to make them secure, but only with a great deal of money. Several Labour councils in London have drawn up programmes for stronger doors and windows, better lighting, entry phones and concierge systems in tower blocks, but we need resources from the Government to carry them out. The Minister must realise that Newham, which has about 110 tower blocks, needs a great deal of Government resources.

Ministers come here and talk of how the crime rates have increased and how they are trying to deal with the problem, but they never relate that back to the resources that they have taken from local authorities; resources which could have been used to pay for extensive crime prevention schemes on council estates and local authority areas. The Minister is aware from his days in the DOE and his interest in housing that the housing improvement programme in London has lost about £8 billion since 1979. Much of that money could have been used for the crime prevention measures to which the Minister referred. It is all very well for him to claim that it does not cost a great deal to secure a home. It is difficult to make secure a home in a tower block, but the Minister said that on average a home could be secured by a DIY expert for £20. The Minister is aware that there are many cowboy kits on sale. However, £20 is still beyond the reach of many people in my area. There are 33,000 people on supplementary benefit who cannot spend £20 on a cheap DIY burglary prevention kit.

Returning to my point about the interrelationship between Departments, why will the Minister not ask his colleagues at the DHSS for single payments for locks, bolts and burglar alarms? Can the Minister imagine what would happen if one went to the DHSS office and said "The Government have been encouraging me to go in for crime prevention kits. Can I have £20?" That £20 would not be made available.

Most of the crimes against property are perpetrated against the poorest people in our society. The people who come to may advice surgery to tell me that they have had another break in are those living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, hostels or badly maintained council houses. The poorest people suffer the greatest incidence of crime in terms of property theft and personal attack. Perhaps the Minister should have discussions with the Department of Transport and the DHSS to see what action can be taken.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) raised a point about consultative groups. These groups have been established in all but one of the Labour-controlled boroughs in London. However, Opposition Members do not regard consultative groups as a substitute for an elected police authority for London.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Ah!

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman may well say "Ah". I accept that I may be corrected by my colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench, but as far as I am aware that is not one of the policies that have been put to the torch since the election campaign. I know that the police authority for London is very much part of our programme.

For the Home Secretary to continue as the police authority for London is an anachronism that must be ended. The argument that London is a special case cannot be sustained any longer. It is nonsense to talk about political control. Of course there is political control, in the sense that the Home Secretary is the police authority for London. It would be no different if there was local authority control, be that Conservative or Labour control. After all, when Conservative Members say that we cannot have London councils involved with the police, I remind them that the City of London has been a police authority ever since police authorities were set up. That being so, I see no reason why the City of London should be treated differently from any other London borough under Conservative or Labour control.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman has reached a very important point which the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) did not answer. I quoted the book written by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) called "Protecting our People" in which he refers to policing methods as well as policy. The hon. Gentleman is advocating that a police authority for London should have control over the day-to-day policing——

Mr. Banks: No.

Mr. Bennett: Very well, over the methods. Conservative Members are concerned that if that control were given to local authorities in London, there are many local authority members in Labour boroughs across London who, by their views, attitudes and speeches have made it clear that they are unfit to give instructions to the police on any issue.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman has merely repeated his earlier mistake.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Deliberately.

Mr. Banks: Indeed, deliberately.

This is a rare occasion. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are clearly trying to approach the debate in a highly objective fashion. I am finding it very difficult to control myself under such circumstances. I am striving "personfully" *[Interruption.]* Yes, I can get the language right. I hope that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) does not lead me from the path of righteousness. At no stage has anyone in the Labour party argued for day-to-day control over the activities of the police in London or anywhere else. I remind the hon. Member for Pembroke that there are police committees outside London and that the Home Secretary, as the police authority is responsible in London. What makes London local authorities different from any other local authority? We cannot accept that. If there were a police authority for London, its relationship with the police would be precisely the same as the present Home Secretary's relationship with the Metropolitan police.

Mrs. Ann Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I think that my hon. Friend wants to tell me that I have got it almost right.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I want to tell my hon. Friend that he is completely right. Conservative Members are fond of quoting from the book entitled "Protecting Our People", which I am glad to see they have read so carefully. Some of the policies on crime prevention that the Minister is now advocating were first contained in the book. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) spoke about the control of police operational matters and day-to-day policing. He claimed to have read the book, but he did not tell the House that it says specifically:

> "The police themselves remain responsible for individual police operational matters."

I hope that that closes the unrealistic discussion that the hon. Gentleman was trying to provoke.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making it clear from the Front Bench as well as from the Back Benches that what is being said by Conservative Members is a gross misrepresentation of Labour party policy. We are used to that, but having now put down the matter forcefully I hope that it will not reappear in its ugly form again during the debate.

During questions to the Home Department yesterday I mentioned the matter of lethal weapons. The limited crackdown on burst-fire weapons and the increased shotgun control being proposed by the Government are welcome but we do not think that what is proposed goes far enough. We believe that the Government are afraid to take on the gun industry and the shooting lobbies. We would like to see a similar approach towards combat knives and other similar lethal weapons. I am sure that the Minister will say some things about that that Labour Members will support.

During Question Time yesterday I gave some examples of lethal weapons. Obviously, one cannot read anything during a question in Question Time, and I am not familiar

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with the terminology included in the magazine *Survival and Weaponry* for August 1987. Some of the weapons available for sale through retail outlets, or, more worryingly, through credit card or mail order sales, are obscene and frightening, and something should be done. I shall give some examples of the weapons available from Framar Shooting World. I shall not give the address, but it can be found in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I hope that I shall not see many of the weapons sticking out of his back.

The new "buck M9 bayonet"—the new United States army bayonet—is now available for sale to the general public. Why should that be imported into this country, at a cost to our balance of payments, and made available to the general public? For any hon. Members who want to secure for themselves such a bayonet the price is £124·95. Yesterday I mentioned the "cold steel urban skinner". the Minister made a joke that turned out to be more percipient than he thought. He said:

> "I am all in favour of banning 'skinners'.".—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 1053.]

he was not to know that shortly after that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would fall foul of Mr. Speaker and be removed from the Chamber. That was merely an unhappy coincidence.

The blurb continues:

> "This superb push dagger is the state of the art in this style of knife."

It comes with all sorts of accessories,

> "making it virtually impossible to dislodge."

It is something that one holds in the hand and is exactly the sort of nasty weapon that can be used in tight crowds, such as football matches. It would be difficult to detect in someone's hand. It is a filthy, vile weapon and it should be banned.

The cold steel magnum tanto is another example. It is offered in a

> "beautiful leather sheath and at only £155."

The description of another weapon reads, "Inconspicuous, solid and sleek". I thought that it was an advertisement for a Back-Bench Tory Member. Instead, it turned out to be a knife that can be folded and put in a top pocket. It is claimed that it is undetectable when placed among a row of pens. That must depend upon whether one is sartorially unwise enough to put pens in a top pocket. I am sure that the Minister would never do such a thing.

Mr. John Patten: I do not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman too often in his preparation for a career on the stage or on the boards. He has offered us some good one-liners this morning. I have not been fortunate enough to be in the Chamber throughout his speech, but there have been some good ones. I hope that help is coming in the Criminal Justice Bill. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is the Government's intention to take power for the Home Secretary to ban, by schedule, the importation, sale or advertisement of as yet to be defined weapons, and that the sort of implement to which he has referred could well come into the schedule? No decisions have been taken yet, but my right hon. Friend and I will be glad of any information that he can supply that will provide evidence of the sorts of things that we should be considering.

Mr. Banks: First, I take it that the Home Office subscribes to the *Survival and Weaponry* magazine. It is a publication that needs to be read carefully. I consider it to be worse than the worst type of pornographic magazine. I hasten to add that I am not in the habit of reading pornographic material. Magazines such as *Survival and Weaponry* are obscene. I know that the Minister shares my concern and that of others and, therefore, there is no need for me to send material to him. I am more than willing to do so if the Minister feels that that will be useful, but the advertisements to which I have referred can be seen in *Survival and Weaponry* every time it is published.

I understand that provisions of the sort that I and others want to see on the statute book are to be a part of the Criminal Justice Bill but, unfortunately, we do not agree with that measure in its entirety. If only the Minister would do what was urged upon him yesterday by my right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary and extract from the Bill provisions that would ban the importation, sale and advertisement of these nasty weapons, I know that I can speak with the authority and sanction of the Opposition Front Bench in saying that he would be given the Opposition's complete support if they were to appear in a separate Bill. If guns can be removed from the Bill in this context, why cannot knives and other weapons?

A Bill that sought a ban on the importation, sale and advertisement of weapons of the sort to which I have referred could be taken through the House as fast as the Government required. We could them all take credit for acting in a responsible and concerted way. I shall be happy to allow the Minister to intervene if he wishes to tell us that he is considering taking that course.

Mr. John Patten: I always feel that I should beware of "Banks bearing gifts" when I am asked questions of that sort. The hon. Gentleman knows that the sanctions that we hope to take against knives and other dangerous weapons being carried by means of the proposed possession offence are an integral part of our attack on a range of crime, as contained in the Criminal Justice Bill. I can only repeat what I said yesterday during a reply to a Home Office question. The Government hope for the co-operation of the Labour party in getting the Criminal Justice Bill, in its entirety, through Committee as quickly as possible so that the necessary measures can be brought into law and implemented. As I have said, we look for co-operation.

Mr. Banks: The Minister knows that he is not offering us a great deal. There are parts of the Criminal Justice Bill that are unacceptable to the Opposition, in common with much legislation. We cannot be in agreement with it all. The Minister should recognise that there is a shared concern on both sides of the House and understand that if he removed from the Bill — it is a controversial measure in many respects—the provision relating to the importation, sale and advertisement of the nasty weapons that we are discussing, and introduced a Bill that contained them that was non-controversial and acceptable to both sides of the House, we could speed it through the parliamentary process.

Why does the Minister not take that course? If he were to do so he would demonstrate how seriously he takes the issue and how ready he is to find willing co-operation from the Opposition when offered it. The Minister should not be saying, "We know that you do not like parts of the Criminal Justice Bill, but if you wish to show your good faith and bona fides you should support it all." The Minister knows that that is an unrealistic proposition. I still hope that with the benefit of further thought the Minister will introduce legislation which we can deal with quickly and which will ban the sale of the equipment that I have described.

Another of the advertisements is for the Tekna security card. Apparently, it is the

> "Winner of the 'Most Effective Use of Design' award at the Accent on Design show in New York."

It is no wonder that the United States is so violent if some idiot can give a prize to some other idiot who designs a knife packed into a credit card holder. The advertisement says the knife is so small that it can

> "go where you go, fits into a wallet, breast pocket of a suit, trouser pockets, etc."

It is an absolute gift to the mugger on a tube train or the hooligan at a football ground.

It is pointless one Department talking about crime prevention if there are no discussions in other Departments about the impact of such weapons and the problems associated with them. Surely the Department of the Environment, which deals with football hooliganism, would be interested in having discussions with the Home Office about banning the sale of these particularly nasty weapons.

To add a seasonal flavour, the advertisement states:

> "Comes complete with smart presentation case. It makes an Ideal present."

It is something that we shall all be looking for in our stockings on 25 December. Let us hope that whoever gives it has closed the blade away before the hand goes down into the bottom of the stocking.

Most of the magazine's advertisements are for realistic reproductions of weapons. They are frightening. I hope that next Wednesday when my Bill to ban the sale of war toys and war games comes up Conservative Back-Benchers will support me.

Why is the sale of offensive weapons about which one reads in the magazine still legal and not subject to regulation when their possession in a public place can be illegal? That dichotomy makes no sense to the Opposition, and I suspect that it makes not much sense to Government Members. I hope that when the legislation is eventually passed that will be reconciled.

The Association of London Authorities takes the view that gun shops and offensive weapons outlets should be licensed by local authorities. They are happy to take that on as part of their environmental health responsibilities, even within their constrained budgets because of constant Government attack. That was put by the ALA to the Home Office working party on firearms in August, but it has received no reply, which seems most discourteous, if nothing else.

Labour-controlled authorities are much concerned about these matters. I know that Conservative-controlled authorities are worried too, but I am referring to the ALA. Local authorities are willing to work with the Government on crime prevention. Labour authorities in London want the Government to recognise the enormous social problems in inner cities. The Minister acknowledges that there is a link between social conditions and crime levels. We want more resources from central Government and a willingness, when we are prepared to co-operate, to accept that co-operation.

The debate so far has been most useful. I have made one of my more temperate contributions, and I hope that I have said at least something with which the Minister can agree.

1 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has said about the absurdities of the documents that he has told us about today. However, I remind him that there are items in the Criminal Justice Bill that should be urgently introduced, not least those that protect children in court. Therefore, if Labour Members would give thought to how they can help to speed that legislation through, I am sure that the public and the Government would be grateful.

The hon. Member has been showering my hon. Friend the Minister with bouquets today, unlike his colleague on the Front Bench. We agree with the hon. Gentleman's actions. I also welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister, not just because of his voluminous knowledge of geography or the eminence of his ministerial status, but because he and the Government have shown considerable commitment to crime prevention. That commitment was shown not least by my hon. Friend's visits to my area of London, for which I am grateful. If my hon. Friend would like another bouquet, I suppose that we should refer to the fact that today is 6 November and I presume that we can give him some credit for the fact that this place went through yesterday safely without any untoward events in the cellars.

Crime has always existed, long before Guy Fawkes or Cain and Abel. The incidence of crime is worldwide and it is increasing in Moscow, Chicago as well as in London and elsewhere in Britain. However, in recent years the crime rate in Britain has become worse and has increased in a particularly nasty way. It is not motivated by need. Indeed, one of the most distasteful accusations is that unemployment and crime go together. I believe that that is a slur on the vast majority of people who, through no fault of their own, happen to be out of work. That accusation is false and hurtful and should not be repeated in this place.

Crime is motiveless, mindless and amoral. It is committed by people of all levels of income, all types of background, job and of all ages. The fraudster is almost certainly, by definition, a well-heeled individual, but the football hooligan or the holiday hooligan, who lets us down abroad, is not short of a bob or two either. Their violence is as mindless and moronic as anything perpetrated on the streets of our towns and cities.

Crime is also about the fear felt by the vulnerable. The worst fears are about the mugger, the intruder or the vandal who attacks by day and night and attacks without compunction or pity. Such crime affects each and every one of us. When we speak on this issue in the House, we speak from the heart as well as from the head. We all know the fear that we experience when our wives or our daughters go out late at night. We worry about whether they will get home safely.

When we see the pictures of the scarred, bruised or battered faces of old people in the newspapers, we know that that could easily be the elderly person that we know and care for. Let no one say that crime is an issue that Parliament does not care about. However, Parliament does not cause crime and, alone, it cannot prevent it. Parliament does not solve crime and, alone, it cannot cure it.

Such crimes as mugging and other attacks are the most difficult to prevent, but we must tackle them. We must defeat this hideous form of crime by a combination of

[Mr. John Bowis]

measures, by prevention, detection, deterrence and education. I wish to dwell on the question of education. I am aware that education is not my hon. Friend's responsibility, but I hope that he will raise this matter with his colleagues. I appreciate that he will tell me that, in the past, he has been closely involved with education, but in ministerial terms it is not his responsibility now.

The prevention of crime comes down to the education of our children and the upbringing of those children. It involves parents as well as schools. Too often, crime is committed by young people who say, "There goes an old lady with a handbag. There is a window that I can push open. There is a stereo cassette." We need to go back, or perhaps go forward, to a society that is taught to respect other people's rights and other people's properties, and is taught to have self-restraint. The old adage of, "Your fist's freedom ends where my nose begins" should be extended to a new one of, "Your fingers' freedom ends where my purse begins."

We could do much more in our schools to stress that message, and we must ensure that it is not limited to religious education. It should permeate the ethos of the school. We should consider the education of our teachers to ensure that they are equipped to put across the message to children. My hon. Friend the Minister should talk to the Secretary of State for Education and Science about using the education support grant system to do more in schools. We have already used it in relation to drugs.

Education is a long job. We need a partnership between central Government, local government, industry, schools, parents and children to tackle crime now. I commend to the Minister much of the work being done in the borough of Wandsworth, where the partnership between central Government, the council, local industry and the police has brought in central and local government money. One example is the Wandsworth crime watch campaign, which is geared towards changing things which encourage crime: putting lights in dark areas; installing entryphones in buildings; taking down walkways wherever possible; and fencing front door areas. It is also important to improve the aura of estates by removing graffiti and preventing it recurring. On estates where there is no graffiti or general dereliction, residents take more care and will try to stop vandals destroying their environment.

Mr. Wheeler: As in Wandsworth.

Mr. Bowis: Indeed, as in Wandsworth.

Mr. John Patten: The brighter borough.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my hon. Friend. We are advertising today.

That scheme provides help for those who live in public sector housing—in high-rise flats and on estates—but we must also consider the people living in their own homes who may be vulnerable because of their age. Wandsworth has a scheme, which the Minister knows well, called the home safe scheme. It is run jointly by central and local government and by Age Concern and it provides money to put locks on the doors of elderly people who live in their own homes. I hope that we can do much more work on this and on installing alarm systems. There is great anxiety about dispersed alarms. They work well in sheltered accommodation, but someone who lives alone and is separated from other elderly and disabled people may be unable to obtain one. I hope that more can be done on that. Other hon. Members have mentioned what can be done in co-operation with the police and with architects in improving building design.

Hon. Members have mentioned neighbourhood watch and shop watch schemes. If more shops worked together to prevent crime, they would show their sense of responsibility to society, as do individuals in their home environment. The shop watch scheme in Battersea has greatly reduced shoplifting and theft. Neighbourhood watch schemes cover 20 per cent. of homes in my area, and crime has decreased by 28 per cent. It is unfair to criticise the scheme. Some people say that it is ineffectual. Having worked in the insurance industry, I know that actuarial records prove that it is effective. Where a neighbourhood watch scheme is in operation there are fewer crimes and, therefore, fewer claims.

It is not true that crime is just being passed down the road. Although that can happen, the sort of crime that neighbourhood watch schemes often prevent is the opportunistic variety—the type in which a young person sees a door or window open and notices that there is a potential weakness to exploit. It is not a case of his going out in the evening saying, "Where shall we go burgling tonight?"

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): If the figures that the hon. Gentleman has given are correct, are there reductions in insurance premiums for areas covered by neighbourhood watch?

Mr. Bowis: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that. I—and, I believe, the Government—believe that insurance companies should give more recognition to the action taken. On the insurance broking side, in which I worked, we put pressure on the insurance companies to do that. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it could be done by means of no claims bonuses or discounts on the premiums. Whichever way it is done, it must be in the interest of the insurance underwriters, because if there are fewer claims, it is cheaper for them. I sympathise entirely with what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Neighbourhood watch is effective and important, but it is not the whole story. Some crimes cannot be cured by neighbourhood watch, and must be cured by police presence and activity—particularly crimes of violence. Something can be done about lighting, but the police are still needed. To that end, we must ensure that there are more police doing the right sort of jobs, and that more jobs are taken off the backs of the police—jobs that do not need to be done by them. Crime prevention panels have been mentioned in this connection, together with the whole area of crime prevention work. More could be done by civilians so that it would not have to be done by the uniformed branches of the police. There is a tendency in society to say, "We have a problem: let's call the police". The problem may be about untaxed cars in the street, the noise of neighbours and so on. Much of that sort of work, and courtroom, paper and sports ground work, could be done in other ways. Our transport system is not policed by the ordinary police force, so why must sports grounds be? If the police can be released from such duties, more of them will be available to tackle crime.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) said, I referred yesterday to the problem of police being taken off their work to look after prisoners because of the prison officers' action. That, too, needs to be put right. When the police are working in the right areas, experiments have shown a dramatic effect on crime levels. In Battersea police district in the past year there was a conscious attempt to bring in more civilian staff for clerical work, thus releasing police clerical staff for plain clothes duties in the crime areas. The result was that street crime, autocrime, and residential and non-residential burglaries all fell significantly. In the six months before the experiment, offences had risen by 39 per cent. and arrests by 41 per cent., but clear-ups had gone down by 6 per cent. In the subsequent period, offences are down 6 per cent., arrests up 140 per cent. and clear-ups up 55 per cent. THat is stark and convincing evidence that when the police force is used in the most effective way, and other duties are taken off its shoulders, it can work with the community to solve and prevent crime.

The message is clear; it comes down to campaigning and educating against crime. Our communities, councils and local firms must be encouraged to take crime prevention measures, and individuals should be encouraged to join and support neighbourhood watch schemes. It is a matter of recruiting and efficiently using the uniformed police force on the beat, and making the police available when they are needed in a hurry. I come back to where I started, with the Criminal Justice Bill. Ultimately, we need to be certain that when criminals are caught it is criminals who pay and crime that does not.

1.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I should like to correct the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on one small point. I am sure that he did not mean to give so much offence to a valuable body such as the British Transport police. They are very much police officers; they are not a different type of police officer. They are specialised police officers. As someone who, in years gone by, once appeared on their behalf in the courts and prosecuted for them, I can put on record the valuable service that that force does.

Mr. Bowis: Of course, I have nothing but admiration for the British Transport police. I was suggesting that they are a separate force from the day-to-day police dealing with street crime and so on. Perhaps we can find an equivalent to help with problems in sport.

Mr. Bermingham: If the hon. Gentleman meant it in that light, I suggest, with great respect, that he should pick his words more carefully in future. There are other specialised bodies that police specialised places.

I did not intend to go down a line of division, because the debate has been most interesting. All those taking part have sought to address the primary problem of how to prevent crime. There are three aspects to preventing crime. The first is to make sure that if a man commits a crime, he is caught. My area is part of the Merseyside police area, and last year the chief constable wrote to me because his funds had been cut. It is an area of high unemployment and social deprivation and the Government decided to cut its funds. That is counter-productive. Why not accept that the greatest deterrent to the petty criminal is the fact that policemen are on the beat and in the vicinity, and the chances of detection and arrest are much higher?

Secondly, one must ask oneself this question: when somebody is caught and punished, what should the purpose of the punishment be? Should it be to rehabilitate or to deter, or a combination of the two? I intervened in the speech by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who made a valuable contribution in respect of juvenile crime. There is much that we can learn from the French and the Americans with the Massachusetts experiment, for example. The idea is, if a child shows delinquency at an early age, that one should begin a programme of rehabilitation. I declare an interest as a practising barrister and I believe that the present concept of sending children to detention centres or youth custody is counter-productive. A senior prison officer in a youth custody centre not far from here told me the other day that he sees them come in like lambs and go out like hardened criminals.

What happens to the children? Inevitably, because of staff shortages and so on, they are locked up for up to 23 hours a day two or three to a cell. What do they have to talk about? They talk about the crimes that they have committed and the way in which they committed them. They busily re-educate each other not only in how to commit crime but in how to avoid detection in future.

I begin to wonder what purpose is served, for example with the non-violent criminal, by just sticking him in a cell, often in thoroughly unhygienic conditions. It is no secret that the prisons of this land are a disgrace. There is no real intention of getting rid of the system of slopping out continually before the mid-1990s. No real effort has been made. It is degrading and dehumanising. In some prisons, one of the prize jobs is to patrol in the morning outside the windows to collect the faeces that have been thrown out in pieces of newspaper. However, this is the 20th century. No real effort is being made to remove those conditions.

We ask ourselves why people re-offend and are returned to prison. We begin to wonder what prison sentences do to human beings. The answer is nothing. Prison sentences merely take adults and juveniles out of circulation and educate them in how to avoid detection next time or perhaps introduce them to new sorts of crimes. A safe blower — a peterman — I know who eventually got caught told me that he had learned all his skills while serving earlier prison sentences. Yet some hon. Members say that prison is the answer. We really have to begin to think again.

At a probation officers conference recently I floated the idea that we should begin to think about constructive sentencing. I used the example of Lester Piggott. I did not go into whether a three-year sentence was merited, as that is irrelevant. What we have effectively done is to take a human being out of circulation for 12 months. Is it not more constructive with a non-violent offender to look at an alternative? It may be that an offender needs to hear the clang of a prison door because that is the bit that hurts. Anybody who has been associated with the prison service knows that it is the first 14 to 28 days that really matters.

Mr. Wheeler Three days.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman who, has some knowledge of those matters, suggests that it is only three days before a prisoner gets into a routine. Having shown the offender what imprisonment is all about, for the rest of the time that society feels that he ought to pay his or her debt to society, why not put them to some constructive use? In this respect, I would like to develop the ideas mentioned by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon,

[Mr. Bermingham]

West (Miss Nicholson). The constructive use of the talents of human beings for the benefit of society repays society for the offences that were committed. It is time that we began to think about the victims and how to repay them. It is so easy to forget all about the victims, either during court proceedings or when punishment is being considered.

The House should spend a little time considering what it is intended to achieve by punishment. Punishment has been used for so long that it is all too easy to continue locking people up or ordering probation, a conditional discharge or a fine. Sometimes the package concept works. I go back to the example of Mr. Piggott. For a year or two he could have been made to invest his efforts and skills in a community programme, such as helping the handicapped to ride or something like that. Every human being who comes before a court has some talent or asset that could be put to use for society. It would mean that we would need more probation officers to supervise, but the cost in real terms to society would be far less because we would not have the expense of people being incarcerated for long periods or their families having to live on social security. The man or woman would be working not only for their families but for society. It has been costed and there would be a saving to society. We would have made sure that crime did not pay, but in a very different way. Rehabilitation and demonstrating to offenders that if they take from society they have to put back into society would be a deterrent as well as being constructive.

The way to beat crime is to stop people from offending. We not only stop people offending by catching them but by stopping them from re-offending. It is the re-offenders who are the real problem in our society.

1.24 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I have some sympathy for a point of view expressed by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and I shall come to that later. I am pleased that we are debating crime prevention because there is no doubt that crime was the issue that worried most of my constituents when I met them on doorsteps during the general election campaign. They are alarmed by the all too frequent reports of crime against the person, especially crimes against the elderly, and crimes against property in the home. They feel that they no longer have the freedom to walk safely in the streets or in open spaces without fear of mugging. They cannot understand why we appear to be unable to combat the mindless vandalising of private and public property by young people.

It is helpful to remind people of all the measures that the Government have taken since coming to office in 1979. They have greatly increased police manpower and have strengthened police powers and the powers of the courts. They have also taken action against drugs and on the prison building programme. It is an excellent record and is in stark contrast to the lamentable record of the last Labour Government, and people are grateful for that. However, the suspicion remains that there is more we can and should do.

When people are further pressed about what they want done they mention three things. First, they want to see the return of capital and corporal punishment so that those things are again available to the courts. They feel that those things constitute one of the best crime prevention measures that we could take and cannot understand why successive Parliaments have refused to legislate on them. I agree with that view. They urge a referendum on the issue, but I have to tell them that there is no point in undertaking a costly exercise to find out what we already know—that the vast majority of British people want to see the return of capital and corporal punishment.

Secondly, they want to see punishments that fit the crime and they want an end to sentences that they regard as far too lenient. They are pleased that the Government have responded to those demands with tougher sentences for violent offenders, rapists, murderers, criminals carrying firearms and drug-pushers. We plan to respond still further with powers to appeal against lenient sentences. I agree with the hon. Members for St. Helens, South and for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) about sentence, because I have reservations about the merits of long sentences.

The purpose of imprisonment is punishment, deterrence, protection of society against the criminal and reform of the offender, but it is also to prepare the offender to lead an honest life on release. The psychological effect of loss of freedom of movement even for a few years should not be underestimated. The longer people remain in prison, the more they forget how to live outside and the process of reintegration in society, which should start on the day that people enter prison, becomes that much harder to achieve—if it can be achieved at all.

I question whether we have yet done enough to combat mindless vandalism by young offenders and to make them accept a greater responsibility for the damage that they do to our street furniture, our parks and, in my constituency, the seafront. The cost of such damage is high and so are the costs of measures to combat it.

On 19 April gangs of youths set fire to a pile of 150 deck chairs on the promenade at Bournemouth. Firemen were pelted with stones and 20 police officers were needed to disperse the crowd of 300 people. There were three arrests and the cost of the damage is estimated at £2,000. Bournemouth has seven miles of glorious seafront, and it was in response to the damage that the borough council recently installed cameras to deter and detect. I understand that the early results are encouraging. However, we regret that such measures are necessary, because they are not the hallmarks of a free society.

Many jobs are based on the amenities and facilities that attract visitors to our town, which has a thriving tourist industry. Those amenities must be protected. Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell me whether he has had any recent discussions with representatives of magistrates about their experiences in applying the powers provided in the Criminal Justice Act 1982. That Act contains powers to deal with young offenders and, in particular, it ensures that they are held responsible for compensating the owners of the property that they have vandalised.

Thirdly, my constituents want a regularly perceived police presence, not just in the high street but in their own neighbourhoods; not just in cars, but on bikes or on foot; and preferably on their own rather than in pairs, for a wider presence and greater personal efficiency. That, they believe, will prove an effective aid to crime prevention because it increases the risk of the criminal being caught.

Here again, the Government have responded magnificently, both nationally and locally. Since 1979, expenditure on the police service has risen by 50 per cent.

in real terms, and total police manpower has increased by 17,000. The police are better paid, better resourced, better equipped and better trained. It is no wonder that police morale today is high. What a contrast that is to the Labour years, when morale over pay and conditions was so low that, in 1977, there was even talk of a strike. I remember that well, because it was during my by-election campaign. In that year, 9,000 men left the police force, the bobby disappeared from the beat and the police took to panda cars because of the lack of manpower. Today it is a different story, notably in the case of my police authority in Dorset, where every application to my hon. Friend the Home Secretary for an increase in the authorised establishment—all of them well founded and based on absolute need—has been allowed. We are very grateful to my hon. Friend for that.

I hope that this year will be no different. As my hon. Friend the Minister may know, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has just received an application from the Dorset police authority for an increase in the authorised establishment by one inspector, 12 sergeants and 27 constables, a total of 40 posts in the 1988-89 financial year. That represents part of an increase in the establishment of 107 posts, which the police authority approved in principle last year, with the remaining 45 posts required in 1989-90.

When my hon. Friend, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary consider that application, will they bear in mind that her Majesty's inspectorate found that Dorset had a significantly higher population per police officer than both the regional and the national averages? Will they also bear in mind that our police-to-population ratio ignores the virtual doubling of the country's population in the summer from 600,000 to over 1,200,000?

Now that the police are so much stronger, and have the resources, training and power to be more effective, they have an even greater responsibility to society to deliver in the war against crime. Fortunately, the figures suggest that the rise in crime is levelling out and, in the case of crimes of violence, modestly falling. However, I should like to suggest a number of improvements.

The police should be more able to refer offences committed by children back to their parents. In areas of high ethnic population, I should like to see more black and coloured police recruits, who, if necessary, should be given special help to obtain the necessary entry qualifications. I should like a greater distinction to be drawn between "real" crime and other offences, mainly motoring offences. I should like a higher age of recruitment for mature officers, with a higher pensionable age to match. Surely we are missing valuable opportunities in allowing experienced officers to retire from the force at the comparatively early age of 50—which they can do if they join the force at a minimum age of 19—when they are willing to continue to serve in a less onerous capacity. We should be using such experienced officers on the essential public relations side of police work. They could also be used—if I may cite a topical issue—to interview those who apply for gun licences, rather than a comparatively inexperienced constable being sent to conduct the interview.

We should be doing even more than we are now with our neighbourhood watch schemes, valuable though they are, to involve the public in drawing up policies to deal with crime nationally and locally. Earlier this year the Prime Minister set an example when she held two seminars on crime prevention. Every policy authority should now have established liaison committees, as recommended by Lord Scarman in his report, to encourage wider public consultation and participation. It is the responsibility of every county councillor as the elected representative of the local police authority to be especially concerned about the crime rates in his ward and to initiate whatever public consultation is appropriate.

A debate on crime prevention should include references to our responsibility for and the cost of the security and protection of our national leaders at party conferences. My hon. Friend the Minister will know of Bournemouth borough council's anxieties at the costs of security that it must bear. Those views are wholly shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and all those who represent towns with large conference centres. We remain wholly dissatisfied with the Home Secretary's response to the representations that we have made to date.

The protection of our national leaders is paramount. There can be no greater tragedy for any free, democratic nation than the assassination of its leaders. We rightly demand the best possible protection for the royal family and we should demand no less for Ministers and our party leaders. I would say that whatever party was in power.

Mr. Pike: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Lancashire county council and all the Members of Parliament representing Lancashire have expressed exactly the same view as he is expressing with regard to Bournemouth? Bournemouth and other places must bear the cost of these major conferences. This is not a political issue and it does not matter which party is in Government. We accept that security must, regrettably, be provided and we endorse exactly what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Atkinson: I welcome those comments, which are in stark contrast to early-day motion 202 on the costs of policing the party conferences. It is signed by some Labour Members, and I find it extremely sad and pathetic.

The responsibility for policing party conferences and the costs involved have been happily accepted by the local authorities concerned, but the Brighton bomb, which could easily have been more tragic and devastating in its consequences, has changed everything. For us in Dorset, police costs in connection with last year's Conservative party conference amounted to more than £1 million. The Department has been sent the breakdown of those figures. Bournemouth borough council has estimated an additional expenditure of its own of £39,000 on security measures which it felt obliged to undertake. I have no doubt that the Lancashire police authority, which the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) mentioned, and the Blackpool borough council incurred similar costs last month and that Brigton will be obliged to do so next year. So it will go on.

It is no longer reasonable to expect local ratepayers to bear those costs. It is not good enough to say that these towns have opted to attract conference business, so must accept the rough with the smooth. It is no good saying that the presence of thousands of delegates means good business. That is debatable, given the time-consuming curtailment of the movements of delegates which effective security dictates and which is at the expense of time to go shopping. But that is not the point. Nor is it reasonable to say, as my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has said, that in addition to the 51 per

[Mr. Atkinson]

cent. police grant a further block grant increases the amount paid by central Government towards policing costs to some 70 per cent.

The cost of maintaining an effective security system to protect our national leaders at large conferences of that nature, must be a national responsibility and must be borne nationally by the Exchequer. That principle was, in effect, accepted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply to a parliamentary question from the former right hon. and learned Member for Southport, Sir Ian Percival on 25 July last year. She said that in view of the heavy security costs now incurred by political parties:

> "It is proposed that payments from public funds should be made retrospectively against expenses incurred on specific measures."—*[Official Report, 25 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 614.]*

I appeal once again to my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider this matter in preparation for the delegation from right hon. and hon. Members representing conference town constituencies, who will be seeking a meeting with him shortly.

1.40 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) made a number of very good points at the end of his speech. However, at the beginning of his comments he injected an unnecessary partisan element. He referred to the Government's record as "magnificent". As politicians, we all need a little humility when we consider the crime statistics. Nothing annoyed me more during the 1979 election campaign than reading the boasts of the then Conservative party spokesman, Lord Whitelaw, about what the Conservative party would do to combat crime. Those who bothered to consider the figures discovered a steep increase which seemed to be unrelated to which political party was in power. It would have been possible to chart the figures immediately after the campaign. However, some humility would behove us all in this area.

I fully endorse the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) about the alternative sentencing system and his example of Lester Piggott. We all accept the importance of the clang of the door in relation to the initital punishment. However, it is absurd that we in this country imprison a far higher proportion of our population than any comparable civilised country. I am reluctant to infer from that that we are by nature a more evil people. There must be other factors relating to habit and an unwillingness to consider alternatives such as those proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South.

We are dealing with a matter that is of considerable importance for our constituents. Many of us know of the deeply individual hurt of victims and communities that have experienced crime and the fear of crime. We are aware that, even in relatively crime-free areas, elderly people, because of what they read, are unwilling to open their doors, or, as they would have done in the past, go out to community activities. We are also aware of the evidence of vandalism, which shows a lack of social concern. The crime syndrome is related to a number of deep factors, such as the breakdown of the community and, I submit at a deeper level, to a loss of Christian values of caring and sharing, the definition of our neighbour and considering ourselves to be our brothers' keepers.

It is dangerous to look at the whole question of crime prevention in a polarised way. The gut reaction of the Right is to look narrowly at law and order and the expenditure on the police and other forces, and call for heavier sentencing. The gut reation of the Left is to say that essentially it is all due to environment and social conditions, and that is the Officer Krupke syndrome.

I believe that there are evil people in our society, whatever the social conditions. It is difficult to find any possible correlation between social conditions and child abusers, about whom there has been so much publicity lately. However, we obviously cannot ignore social environment and alienation of the most vulnerable group in our society, especially young people.

It is true that unemployment breeds apathy and makes people anti-social. I know of many examples of that, as I am a lawyer. From my experience of murder trials, I know of a young man whose daily life consisted of lying in bed until midday and perhaps kicking a football around a recreation ground in the afternoon. He would perhaps go to a disco and then go to bed early. All the time he would just be collecting his social security cheque. He felt that society had offered him a poor education and had not provided him with a job or reasonable housing. He felt that he had been alienated and that he had no stake in a society that had rejected him. Having met that young man on several occasions, I did not think that he was evil.

We cannot divorce the alienation of young people from the housing and social security policies that certain parties encourage. For example, the current housing proposals in the White Paper will hit the young single homeless. The new social security changes due to come into force in April mean that most claimants will lose some housing benefit and, most seriously, as a result of the Government's announcement last week, 16 and 17-year-olds will no longer be eligible for income support. Therefore, they will receive no money towards the cost of emergency housing in hostels or bed-sits.

Pressures such as the lack of employment and the non-availability of relevant affordable housing are a background within which many young people would revolt. Those who seek refuge in figuratively moated and walled estates, such as some of the estates in south London, be they in Dulwich or the "Sarsons" estate just across the river, are unlikely to feel the front-line reaction of many young people on other estates.

I give credit to certain developments in Government policy such as the measures on the possession of knives, which I am sure should be fully supported. I support the announcements by the Court of Appeal on the increased penalties for those withvolved in drugs, particularly drug pushers, because of the lives that can be destroyed by that evil and the ease with which the drug operators can make massive sums of money at the cost of misery to many young people. However, some aspects of Government policy have to be negatived. I hope to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair on Monday during the debate on the Licensing Bill, so I shall not linger on the subject. However, do we think that the implementation of the provisions in the Licensing Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. During a debate on the Adjournment it is out of order to refer to legislative proposals that are to come before the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pursue that further.

Mr. Anderson: I just wish to make a general point. If licensing hours were to be increased, would that have a negative, or positive, effect on crime? I make a plea for a total Government across-the-board view on crime prevention. It is certain that there is a correlation between the availability of alcohol and the consumption of alcohol. There is certainly a correlation between the consumption of alcohol and crime levels.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman on the matter of alcohol-related crimes. One of the major problems now is that because public houses are closed between 3 o'clock and 5.30 pm in most places, people who want to consume alcohol buy it from off licences and supermarkets and consume it on the streets. That causes much aggravation. Would it not be better to have that in a controlled environment?

Mr. Anderson: I believe that the evidence in Scotland does not support the contention of the hon. Gentleman. I shall not linger on that point, except to say that there is a considerable degree of alcohol-related crime. Alcohol is involved in 45 per cent. of violent crimes, 4,000 people under the age of 18 were convicted of drunkenness, and in Scotland 52 per cent. of wife assaults resulted from intoxication. Is that likely to be increased, or decreased, as a result in changes in the licensing hours? A Government who enter that area of legislation should be extremely wary of the impulse that they will give to increased consumption and, therefore, to more crime.

I shall not mention neighbourhood watch schemes, because they have been referred to by many other hon. Members. Instead, I shall speak briefly about neighbourhood projects. The Minister will be aware of a most welcome project in my constituency within the housing estate of Penlan, which has received a substantial amount of favourable publicity since it began during the summer of 1986. The estate was chosen because it is typical of many estates in Swansea. It is pretty ordinary in some respects, and it was not selected because of substantial crime rates within it. Resources were made available for the project by several agencies, including the Home Office, the county council, the police and the city council. The personnel are paid for largely by the Manpower Services Commission.

The major problems in the area were easily defined as residential burglary and autocrime. The scheme has involved members of the community in the fight against crime, and apart from the narrow sense of involvement, it has given young people something to do. This has led to quite a substantial effect on crime rates. In south Wales as a whole there were about 100,000 incidents of crime in 1986, an increase of 12·5 per cent. over the previous year. In Swansea the increase was even greater. Over 20,000 crimes were reported, an increase in 1986 over 1985 of 15·5 per cent. However, in the six-month operation, which is relevant in terms of the Penlan project, there was a reduction in the number of crimes reported. Indeed, the number of domestic burglaries was reduced by two thirds.

The scheme involves young people in community projects and embraces a property-marking scheme. People are asked to postcode their property invisibly and to display stickers in their windows. I pay tribute to the Hoover company, which made security fittings, including special windows, locks and door bolts, and agreed to supply the project with these fittings at cost price. There was a free-fitting service for the elderly and the handicapped. Well over 100 houses have been fitted with these devices at an average cost to the householder of only £10. They have had a positive effect in making people in the community more aware of the area in which they live.

There has even been a graffiti-watch project, which has come under the probation service. It involves those who might otherwise be inclined to embark on anti-social activities. It is hoped that through this involvement they will gain a greater pride in their community.

A feature that distresses me is the current image of the police force. For whatever reason, there is considerable suspicion of, and hostility towards, the police in many areas. I helped to run a youth club in north-west London in the early 1970s, and I recall the unwillingness of the young people even to receive into the club the community liaison officer of the local police force, in spite of what I was trying to do. However worthy these schemes, I find all too frequently that when police officers are successful they are promoted, nearly always at the very time when they have achieved a good relationship with the community.

I remember another murder case in which I was involved professionally as a barrister. The local community was unwilling to co-operate with the local police in spite of all entreaties. It was a black person who had been murdered. Those who encourage negative attitudes to the police are involving themselves in the equivalent of the poisoning of our youth.

The police have a major responsibility as well. I have in mind a black friend, a professional man, who, I am convinced, has had a most unfortunate racial confrontation with an individual police officer. The police are like a first cousin of our society. If anything, they are more enlightened, especially in racial terms, than the average citizen.

I urge my contacts in the police force, in their own interests, to accept, for example, the outside investigation of complaints, and not to reject out of hand increased local authority involvement. One understands the esprit de corps, in the police but they should not shield brother officers whom they know to be involved in something improper. I say that that is in their own interests because it is important for them to act sensitively towards the public. The parents of a black lad assaulted by a policeman might be on a jury next week and so try to have his or her own back. The white motorist who has been abused might be on a jury, or he might see a policeman or policewoman and think twice about going to their aid.

The process is two-way. The police need training in sensitive public relations. We are responsible for encouraging positive views of our police force. The Government also have a responsibility, not in a narrow law and order sense, but in the sense of seeking to integrate all their policies—not just on licensing, but on housing and social security. They should ask whether they are likely to alienate young people by their actions. If we ever come to discuss a Bill that increases licensing hours, I hope that as in other Bills there will be a little clause——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying on to forbidden territory again.

Mr. Anderson: I hope that when, if ever, we consider licensing hours we will add a clause to the Bill, not to deal with the effects on Civil Service manpower, but to deal with how much the policy will cost in increased crime, increased expenditure and increased misery.

1.57 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I shall be brief because I know that several other hon. Members hope to contribute.

I welcome the tone of the debate. I must say how much I enjoyed the contribution by the hon. and personable Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) whose constituency adjoins mine, but I shall not go too far on those lines.

I wish to cover two areas. The first concerns the Government's aim of preventing crime. This involves not only putting additional locks on cars and houses but deterrents, increasing police powers and increasing the powers of the courts.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act has been particularly successful in respect of tape recording interviews of suspects. Soon after the tape recorder goes on the suspect completely forgets that it is on, begins to become completely natural and to talk to it. That has two benefits. The first benefit is that it tends to make it impossible for the suspect to suggest that he has been "verballed" — that the police have invented his confession. That, in itself, is beneficial.

The second benefit is that tape recording gives the jury a much better feel of the type of man involved in a case and whether he is guilty. If there is a question asked and there is a long pause before the answer, the jury draws its own conclusion from listening to the tape of that evidence.

I do not know whether there is any evidence to show that, as a result of tape recording interviews, more pleas of guilty are lodged than before, but that may well be the case. I suggest that tape recording should be much more widely available because the cost of it is offset by the avoidance of long and expensive trials. I hope that tape recording can be expanded countrywide as quickly as possible.

To take up a point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) I believe that the speed with which criminals are brought to book is crucial. At the moment the speed of the court system is hampered by various things and one of them is the Crown prosecution service. That service is in its early stages and has resulted in a huge change to the existing system. It would be unfair of me to criticise it too much, but at the moment it is understaffed and problems are arising. The Crown prosecution service tends to lose files and, from time to time, it even loses people. The files tend not to include the full evidence that is needed to secure a conviction. Agents are used for the work as opposed to Crown prosecution staff because there are not enough Crown prosecution staff available, but those agents cost more than the staff.

I appreciate that those matters are being considered, but when the pay of the Crown prosecution service staff is reviewed I ask the Government—I appreciate this is not the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister—to consider the court system as a whole. There should be no attempt to try to poach, for example, magistrates' clerks. If that happened, it would lead to a crisis regarding the availability of those clerks. We must consider the court system as a whole and increase the pay available to Crown prosecution service staff.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am extremely interested in what the hon. Gentleman has said and I agree with every word. Does he agree that the recruiting principle of the Crown prosecution service should be to aim to recruit good, average practitioners from both the solicitors and the bar and that pay must be adjusted accordingly?

Mr. Arbuthnot: Yes. I hope that answer satisifes the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. John Patten: If my hon. Friend will allow me——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention, whether from a Minister or otherwise. Other Members have sat here all day waiting to take part in this debate.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As long as Peter is not robbed to pay Paul the excellent Crown prosecution service, which is in its early stages, will become even better. I do not want to criticise it too much because it is too early to judge, and indeed, that service is the thrust behind the Government's aim of increasing crime deterrence.

2.3 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): In view of the time I shall keep my remarks brief.

This has been an important debate and the items that I should like to mention are, I believe, just as important. Statistics show that drugs are involved in a great many crimes today. Although I recognise that the Government have done all that they can to tackle this problem, I believe that there is still a long way to go. My regional health authority has made increased provision for drug rehabilitation and other facilities associated with tackling the drug problem but it still needs more resources.

The Minister mentioned the new meters that are being used by the electricity and gas boards. During the summer recess, I visited the Preston headquarters of the electricity board which serves north-east Lancashire to examine the new meters that it is using. Much more publicity should be given to those meters. They are an interesting development. Even if the tokens are stolen before they have been put into the meter, the person who purchased them is credited with the amount that they are worth. There are tremendous advantages in that system, and if time permitted I would discuss it in more detail. It will be a great help to those who find payment by meter a more attractive way of paying their electricity bills.

The Minister said that the offence of breaking into vehicles is on the increase. During the past 12 months, in Lancashire, car theft has been the fastest-growing crime. Indeed, during the recess, my car was broken into three times in the space of 10 days—once in Burnley and twice while travelling through France. It reached the stage where I nearly put a notice on the car saying that there was nothing left to steal. I have now fitted an alarm to the car, at a relatively modest cost, and I believe that we should encourage vehicle manufacturers to instal them as standard equipment. The advantage of an alarm is that not only does it sound when someone tries to break into the car, but if the driver forgets to lock it, the alarm will sound after a few seconds and remind him to lock it.

The Minister mentioned the effects of crime on victims, and victim support schemes. We must ensure that the local authorities and other bodies which support those schemes financially continue to maintain them. The Minister was right to say that victim support schemes have a vital role to play. They must have adequate resources. A few years ago, I chaired a meeting which led to the establishment of a victim support scheme in my area.

I agree with what the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) said about vandalism. We all deplore vandalism, which is a waste of money and resources. We must encourage people in the community to regard buildings and parks as belonging to them. In other countries schoolchildren are involved in the establishment of parks, so that when they grow up they have an interest in and sense of ownership of those parks.

Finally, may I mention policemen on the beat. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that some of their constituents fear leaving their homes at certain times of the day. When I visited the Lancashire police HQ during the summer recess, a senior officer told me that his elderly parents will not go out at all in the evening, and, in the daytime, only one of them dares go out at a time. That is a tragedy in 1987.

I also know that some police officers would argue that having them on the beat is not the best use of police resources and staff. I do not share that view; even if it is true that having officers on the beat does not really deal with crime as effectively as it could be argued that it does, it reassures the public and it is certainly what they want. Policemen on the beat give confidence to the elderly, to women and to others, and for that reason alone it is the direction in which we should be moving.

2.10 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), not only because he made some useful and succinct points, but because he managed to do so in a relatively short time —in contrast to what has happened in the course of the day. The lengths of the speeches made by hon. Members today have gone as follows: 58, 35, 20, 18, 31, 37 and 17 minutes. That is very unfair to the hon. Members on both sides who have been in the Chamber for several hours wanting to make a contribution to an important debate, but who have been prevented from doing so by the length of those speeches. May I commend to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the thought that the ten minutes rule is helpful to all hon. Members and could be usefully applied on Fridays, too?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has a great deal of sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said, but the House itself must give the Chair the power to implement the ten minute rule, and so far has been denied that.

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I deliberately raised the matter in this way because I know that some hon. Members have given up and left the Chamber. I hope that my comments will be borne in mind by those who plan the business of the House.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on initiating this important debate on crime prevention. He is right to do so, and to draw attention to the role of the individual in our society in preventing crime. The great bulk—96 per cent.—of crime broadly relates to property and is not prevented by random patrolling by uniformed police officers. It is crime committed in people's homes and on council estates out of sight of the police, and, for perfectly understandable reasons, the police can have little influence over it. About 60 per cent. of car thefts are from unlocked vehicles and about 30 per cent. of burglaries are carried out because of unlocked doors and windows. The need to force an entry deters many thieves. Indeed, that has been the theme of many of the speeches today, and the thrust of my hon. Friend the Minister's remarks. If we can but encourage individuals to take more responsibility for themselves and to be aware of the relatively simple precautions that they can take to protect their own homes or motor vehicles, that will provide a valuable contribution to the containment of crime. It will not eradicate it; other things must be done, besides. But let us at least begin by encouraging the community to do more to protect itself.

The important message is that so much crime is opportunistic and often results in little financial loss. Of the burglaries to which I referred, some 45 per cent. involve less than £25 by way of value of property stolen. Those are the distressing, opportunistic burglaries, often committed against elderly or lonely people, or people living on council estates, who are greatly disturbed by the impact of the burglary, although they may lose little property. Those crimes are preventable. That must be the message of the debate.

The same is true of auto-crime. We must consider the role of the motor car industry in making its contribution to improving car perimeter security and developing strategies that help make the motor vehicle more secure.

Reference has been made to the need to provide Government resources to help the elderly, particularly on council estates. The Home Office steering conference on crime prevention is aware that Hammersmith and Fulham local authority pioneered a pilot scheme funded under the urban programme to provide and fit basic security hardware to the homes of vulnerable households. That scheme was successful and perhaps illustrates how elderly people and those who are disadvantaged might be assisted at minimum cost in a way that I think the House will approve of.

Time has now moved against me. I have been unable to develop the debate in the way that I should have wished, but I conclude on the theme that the debate is about encouraging individuals to do more to help themselves. It is welcome that we should have this debate to make possible that encouragement.

2.16 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): In the game of beat the clock in two minutes, I have time to make only three points.

First, I am lucky that in my area of the Dyfed-Powys police force we have the highest detection rate and the lowest crime rate as well as the lowest insurance premiums, so there is a correlation.

Secondly, the point that I made in an intervention is worth stressing. I referred to moral education in our schools because so many of our young people are led astray at an early age and cannot see that vandalism, crime and the "yob" behaviour that so many of them exhibit is harmful to their fellow citizens.

I raised my third point with my hon. Friend the Minister at Question Time on 16 July. I should like to stress it again, especially as I have a home in south London. There is a new crime of "steaming" committed by "posses" on bus routes, especially the No. 36 set of routes, which still has open platform buses. People are being attacked in broad daylight by gangs of 20 or 30 and that outrageous behaviour is now spreading across south

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

London. I hope that, with the Metropolitan Police, the Government will do everything possible to try to prevent this lawlessness expanding.

2.17 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am glad to take part in the debate because I represent west Hull in Humberside, which is one of the worst counties for certain types of crime, Particularly burglaries, and sexual and personal attacks. That is worrying. Although I listened today with great interest to the points made on both sides of the House and although there was good intent and plenty of good will in what was said, I have a feeling of despair because I cannot sense that some of the proposals that have been made will have a significant impact on rising crime. I believe that no change of direction will result from those policies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, that is partly because people's values have declined. We live in a society where greed is promulgated. We seem to have an uncaring society. It is an "I'm all right, Jack" society, a society of moral decline, as the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) mentioned, which is a serious matter. There is sex, violence, drugs and alcoholism. Our society is rotten to the core. In the House we must face up to the fact that it is pretty rotten, and we must have policies that address those problems.

Recently, as many hon. Members have done, I toured inner cities. When one meets the people in inner cities who are trying to cope with their problems one realises how serious and distressing it is for those living and working in such communities. I recently asked the deputy director of social services in Birmingham to describe the problems of inner cities in one or two words, and she said, "apathy and no hope". That exists in our inner cities. Unquestionably the problems in our inner cities and in our society generally that are resulting in crime are multifaceted. No simplistic solutions can be found. However, as most Members of Parliament who work hard in their constituencies must concede, I am convinced that unemployment is part of that problem. In my view, it is a major factor.

I recently toured the prison in my city. That was an incredible and moving experience because I thought I would see lots of tattooed big men wearing shirts with arrows on them, but it was more like going to a Methodist youth club. Many young children were in the prison and a prison officer told me that one reason for that was that in Hull crime pays. They can either be on social benefits and get their £35 a week, or they can be on crime and get several hundred pounds a week. They consider crime to be a career. That is how they think about it. They consider it a high-risk job, just like coalmining.

I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). She spoke about breaking the cycle of crime. I accept what she said about the enormity of the problem and the need to educate people so that they can break out of the cycle. Prison staff I have talked to do not even think in those terms. They admit people, bang them up and at the end of it those people leave. The amount of counselling those people receive is extremely limited.

The investment that is needed in inner cities, not only in monetary terms but in other resources, is so incredibly massive that it is difficult to get one's mind around the outside of it. In communities where there are black people it is important for there to be good relations between the police and black or coloured communities because I believe that to be a big factor in crime prevention and detection. Many hon. Members referred to the Criminal Justice Bill. Opposition Members feel that that Bill is getting a bit on the big side. Lots of things have been added to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind what I said earlier. In the debate on the Adjournment we cannot discuss legislation that is before the House.

Mr. Randall: I do appreciate that. I was going to talk about a matter of procedure rather than the content of the Bill. The Opposition would support the addition in that legislation of measures affecting the carrying of knives, and video techniques for witnesses in child abuse cases. The Opposition would unquestionably support the bringing forward of such small elements of legislation because of their urgency.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke about the way in which our courts seem to place more black people on remand in custody than white people. I understand that the matter came up recently in a MIND report and I think that there have been other reports. It is crucial that we establish quite clearly what is happening, because if our courts are showing racial prejudice by evaluating cases in terms of a person's colour, it must be taken up with a sense of urgency.

The Opposition regard the problems of crime as very serious. Under the Government, crime is at a record level. The Tories can no longer regard themselves as the party of law and order, and that is because of the policies that have, at least partly, led to this massive increase in the level of crime. We support the Minister in a number of areas that he mentioned but they will not make more than a dent in the chronic crime problem in our society.

Mr. John Patten *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

2.24 pm

Mr. John Patten: This has been a constructive debate and I found it extremely valuable to listen to all hon. Members who have spoken. The debate will help the Government to formulate their policies and will bear a lot of reflective reading by us in the Home Office and by the assiduous civil servants who advise me. There have been some thought-provoking contributions, and I shall mention first the speeches on the Government side.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) gave a comprehensive and thought-provoking speech on his ideas about how we might develop the neighbourhood watch system in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) gave us a lot of food for thought about how to break the cycle of crime. My hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) added much to the debate by their speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) was quite right in his views about the need to deal with young thugs and about the deterrents offered to them. My hon. Friend at the Home Office looks forward to receiving the delegation on the other matter to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East alluded and which is of such interest to his constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) gave me some messages to pass on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General about the Crown prosecution service. I shall certainly pass those on. There was a brief intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) who knows a great deal about the subject. We in the Home Office have benefited greatly from what he has said in recent years about crime prevention and we appreciate the service that he has given in the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) made a record-breaking one minute 30 second intervention before the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) made his speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke also made some very powerful interventions in the debate and, quite rightly, persecuted one or two hon. Members.

In the two minutes that are available to me I cannot do anything like justice to the three important points made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). With his agreement I hope that I can write to him in detail and place a copy of the letter in the Library so that hon. Members can see what I would have said if I had had the time to do so.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I came dangerously close to becoming hon. Friends, because we agreed with each other for most of the debate. I pinched myself a lot. I regard him as a dangerous and wicked Left-wing radical who is attacking the very fabric of society. I hope that that helps him with his general management committee at his next constituency meeting.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am much obliged to the Minister.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is not present in the Chamber. As always, he talked about prisons and prison conditions. I wonder how many chords were struck by the speech by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), at whose feet the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is now suitably kneeling, when the hon. Gentleman talked about the family and Christian values and how much they can give to crime prevention.

"Tail-end Charlie"—the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), speaking from the opposite perspective—gave us a very thought-provoking speech. The hon. Gentleman caused me a lot of thought when I was Housing Minister with his interventions, and what he said today gave us much more food for thought. We shall remember his observations.

Let me make two final points. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who had to go off through the fog to her constituency duties, used an article in *The Guardian* against me—a most fearful thing for a Tory Minister—and suggested that that excellent, perceptive and highly accurate journalist, James Naughtie——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 11th November, the Motion in the name of Mr. Norman Lamont relating to Supplementary Estimates, 1987-88 (Class XIX, Vote 16) (Sales of shares in BP plc) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until halfpast Eleven o'clock, or for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put any Questions necessary to dispose of them.

That, at the sitting on Thursday 12th November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), if proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Moore relating to Social Security have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put forthwith the Questions thereon; and proceedings in pursuance of this Order, though opposed, may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business.

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 10th November, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to House of Commons (Services) have not been disposed of before Seven o'clock, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the main Question or the main Question, as amended.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Anna Chertkova

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful for the opportunity to draw the attention of the House once again to the plight of Anna Chertkova, a Soviet Christian who is being forced to be confined in a psychiatric hospital near Kazan. I am pleased to see that my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) are also to take part in the debate, which comes appropriately on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the revolution, and, therefore, on the eve of the day on which the Soviet authorities have promised a major amnesty.

It is equally appropriate that the debate coincides with the week-long vigil outside the Soviet embassy in Bayswater by the Rev. Dr. Richard Rodgers and four other men to draw public attention to Anna's plight. I am grateful to them for all that they have done, and I am equally grateful to many of my constituents, who have written letters and signed petitions on Anna's behalf.

Anna Chertkova is now 59, and has spent the past 14 years of her life in a special psychiatric hospital for the criminally insane. Yet Anna is neither criminal nor insane. She simply believes in God, and will not renounce her Christian faith. Anna was arrested in 1973 by militiamen who bundled her into a van and took her to the local psychiatric hospital. Friends and neighbours searched for her for a week before they became aware of her whereabouts. When her mother inquired why her daughter had been imprisoned, doctors told her that they did not know why people like Anna were sent to them. They wished that they could release her, but they were powerless to do so.

Anna was tried in secret, having been accused of circulating deliberately false concoctions slandering the Soviet state and social order—charges motivated by her open adherence to religious practices and dissemination of literature. She was declared criminally insane, and sentenced to indefinite confinement in psychiatric hospitals.

In 1975, Anna was moved to the psychiatric hospital in Tashkent, 400 miles from her home, and, in January 1986, to a hospital near Kazan, 1,300 miles from her home. During her years of imprisonment, Anna has been harshly treated. She developed jaw tremors which spread to her whole body owing to the administration of neuroleptic drugs. She was threatened that visits by her family would be stopped if she once complained about her treatment. She has been told that if she denies her faith in God she will be released. With great courage, she has refused to do so. She conducts herself with great dignity, and is a magnificent example and inspiration to those of us in this country who take our freedom of worship for granted.

On 1 August 1975, in Helsinki, the Soviet Union, along with the United Kingdom, the United States and other countries, adopted the Helsinki Final Act. In part 7 of that agreement, those signing agreed to respect human rights and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief for all without distinction as to race, language or religion. They agreed to recognise and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practise alone or in the community, religion or belief, acting in accordance with the dictates of his own consceince. The cruel and inhuman treatment received by Anna Chertkova is at variance with the undertakings given when the agreement was signed. Sadly, Anna is only one of many Christians treated in that way in the Soviet Union.

The persecution of religious believers in the Soviet Union is of great concern to the British people, including many hon. Members from both sides of the House who have signed early-day motions tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Stratford-upon-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). Many of us are grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for raising the question of religious believers in the Soviet Union during her visit last March. We are especially pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in making representations to the Soviet Foreign Minister singled out Anna's case for special mention as a victim of psychiatric abuse. Mr. Shevardnadze undertook to look into her case, but, sadly, she is still detained.

The Soviet Union signed the Helsinki Final Act freely and the violation of its commitments, so freely given, is a matter of great anxiety. In equally serious matters, for example the arms control talks, we must trust and have confidence in the Soviet Union. That trust and confidence would be a little increased if the Soviet Union accepted its responsibilities under the agreement it signed and gave its people the freedom to worship. The release of Anna Chertkova would be a sign of the Soviet Government's good intentions and I hope that the British Government will do everything possible to encourage the Soviet Union to release her. I hope, too, that the Government will urge the President of the United States to raise Anna's case when he meets Mr. Gorbachev in December, and that the Soviet Government will respond favourably. Such a reaction would remove much of the distrust which exists when people rightly ask, "If this is how the Soviet Union treats its citizens, how will it treat us, given the chance?".

Anna Chertkova is a brave, good woman. The Soviet Union should be proud to have people like her as citizens. Her release will pose no threat to the Soviet Union, but her continued imprisonment threatens the welcome recent improvements in the relations between the Soviet Union and the West. I plead that the Soviet Government will release Anna and not put at risk all that has been achieved since Mr. Gorbachev came to power.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon) *rose*——

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Do the two hon. Members who are standing have the consent of the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and the Minister to take part in the debate?

Mr. Hargreaves *indicated assent.*

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor) *indicated assent.*

2.37 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): The details of the circumstances surrounding the imprisonment of Anna Chertkova highlight how we take our personal freedoms for granted. The very idea that someone should be imprisoned for her religious beliefs would be anathema to each and every one of us. When we consider that the time which Anna has spent imprisoned represents one fifth of the total time that the Soviet Union has been in existence, one realises that it is an appalling fact. The conditions in the hospital where she is detained are not what we in the United Kingdom would accept as satisfactory for the treatment of psychiatric patients and in many cases the conditions are worse than those which exist in ordinary prisons in the Soviet Union.

Anna has been told at review tribunals that if she denies her faith in God, she will be released. Such an idea is repugnant to every hon. Member and, indeed, to everyone who upholds the right of freedom to worship. Sadly, Anna is not alone. At present, there are 265 religious prisoners in the Soviet Union who are known by name and possibly thousands of others who are not. There are also at least 32 prisoners currently held in psychiatric hospitals similar to Kazan or other hospitals in the Soviet Union who suffer the same treatment as Anna Chertkova.

I am sure that most people would agree that freedom of worship should be one of the basic rights guaranteed by all nations. The horrors of compulsory treatment for an illness that does not exsist and the removal of basic human rights imposed on Anna deserve our contempt. I am sure that some people outside the Chamber would say "What right do British parliamentarians have to interfere in what happens in other states? I believe that we would be failing in our duties and responsbilities as parliamentarians if we did not speak out for those who cannot speak out for themselves.

We are very encouraged by successes leading to the release of prisoners of conscience over the past 18 months to two years. I very much hope that that success will continue. I urge the Government on behalf of Anna Chertkova, on behalf of the hundreds more like her in the Soviet Union, the Members of this House who feel as strongly as I and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and the many members of the general public who are sickened and appalled at what is happening to Christians purely as a result of their beliefs, to make urgent representations to the Soviet Union to secure the immediate release of Anna Chertkova.

2.40 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) was able to secure this afternoon's Adjournment debate on such an important issue and I am most grateful to him for allowing me to make a short contribution in the debate.

The plight of Anna Chertkova, a Soviet citizen, is unfortunately an all too familiar plight for those of us who monitor the Soviet Union's observation of the Helsinki accords. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn has stressed, Anna has been detained in a psychiatric unit by the Soviet authorities for 14 years for what we in this country consider to be a basic human right, notably the exercise of the freedom of religious worship. Anna Chertkova is not a thief, murderer, terrorist or criminal. Her only crime is that she wishes to read the Bible, to pray and to worship God in accordance with her beliefs as a Baptist and to fulfil her Christian religion. For that, she was arrested and taken away. She was tried in secret without witnesses and found guilty of slandering the Soviet state. Her sentence, as we have heard, was indefinite detention in a psychiatric unit where she has received drugs and so-called treatment. Those drugs have had a serious side effect on her mental and general health and they would not be allowed in a civilised country and certainly would not be allowed in this country.

Her only hope of release will come if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) said, she is willing to collapse and give into the pressure being imposed on her by the Soviet authorities to denounce her Christian beliefs. That is an act which so far she has bravely resisted against all the odds.

Reports that reach us in the West say that she is constantly reviewed by psychiatric review panels and told that if she were to deny God she could be home tomorrow. That is the other side of Russia in 1987, the side frequently hidden by the Soviet authorities and their propaganda.

In this country we would rightly be appalled by such treatment because in the democratic society that we have the privilege to enjoy in Britain we recognise and protect the rights of the individual. In the Soviet Union, such matters are handled quite differently and the Soviet state works ceaselessly to extinguish all rights and beliefs that do not fit in with its rigid political dogma. Indeed, it is believed that Anna's petition to former Soviet leader Brezhnev asking for help to prevent the local authorities from persecuting her actually precipitated her indefinite detention on the grounds of criminal insanity.

We hear much today in the press and the media of the so-called new Soviet openness, the self-proclaimed policy of glasnost. Yet, behind that window dressing and the courting of the world's media, lies a harsh and vastly different reality. It is the reality of the totalitarian state, where the act of Christian worship is sufficient to cause an individual to be branded an enemy of the state.

Those of us in the free world must let people such as Anna know that their suffering does not pass unnoticed. It is up to us to bring pressure to bear on the Soviet Union and we are grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary for what he has done in the past to bring to the attention of the Soviet leaders our feeling about the treatment of people such as Anna. Their suffering is immoral and inhuman. Above all, we must work tirelessly to ensure that the rights of the individual are respected internationally, not just in democracies such as Britain.

Despite the Soviet Union's signature on the Helsinki accord a decade ago, the Russians flagrantly breach the important clause on human rights. In any negotiations with the Russians — I am sure that we all welcome discussion and negotiation in the interests of world peace —it is essential to remember that human rights must be at the top of the agenda. People such as Anna are expecting help from the free world. We are not interested in the rewriting of Russian history in the years since the revolution about which we hear so much in the speech of the Russian leaders. We are not interested in past events but are looking to the future. I urge my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to continue the good work that the Government are doing in the negotiations on behalf of people such as Anna so that one day in the near future, hopefully sooner rather than later, people such as her will be released, allowed freedom to worship and to live a full life as we would hope to in this country.

2.46 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves)

[Mr. David Mellor]

for raising the tragic case of Anna Chertkova. It is the first opportunity I have had to congratulate him on a truly spectacular result at the general election when his not too comfortable majority of 21 was increased to over 2,000. That is a sign of the respect with which he is held in his area. Perhaps I could also say, knowing how ill he was during the last Parliament, what a joy it is to see him so fully restored to health. Long may that continue.

I enjoyed the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). It was appropriate to show that Anna Chertkova's case concerns not only one or two but a large number of hon. Members. Each week I sign several letters to hon. Members who have written expressing their concern about this case. Anna Chertkova is certainly not forgotten in the United Kingdom and never will be for as long as she remains incarcerated in the manner referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn.

Anna's case is well known to us, particularly thanks to the efforts of the Rev. Dick Rogers and organisations such as Keston college. I pay tribute to their work. Her plight has rightly aroused great concern among the wider British public, just as it has among hon. Members. The aim of this debate must be to ensure that those with direct control over her fate get the message loud and clear that she is not forgotten and never will be.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn has made clear, the facts of the case are strikingly simple. Anna is a Christian and has suffered for many years for her religious beliefs. She was arrested in 1973 and declared criminally insane. She has been confined to a special psychiatric hospital ever since. I will not repeat what has already been said about the details of the treatment she has received. It is enough to say that the behaviour of the Soviet authorities has been deplorable.

The Government have taken an active interest in her fate. We have taken every suitable opportunity to ensure that the Soviet authorities are fully aware of the strength of our views. In March this year, for example, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, as has been mentioned, raised Anna's case with Mr. Shevardnadze. Her name was included on the list of 26 prisoners of conscience that he handed over. I am glad to say that 11 of those on that list have since been released but sorry that Anna was not one of them.

In September I went to Vienna to address the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I made it clear that we want to see a significant improvement in Soviet human rights performance and that we shall continue hammering away until we get it. I made a point of drawing the attention of delegates to the harassment of religious believers in the Soviet Union. I referred specifically to Anna Chertkova and called for her immediate release, as part of a general amnesty for all prisoners of conscience.

As a signatory to the Helsinki Final Act, the Soviet Union made a number of important commitments on human rights. One of these was a pledge to respect

> "human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief."

According to this principle, all Soviet citizens should be guaranteed the freedom to profess their faith, but experience shows that this principle is not upheld in practice.

Anna Chertkova is the victim of an especially pernicious double violation of her rights. She is persecuted as a Christian and subject to that most frightening of practices—the abuse of psychiatry for reasons of state policy.

Anna Chertkova is not alone. It is a sad irony that the Soviet Union is preparing to celebrate 1,000 years of Christianity next year. We can expect to see that millennium celebrated with considerable pomp and circumstance by the pillars of the official church in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile hundreds of believers are still languishing in psychiatric hospitals and prison camps. Mr. Gorbachev, as we all know, is committed to transforming Soviet society. He has called it a new revolution. He has spoken at length of the need for greater openness and structural reform, for a greater role for the individual and a lesser one for central bureaucracy, which is trying to lay down norms in all areas of life.

There is no more individual area of human life than the act of religious faith. It should flow naturally from Mr. Gorbachev's reforms that individuals are genuinely free to worship as they wish. We are not asking the Soviet authorities to encourage religion in their country. It is for them to choose whether they wish to do so or not. We fully accept that and there is room for different views here. But there is no room for argument about whether religious belief and activity should be freely allowed. When will the Soviet authorities accept this and accept the logic of glasnost and perestroika in this sensitive and important area of life?

I shall quote from an article on human rights in the Soviet Union which appears in the most recent edition of *Soviet News*, a weekly newsheet put out by the Soviet embassy in London. It reads:

> "How does Soviet jurisprudence understand human rights and freedoms? They are above all the possibilities the individual has in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres and in his personal life. Human rights are not a gift from the state: they are not a magnanimous gesture on the part of a law giver . . . Human rights—respect for the individual's sovereignty, integrity and dignity — are inalienable components of socialist democracy".

I could hardly put it better myself. But when are Soviet deeds going to match these fine words?

Anna Chertkova is sane but imprisoned against her will in a psychiatric hospital. The extent of psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union has been fully documented. No one can seriously doubt that the practice has been widespread. Even the Soviet press is now beginning to reflect this reality, however timorously.

One of the most courageous exposers of psychiatric abuse in the Soviet Union has been Dr. Anatoli Koryagin, himself a psychiatrist. It is perhaps of some interest that he has been visiting Britain this week. His attempts to bring to public attention psychiatric malpractices in the Soviet Union earned him a seven-year sentence in a prison camp and five years of exile. Throughout his period of imprisonment Dr. Koryagin continued to fight for the rights of psychiatric patients whom he knew to be sane. He smuggled statements to the West. He urged Western psychiatrists to boycott their Soviet colleagues. He went on hunger strikes to demand better conditions, despite the extra harsh conditions, treatment and prolonged sentence that that earned him. He was finally released earlier this year and allowed to leave for the West.

I take this opportunity to salute Dr. Koryagin's courage and welcome the initiative that brought him to

Britain to share with us his knowledge and views. Let us hope that his long fight will soon be crowned with success. That will come when the Soviet Union admits openly that it has deliberately practised psychiatric abuses for political reasons and undertakes that there will be no repetition in the future.

I have said that religious persecution and psychiatric abuse continue. They are two areas where glasnost seem to have had perhaps least effect. But it is only fair to say that the picture is not entirely black. I welcome the release of a number of political prisoners earlier this year and the amnesty declared in June. So far over 200 political prisoners have been released before the end of their sentences. At the same time the number of Jewish and ethnic Germany applicants allowed to leave has increased noticeably. Some long-standing refuseniks have been given permission to leave.

These are steps in the right direction. But they are not nearly enough. In particlar those convicted for allegedly illegal religious activities do not qualify under the terms of the amnesty, nor does it include inmates in psychiatric hospitals. The Anna Chertkovas of this world have yet to see any benefit to themselves from Mr. Gorbachev's reforms.

Human rights are increasingly, and rightly, seen as an important international issue, an issue with profound implications for relations between states. The Soviet Union is slowly beginning to realise this. We hear less now of the tired old complaint of interference in internal affairs. The commitments entered into as a result of the CSCE process have booted that argument out of court once and for all. At Vienna pressure will be kept up for further improvements in human rights performance. It is not a question of notching up propaganda points. Respect for the individual's rights is at the heart of our democratic system and fundamental to all of our policies.

That is why we have called on the Russians in Vienna to reflect in the texts under negotiation there the spirit of change now abroad in the Soviet Union. Their response so far has been almost entirely negative. I hope that it will change.

The Russians have made one proposal in this area—a conference on humanitarian issues, to be held in Moscow. How should the West respond?

Our response will depend crucially on Soviet performance in the human rights field. There have been improvements but can it convincingly be argued that as things stand, and while cases such as Anna Chertkova are before us, Moscow is an appropriate place for a conference dealing with the promotion of human contacts, and therefore with human rights? We shall take a great deal of persuasion and need a good deal more evidence of real improvement before we can even begin to be convinced.

If there is one concern that lies at the heart of the Final Act, it is concern for people, ordinary people, individuals. That is why the human rights of these individuals are so important to us, not only in our own country, but in all the states which signed the Final Act, and beyond. If that concern for people does not find its way into reality, into specific improvements in human rights performance, the Helsinki process is fundamentally a hollow shell. That is why we and our Western partners insist that the present meeting in Vienna must conclude not only with further commitments in the areas of security and economic exchanges, but with an equally substantial follow-up in human rights and contacts. Anything else is simply unacceptable. We have made clear and specific proposals for such follow-ups in what has become known in the jargon as the human dimension. We await a constructive response to these proposals.

Mr. Gorbachev wrote in *Pravda* in September that the world cannot be secure if human rights are violated in it. He added:

"national legislation and administrative rules in the humanitarian sphere"

should everywhere be brought into accordance with international obligations and standards. Mr. Gorbachev, we are waiting for you to put this into practice.

I hope that the Soviet Government will take a long hard look at their own performance and ask themselves some questions. Can a super-power be seriously threatened by the Christian faith of Anna Chertkova? Does the imprisonment of individuals like her contribute to the release of individual energy and creativity the Soviet economy and Soviet society so badly need? Does history suggest that persecution can stamp out non-conformist behaviour and thinking? Is the image of the Soviet Union abroad and its professed desire for international peace and stability helped by the knowledge that Anna Chertkova, after 14 years, is in a psychiatric hospital?

There is only one answer to all these questions. I hope that the Soviet Government will draw the right conclusions in their own interests. I appeal to them to free Anna Chertkova and those like her and let her live in peace. I appeal to them to put an end to practices which bring only disgrace on their country. I know that the House will join me in sending this simple message about Anna Chertkova—let her go!

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 26 October 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Institute of Marine Biochemistry

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether, in the light of falling land values in Aberdeen and the revised upward costings of both phase I and II of adapting the Scottish Marine Biological Association laboratory at Oban, he will advise the Natural Environment Research Council to review its plans to close the Institute of Marine Biochemistry in Aberdeen and transfer its staff to the Oban laboratory;

(2) if he will publish the latest estimate of *(a)* the anticipated building costs consequent upon the removal of work from the Institute of Marine Biochemistry in Aberdeen to the Scottish Marine Biological Association laboratory at Oban, *(b)* the anticipated receipts from the sale of the Institute of Marine Biochemistry building and *(c)* the costs of the transfer of mobile staff to Oban and severance payments for non-mobile staff; and if he will itemise how the Natural Environmental Research Council has arrived at these estimates.

Mr. Jackson: In an earlier reply, my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) explained that there were strong scientific motives for the move of the Institute of Marine Biochemistry (IMB) to the Scottish Marine Biological association's Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory (DML) at Oban (*Official Report*, 24 November 1986, column *35*). The scientific case has not altered, and although certain costs have increased, the substantial recurrent financial benefits resulting from the move will still offset the initial costs within five years. My right hon. Friend has thus no reason to advise the Natural Environmental Research council to review its plans in respect of the closure of the IMB and the transfer of its staff to Oban.

The cost of the new building at DML, Oban is within the estimates, and is nearing completion. The cost of necessary alterations to existing buildings will be above the original forecasts, but are still subject to contractural negotiations. A selling price for the IMB building in Aberdeen has been agreed with a puchaser and is in line with the previous estimate, but is still commercially sensitive.

The cost of transfers has fallen to £70,000, while that of severance payments has increase to £190,000, in the first years and £54,000 thereafter, because more staff have decided to leave IMB than previously estimated. These additional costs will be offset by greater savings in salary costs at Oban. The estimate of transfer and severance costs are now based on the known circumstances of individual staff members.

School Leavers (Knowsley)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of school leavers from the borough of Knowsley attending full-time degree courses at university in each year from 1976 to 1986; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the number of students in secondary education in the borough of Knowsley for each of these years.

Mr. Jackson: Information in the form requested is not available. The table below covers all students who where in receipt of a mandatory or a full value discretionary award from the Knowsley local education authority and who are estimated to have been on first degree courses at university excluding teacher training. The table also relates the numbers of such students newly taking up an award to an average of the 18 and 19 year old population in Knowsley.

Knowsley local education authority mandatory and estimated full-value discretionary awards to students on first degree courses at university (excluding teacher training)

Academic Years[2]	*All award-holders*	*of which New award-holders*	*New award-holders per 1,000*[1] *population*
1977-78	420	140	39
1978-79	453	167	46
1979-80	475	171	50
1980-81	474	141	40
1981-82	442	130	37
1982-83	414	115	32
1983-84	387	109	33
1984-85	330	85	26
1985-86	313	102	32

[1] Per 1,000 of the average of the 18 and 19 year old population.

[2] Comparable figures are not available for years before 1977-78.

Contract Staff

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what number and percentage of *(a)* contract research staff and *(b)* contract academic staff progressed to permanent positions in institutions governed by the University Grants Commission over each of the past 10 academic years, indicating the total number and the percentage that they represented of such contract staff at each of the institutions.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* contract research staff and *(b)* contract academic staff at present employed in institutions covered by the University Grants Commission, indicating the annual growth over the past 10 academic years as a total number and as a percentage of the total research and academic staff at each institution and as a total of all institutions.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available in the form requested. However a recent study on "Contract Researchers in Universities" conducted by the Advisory Board on the Research Councils found the following growth in contract research staff at all UK universities:

Year	*Number of contract staff*	*Number of contract research staff as a percentage of all full-time academic staff (%)*
1976	6,010	15
1977	6,084	15
1978	6,615	16
1979	7,469	17
1980	8,005	18
1981	8,223	19
1982	8,275	22
1983	9,684	22
1984	10,249	23

Medical Training

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the ratio of teaching medical doctors and medical students for university medical departments; and what were the comparable figures for 1979;

(2) what is the ratio between teaching medical personnel and medical students for each year since 1973 in Scottish universities.

Mr. Jackson: The available figures cover full-time academic staff in clinical medical departments, employed by universities. The table below shows the ratio of full-time equivalent student load to such staff who are wholly university-financed. The figures do not take account of the teaching contribution of other members of clinical departments who are paid wholly or partly from DHSS or other sources of funds. They include staff engaged in teaching, teaching and research and research only.

Ratio of full-time equivalent student load to full-time academic staff wholly financed from general university funds.
Clinical medical departments only

Academic year beginning	*GB Universities*	*Scottish Universities*
1973	5·4	4·6
1974	5·5	4·7
1975	5·6	4·8
1976	5·4	4·5
1977	5·4	4·4
1978	5·4	4·4
1979	5·3	4·1
1980	5·6	4·4
1981	5·9	4·7
1982	6·6	5·6
1983	6·6	5·6
1984	6·9	6·2
1985	6·9	7·1

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last had discussions wth university authorities concerned with the university teaching and training of medical doctors.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent meetings with university interests at which a range of matters, which may inculude medical education, are discussed.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what policies and funds for the maintenance and progress of medical university training Her Majesty's Government have applied and provided for each year since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's policy for medical education was recently set out in a joint note of guidance to the universities and the health authorities issued earlier this year, a copy of which is in the Library. Financial provision for undergraduate medical education is made through recurrent grants to the universities on the advice of the University Grants Committee and, in respect of teaching hospitals, through the National Health Service. In neither case is provision for the training of doctors specifically identified.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of new medical students in Scottish universities for each year since 1975.

Mr. Jackson: The number of full-time new entrant undergraduates to Scottish universities studying pre-clinical and clinical medicine in each year was as follows:

	Number
1975	672
1976	651
1977	695
1978	685
1979	722
1980	717
1981	728
1982	773
1983	780
1984	791
1985	781
1986	—[1]

[1] not yet available.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the provision of funds for medical equipment and laboratories in the Scottish universities for the purposes of medical teaching and training, for each year since 1973.

Mr. Jackson: Provision for medical education is not separately identified in the equipment grants made to universities.

Calderdale

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if an early response will be given to Calderdale council's request for additional capital allocation to meet his Department's requirements imposed following publication of the report by the Commission for Racial Equality on education in Calderdale.

Mr. Dunn: Calderdale's bid for a capital allocation for 1988-89 has not yet been received. When it is received we will give careful consideration to the particular issues raised by the report of the Commission for Racial Equality. The Department aims to notify authorities of their allocations around Christmas.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking during the period of falling school rolls to reduce the pupil-teacher ratios in state schools.

Mr. Dunn: Total pupil numbers in maintained schools in England continue to fall until 1991, although primary pupil numbers have been rising since 1985. The Government's expenditure plans already provide for the overall pupil to teacher ratio, standing in 1986 at its lowest ever level of 17.6:1, to continue to improve up to 1990. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for schools and teachers in Scotland.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the average pupil-teacher ratios in state schools in the years 1979 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The average overall pupil-teacher ratios in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England were as follows:

	Pupil-teacher ratios
January 1979	18·9
January 1986	17·6

Information in respect of Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the average pupil-teacher ratios in schools in the independent sector.

Mr. Dunn: The average pupil-teacher ratio in independent schools in England in January 1986 was 11·3. Information in respect of Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland respectively.

Children (Special Needs)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the proposed tests for 11 to 14-year-old schoolchildren will take into account the problems of children with special needs.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. The Government's proposals for a national curriculum in England and Wales envisage that, for a pupil with a statement of special need under the Education Act 1981, that statement should specify any modifications to the statutory requirements for attainment targets, programmes of study and arrangements for assessment and testing during each key educational stage, that would be appropriate for that child. The regulations governing each of the foundation subjects would also define any circumstances in which those requirements might be modified, for example for pupils with severe language difficulties. The respective subject working groups and the task group on assessment and testing have been asked to pay attention to these issues, and generally to the range of pupils' abilities, when framing their recommendations. In these ways children will be able to enjoy the maximum benefit from the national curriculum while due account is taken of their special needs.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will be taking to ensure that children with special needs will be protected against discrimination in the event of schools being allowed to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Dunn: It is not our intention that the operation of our policy on grant-maintained schools should in any way prejudice the position of children with special educational needs. The admission policies of all grant-maintained schools will require the approval of my right hon. Friend.

National Curriculum

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much time in the new national curriculum will be allocated for home economics; what steps he proposes to take to increase technological training in schools to equip school leavers for jobs in modern industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's consultation document on the national curriculum does not envisage that home economics will be a foundation subject in the terms of the proposed legislation. However, we expect that some elements of home economics will be taught through the foundation subjects, particularly science, technology and art. Schools will be free additionally to devote to home economics some of the time—the equivalent of about one day a week — which will not be required for foundation subjects. My right hon. Friend does not intend to prescribe in legislation how much time should be allocated to subjects within the national curriculum. The Government's proposals for a national curriculum, including the establishment of technology as a foundation subject, will ensure that all pupils receive a relevant and practical curriculum which equips them for working life.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the visit to Liverpool on Wednesday 21 October of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Dunn: My noble Friend addressed the annual general meeting of the Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service. In the afternoon, as the guest of the local education authority, she visited Millbrook college and South Mersey college, looking in particular at provision for special needs and at open learning. My noble Friend found her visit both stimulating and informative.

University Academic Staff

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to bring forward proposals to abolish tenure for university academic staff; and whether these proposals will contain provisions to guarantee academic freedom.

Mr. Jackson: Our proposals to legislate on academic tenure will be part of the major education reform Bill which we shall be introducing shortly. It is our intention to bring forward the relevant provisions when the Bill is introduced. The Government recognise the importance of maintaining academic freedom, and the provisions will be framed with that objective in mind.

Research Councils

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many polytechnic staff are represented on each of the research councils and their constituent committees, respectively.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is as follows:

	Council	*Constituent committees*
Agricultural and Food Research Council	Nil	Nil
Economic and Social Research Council	1	3

	Council	*Constituent committees*
Medical Research Council	Nil	Nil
Natural Environment Research Council	Nil	2
Science and Engineering Research Council	1	23

Applied Research

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of applied research is undertaken in the polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: The available statistics do not distinguish between applied and other research undertaken in polytechnics, nor do they admit a direct comparison with the amount of publicly funded research undertaken elsewhere.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much of his Department's earmarked major capital expenditure has been *(a)* allocated to local education authorities and *(b)* spent in each of the polytechnics in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: In making capital allocations to local education authorities under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 my right hon. Friend has not used his power to earmark parts of allocations for projects of regional or national importance. Local education authorities have therefore been free to spend their allocations as they wished.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much capital expenditure, other than his department's allocated major capital, has been spent by local education authorities in each of the polytechnics in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister whether it is proposed to consult the public at any stage about the new national response plan for nuclear accidents.

The Prime Minister: I announced the main features of the plan on 30 June. More detailed proposals for implementing a national radiation incident monitoring network will be published in due course.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister whether she proposes to publish the Cabinet Office review of existing emergency plans and procedures for major nuclear accidents in the light of experience of the Chernobyl accident, referred to in her statement of 18 December 1986.

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to publish internal Cabinet Office working documents.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received calling for a public inquiry into the British official response to the Chernobyl nuclear accident and what response she has made.

The Prime Minister: Apart from the hon. Gentleman's letter of 26 August 1986, to which I replied on 28 October 1986, I have received two requests for a public inquiry in letters dated 30 June 1986 and 2 September 1987 from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). In my replies I explained why an inquiry of the kind he suggested would not be justified.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government intend to observe the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection for the protection of the public in the event of major radiation accidents.

The Prime Minister: The National Radiological Protection Board has a statutory duty to advise the Government on radiation dose limits. In its publication ERL 2, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, it gives criteria for limiting doses to the public in the event of accidental exposure to radiation. This guidance is generally consistent with that given in the relevant International Commission on Radiological Protection publication—Publication 40—and in some cases is more stringent.

The ICRP is at present reconsidering its recommendations in respect of risk estimates. The Government will consider, in due course, any revised advice from the NRPB in the light of ICRP deliberations.

Guatemala Accord

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to call upon President Reagan to accept the II Esquipulas agreement (Guatemala accord).

The Prime Minister: The United States Administration are well aware of our support for the Guatemala agreement.

World Peace

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if, in order to help the search for world peace, she will approach European Community Governments and Commonwealth nations, in order to seek to introduce more acceptable international rules protecting the independence, self-determination and security of nations against the aggression of powerful neighbours and superpowers.

The Prime Minister: Acceptable international rules to protect peace and stability already exist, for instance in the United Nations Charter.

Namibia

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what recent talks she has had with other Heads of Government involved in the arrangements for the independence of Namibia.

The Prime Minister: Namibia was discussed briefly at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver. I refer the hon. Member to the statement on Southern Africa, issued by the Heads of Government, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Angola

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what information has she recently received about incursions of South African troops into Angola; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In a statement on 3 October the South African Defence Minister confirmed that there was a South African military presence in Angola. We have made clear to the South African Government, both before and since that statement, that we condemn cross-border violations from whatever quarter. We consider that the problems of the region should be solved peacefully by negotiation.

National School for Public Administration

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to create a national school for public administration to which local government employees should have access.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Thursday 22 October at column *845*. Opportunities already exist for local government employees to undertake training jointly with civil servants, for example through the Cabinet Office's top management programme, or courses run by the Civil Service College.

South Africa

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister how many of the countries attending the Commonwealth meeting recently held at Vancouver made proposals for, or supported, the selective sanctions against the South African Government, and if she will list them.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my statement in the House on 22 October, columns 921-22.

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if she discussed the situation in South Africa during her recent contacts with the German Chancellor and with the French Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to disclose the details of my discussions with other heads of state.

Voting

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to increase voting during general and local elections and to reduce the number of abstentions.

The Prime Minister: It is up to each elector to decide whether or not to vote. The Government are committed to ensuring that the arrangements for elections enable electors to exercise their right to vote. We have extended the right to vote in parliamentary, European Parliament and local government elections to holidaymakers and others unable to vote in person.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if she will urgently seek the postponement of the application of poll tax on Scotland and instruct a review of similar proposals for England and Wales with the same objective.

The Prime Minister: No.

Open Government

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking as regards open government; and what areas have been given first priority for such purposes.

The Prime Minister: It remains the Government's policy that all Departments should make publicly available as much information as possible whilst preserving the confidentiality essential to the effective working of government.

Commonwealth

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister how many Commonwealth countries' representatives attended the recent meeting in Vancouver.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the communiqué, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. Forty-five countries were represented at Vancouver, 37 at Head of Government level.

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister (1) what was the number of people who were members of the British delegation, including the supporting staff, during the Commonwealth meetings of Heads of Government held at London, Lusaka, Melbourne, New Delhi, Bahamas and Vancouver, respectively;

(2) what was the number of people serving the press and public relations requirements of the British delegations at the Commonwealth conferences at London, Lusaka, Melbourne, New Delhi, Bahamas and Vancouver respectively;

(3) if she will list the names of the persons serving the press and public relation requirements of Her Majesty's Government at the Commonwealth meeting in Vancouver;

(4) if she will list the members of the British delegation and all their supporting staff who attended the Vancouver meeting of the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister: The numbers of the official delegation, including press officials, together with those of the accompanying support staff during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings concerned were as follows:

	Official delegation	*Support staff*
London 1977	22	17
Lusaka 1979	14	40
Melbourne 1981	15	42
New Delhi 1983	16	29
The Bahamas 1985	13	36
Vancouver 1987	15	38

The figures for support staff include security personnel and other technical staff. They take account of the fact that some meetings were held in venues other than capitals or where our residential diplomatic mission was small. They do not include personal protection officers. It would not be appropriate to list the names and responsibilities of individual members of the delegations.

Film Finances Ltd.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister is she will dismiss the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), for failing to investigate the affairs of Film Finances Ltd. after Mr. Justice Knox found that there was a prima facie evidence of crime under the Companies Act.

The Prime Minister: No.

Fraud

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will instruct Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate alleged fraud under the Companies Acts when hon. Members of Parliament send them evidence;

(2) if she will instruct Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate alleged fraud under the Companies Act when High Court judges find that there is prima facie evidence of such fraud.

The Prime Minister: Decisions on Companies Act investigations are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and not for me.

Governmental Messages

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister whether it is normal practice for messages from Her Majesty's Government to Presidents of other nations to come from the Prime Minister or from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The Prime Minister: This is judged on the circumstances of each case and the nature of the message.

Mr. Frank Larsen and others

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister in what capacity *(a)* Mr. John Farmer, *(b)* Mr. Frank Larsen, *(c)* Mr. Dennis Evans, *(d)* Mr. John Larsen, *(e)* Mr. Jonathan Wheatley, *(f)* Mr. Hans Christian Dahl, *(g)* Mr. Johann Neimoller, *(h)* Mr. Viggo Oerbale, *(i)* Mr. Gerard Horeau, and *(j)* Mr. Pierre Ferrari are, or have been, employed by Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on Friday 23 October at columns 1095-96.

Intergovernmental Organisations

Mr. George Foulkes asked the Prime Minister, if she will list all the intergovernmental organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member, giving for each one which Department has primary responsibility, which other Departments are involved, and in what ways, and whether Her Majesty's Government has a permanent diplomatic mission at the relevant organisation's headquarters.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to her reply,* 21 October, c. *734]*: A list of international organisations for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible for 1987-88 was published in class II, vote 2, sections A and B, and vote 5, section C, of the Supply Estimates. A list of other international organisations to which the United Kingdom subscribes for 1987-88 will be found in the appropriate Supply Estimates of the relevant Government Departments. Copies of all these documents are available in the Library of the House.

We have permanent diplomatic missions at the following:

Conference on Disarmament (Geneva)
Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) (Vienna)
Council of Europe (Strasbourg)
European Community (Brussels)
International Atomic Energy Agency (Vienna)
International Civil Aviation Organisation (Montreal)
IMF-IBRD (Washington)
North Atlantic Council (NATO) (Brussels)
OECD (Paris)
United Nations (Geneva)
United Nations (New York)
United Nations (Vienna)
MBFR (Vienna)
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (Nairobi)
United Nations Environment Programme (Nairobi)
United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (Vienna)
Asian Development Bank (Manila)
Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (Rome)

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Skimmed Milk Powder

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the next Council meeting the export of radioactive skimmed milk powder from Germany to Ghana as part of the European Economic Community policy of humanitarian food aid; and if he will seek to establish whether the skimmed milk powder came from Eastern Europe.

Mr. Chris Patten: Two separate consignments of milk powder have recently been received in Ghana, one from Czechoslovakia and one from the European Community. I have no information on the former.

The EC food aid consignment consisted of 750 tonnes from the Federal Republic of Germany. Results of three tests carried out by and on behalf of the European Commission indicated that the consignment was well within the permitted safety limits for radioactivity in milk powder. However, in view of Ghanaian claims to the contrary, the Commission has agreed with the Ghanaian Government that a further independent test be undertaken by the International Atomic Energy Authority in Vienna. The outcome of this test is not yet available. I have no present plans to raise this in the Council of Ministers.

St. Helena

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to give approval for the ordering of a new vessel for the St. Helena service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 21 October at column *747*.

ENERGY

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion and amount of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets with equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, and *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act; and what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Parkinson: No separate working time or proportion of departmental budget is allocated to the equal opportunities officer in my Department for equal opportunities duties.

The equal opportunities officer in my Department is the head of the branch dealing with personnel matters. He is responsible for the recruitment and career management of staff, pay and conditions of service, welfare and training.

The equal opportunities officer and his deputy meet with those from other Departments on many occasions, both formal and informal, throughout the year.

Cabinet Office guidelines on training, in accordance with section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, have been issued to the equal opportunities officer in my Department and to the training section for which he is responsible.

Attention of all staff has been drawn to my Department's aim to expand opportunities for part-time work and job sharing and every effort is made to meet individuals' wishes.

Maternity leave, in accordance with Civil Service-wide provisions, is granted to women in my Department. While my Department has no authority to grant paternity leave, requests for special leave in cases of domestic of family difficulty are considered as sympathetically as possible.

Oil Exports

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will reconsider the ban on oil exports to Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my noble Friend the then Minister of State for Energy on 8 February 1982, at column 249 of the *Official Report*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General (1) what policy the Crown Prosecution Service has developed in respect of applications for prosecution costs;

(2) what policy the Crown Prosecution Service has developed in respect of the prosecution of petty offences;

(3) what policy the Crown Prosecution Service has developed in respect of breach proceedings;

(4) what policy the Crown Prosecution Service has developed in respect of supplying of information to the probation service;

(5) what at the latest date available, was the establishment of lawyers, lawyers' clerks and administrators in each of the 31 areas of the Crown Prosecution Service;

(6) what is the estimated annual cost of employing agent lawyers to cover shortages in Crown prosecution staffing.

The Attorney-General: Because of recent problems with the printing and distribution of the Order Paper, I have only been made aware of these questions this afternoon. I will reply to the hon. Member when the relevant information has been obtained.

Salmon Poaching

Mr. Onslow asked the Attorney-General what guidance the Lord Chancellor has sent to magistrates in England and Wales on sentencing policy for offenders convicted of salmon poaching since the passing of the Salmon Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor does not issue guidance on the sentencing to magistrates but when speaking to members of the Magistrates' Association, of which he is the president, he may in that capacity express his personal view on the approach to sentencing for particular types of offence. Since the passing of the Salmon Act 1986, the Lord Chancellor has not spoken to magistrates on the sentencing of offenders convicted of salmon poaching.

Mr. Frank Larsen and Others (Prosecution)

Mr. Adley asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the failure of the Director of Public Prosecutions to offer evidence in the case of alleged conspiracy to kidnap a senior official of the African National Congress in London.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made on Friday 23 October at column 1095.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Extradition

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests he has had in each year since 1979 to extradite persons residing in the United Kingdom to face charges of alleged war crimes; how many extraditions have taken place; what steps he plans to take to investigate such allegations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Since 1979 the United Kingdom has received three requests from the Soviet Union for the extradition of people accused of war crimes. In 1986 two requests were received, one relating to a person who had died and the other to a person whose whereabouts were unknown. One request has been received this year. However, in the absence of an extradition treaty it is not possible to extradite to the Soviet Union. We are examining documentary material provided to us by the Simon Wiesenthal centre which contains serious allegations about the wartime activities of three people. In the light of our assessment of this material we shall consider what action is open to us.

Police (Multi-racial Relationships)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that all police officers are instructed in the complexities of multi-racial relationships and in understanding the basic social needs of different ethnic, sex and religious groups.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is already our policy that all police officers should receive training which comprehends community and race relations issues.

Privacy

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the increased sophistication of electronic means of communication and surveillance, he will ask Her Majesty's Government's legal officers to prepare urgently proposals for legal and constitutional protection of the rights to privacy.

Mr. Renton: No.

"Legislating for Change"

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received the Equal Opportunities Commission report on "Legislating for Change"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Equal Opportunities Commission is still considering their proposals for change to the sex discrimination legislation.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the visit to Liverpool on Thursday 22 October by the Minister of State, Home Office.

Mr. Renton: In Liverpool I visited the passport office and an independent television production company in my capacities as Minister with responsibility for the passport department and for broadcasting.

Mr. Gecas

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest position regarding his inquiries into the allegations of Nazi war crimes made against Mr. Gecas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 17 July the Simon Wiesenthal centre presented documentary material containing serious allegations against Mr. Gecas and two others. This material is still under examination. In the light of our assessment we shall consider what action is open to us.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the numbers refused admission as visitors into the United Kingdom in the last five years due to involvement in wartime Nazi organisations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if wartime involvement in the Waffen SS is a reason for refusing someone admission into the United Kingdom as a visitor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Decisions on the admission of passengers to the United Kingdom are taken on arrival here and on the basis of the circumstances of the individual case. A passenger may be refused leave to enter on the grounds that his exclusion is conducive to the public good and factors such as that referred to by the hon. Member may be relevant to that decision. Central records are however not maintained of the detailed reasons for the refusal of leave to enter to passengers seeking entry as visitors.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is now his policy towards the admission into the United Kingdom as visitors who are leading members of the French National Front; and what representations he received over the proposed visit by the leader of that organisation.

Mr. Renton: Decisions on the admission of passengers to the United Kingdom are taken on their arrival here and on the basis of the circumstances of the individual case. We have received a small number of letters opposing the recent proposed visit of M. Le Pen, of which two were from hon. Members.

Gun Shops

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations concerning siting of gun shops; if he has any proposals for the introduction of regulations concerning their siting, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Representations have been received from time to time about the sale of firearms in particular locations. The Firearms Act 1968 contains no provisions relating to the siting of gun shops, which is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

It does, however, contain strict provisions for the registration and control of firearms dealers and a chief officer may refuse to register an applicant if he is satisfied that the applicant cannot be permitted to carry on business without danger to the public safety or to the peace.

Prison Population

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total prison population for England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 October 1987, the total prison population in England and Wales was 47,494. This does not include 1,298 in police cells.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population for England and Wales for each of the following dates *(a)* 1 June, *(b)* 1 July, *(c)* 1 August, *(d)* 1 September and *(e)* 1 October.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information is given in the table.

Population of Prison Department establishments[2] *in England and Wales, May to September 1987*

Number of Persons

Date	*Population*
1987	
May 31	49,255
June 30	50,265
July 31	50,226
August 31[1]	47,105
September 30	47,398

[1] Fall mainly due to the increase on 13 August 1987 in remission to one half for prisoners sentenced to up to 12 months.

[2] Excludes prisoners in police cells.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the certified normal accommodation and the actual prison population for each of the following prisons for the latest date available:

Bedford, Birmingham, Cardiff, Gartree, Holloway, Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Lewes, Lincoln, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Wakefield, Wandsworth.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 October, the certified normal accommodation and population of the establishments listed were as follows:

Establishment	*Certified normal accommodation*	*Population*
Bedford	176	346
Birmingham	592	1,190
Cardiff	340	551
Gartree	315	314
Holloway	479	461
Hull	367	629
Leeds	642	1,306
Leicester	200	396
Lewes	364	567
Lincoln	359	691
Liverpool	967	1,233
Manchester	969	1,667
Nottingham	202	298
Oxford	127	233
Reading	178	334
Wakefield	756	726
Wandsworth	1,266	1,286

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison in Yorkshire at the most recent count.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 October 1987, the total prison population in Yorkshire was 3,977.

Prisons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has any future plans for the following prison establishments *(a)* Kelmsfield House Oxfordshire, *(b)* Foston Hall, Derbyshire, *(c)* Blantyre House, Kent, *(d)* Nedonsley, County Durham and *(e)* North Sea camp, Lincolnshire.

Mr. John Patten: It is planned to bring North Sea camp into use as an open prison. With respect to the other establishments, the timing of their return to normal operation will be kept under review.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long have the following prison establishments remained unoccupied *(a)* Kelmsfield house, Oxfordshire, *(b)* Foston hall, Derbyshire, *(c)* Blantyre house, Kent, *(d)* Medomsley, County Durham and *(e)* North Sea camp, Lincolnshire.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Her Majesty's Youth Corrective Centre Campsfield house was temporarily closed on 28 September 1987.

(b) Her Majesty's Prison Foston hall became a non-residential establishment on 6 July 1987.

(c) Her Majesty's detention centre Blantyre House was temporarily closed on 6 July 1987.

(d) Her Majesty's Prison Medomsley is due to close temporarily on Monday 26 October 1987.

(e) Her Majesty's detention centre North Sea camp became a non-residential establishment on 21 September 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers, from what divisions, of what ranks, and at which locations, were receiving training on 22 October for duties in connection with the supervision and security of prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it remains his policy to implement the fresh start agreement reached with the Prison Officers Association insofar as it relates to the provision of extra staff with effect from February 1988.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. I remain committed to the provision of extra staff between now and 28 February 1988 and over the five years from 1 April 1988 in accordance with the terms of the fresh start agreement.

Grendon Prison

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to change the therapeutic regime at Grendon prison.

Mr. John Patten: No. As recommended by the advisory committee on the therapeutic regime at Grendon, the establishment continues to concentrate in the main on the provision of group therapy for prisoners clinically referred by prison medical officers.

Probation

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in the last three months about "Probation—The Next Five Years," a joint statement by the Central Council of Probation Committees, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation and the National Association of Probation Officers.

Mr. John Patten: Sixteen letters have been received from hon. Members on the subject. My right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the three organisations in August and discussed the statement with them.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he or other Ministers in his Department have made any recent visits to probation services in England and Wales; and if he has any plans to do so in the future.

Mr. John Patten: Since April this year the Home Secretary has visited probation services in north Wales (in April) and the west midlands (in October); I visited the Inner London probation service in July. My right hon. Friend plans to visit a day centre project in Norwich in March 1988; and I plan to visit the Hampshire and Oxfordshire services this month, Northumbria probation service in November and Hereford and Worcester probation service in January 1988.

Black Defendants

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many black defendants were received into prison during 1986.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the following table.

Ethnic origin	*Type of prisoner*	
	Untried	*Convicted* unsentenced*
White	45,959	13,913
West Indian, Guyanese, African	5,748	1,425

Ethnic origin	*Type of prisoner*	
	Untried	*Convicted unsentenced*
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	1,081	237
Chinese, Arab, Mixed Origin	1,167	305
Other, not recorded (including refusals)	1,514	248
Total[1]	55,469	16,128

[1] Total cannot be calculated by adding together receptions in category because some untried prisoners were subsequently received as convicted unsentenced.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Merseyside on 1 and 2 October, and again on 21 October. On the evening of 1 October I was a guest at the Merseyside senior police officers' mess dinner. On the following day I visited the police port unit, the main Bridewell and local police stations, and had discussions with the chief constable and senior officers at force headquarters about a range of policing issues. I had useful discussions with members of the Merseyside police authority.

I was pleased to speak at the first of the national crime prevention road shows at Knowsley on 21 October.

West Yorkshire (Police)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the number of police in west Yorkshire for each of the years 1974 to 1987, respectively.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

West Yorkshire Police

On 31 December	*Authorised police establishment*	*Actual strength*
1974	5,103	4,412
1975	5,104	4,547
1976	5,104	4,676
1977	5,104	4,616
1978	5,104	4,621
1979	5,104	4,799
1980	5,104	5,040
1981	5,154	5,147
1982	5,154	5,155
1983	5,154	5,116
1984	5,154	5,026
1985	5,154	5,049
1986	5,154	5,116
1987[1]	5,204	[2]5,219

[1] 31 August.

[2] Strength exceeded the establishment in August because the force had approval for 17 supernumerary posts for temporary purposes.

Defendants (Statistics)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of defendants who were remanded in custody during *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1986 and who were subsequently either found not guilty, not proceeded with or given a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is published in table 2.4 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1986" (Cm. 210).

Grants

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many section 11 applications are currently awaiting decision; how this compares with the number of applications awaiting decision in October 1986; what is the average time taken in reaching a decision on a section 11 application; and if Ministers consider personally all section 11 applications.

Mr. John Patten: There are currently under consideration 135 applications for section 11 grant in respect of 980 posts. At the end of October 1986 there were seven applications covering 14 posts outstanding. However, these figures are not directly comparable because there had been a moratorium on the acceptance of new applications between late March and the end of September 1986 while new arrangements for the administration of grant, which came into effect on 1 October 1986, were being prepared.

Since 1 October 1986 the average time taken to complete consideration of an application for grant has been just under three months. In general the aim is to complete consideration within this period but this depends on the number of posts applied for; what further information may be required from the local authority and whether advice needs to be sought from other Government Departments where they have an interest. All recommendations for approval of new posts are considered by Ministers.

Earl William

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the Earl William ship in Harwich, used for detaining asylum seekers, coming adrift in the recent storm.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to an answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 21 October at column *781*.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were being held on remand in England and Wales for the latest date available.

Mr. John Patten: On 30 September 1987, about 11,650 untried or convicted unsentenced prisoners were held in custody in England and Wales. This number included about 820 prisoners held in police cells, most of whom were untried or convicted unsentenced.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department *(a)* how many males are currently being held in police cells, *(b)* how many females are currently being held in police cells and *(c)* how many of the totals were sentenced prisoners for all police districts of England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 October 1987, the number of prisoners being held in police cells in all police areas in

England and Wales was 1,268 males and 30 females. Information relating to the numbers of sentenced prisoners in police cells is incomplete but of the 1,142 prisoners held by or on behalf of the Metropolitan police, 74 were sentenced.

Mr. Frank Larsen and Others

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Frank Larsen at the Regent Palace hotel on 9 July; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how the police established that a Ministry of Defence police warrant card in the possession of a Mr. Frank Larsen, charged in connection with alleged conspiracy to kidnap members of the African National Congress, had been forged; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps have been taken to recover classified material found in the possession of Frank Larsen at his home and premises he has occupied; and if he will make a statement;

(4) when Her Majesty's Government first became aware of an alleged conspiracy to kidnap members of the African National Congress in London;

(5) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to when all documents previously in the possession of Frank Larsen, John Larsen, Hans Christian Dahl, Viggo Oerbak, Jonathon Wheatley, Evan Dennis-Evans and Johann Neimoller will be returned to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on Friday 23 October 1987.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to on what grounds Frank Larsen, John Larsen, Evan Dennis-Evans and Jonathon Wheatley were held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: All four men were arrested and detained under section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 on suspicion of having been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Space Programme

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting on 19 October between officials of his department and the Advisory Council on Science and Technology on the subject of the space programme.

Mr. Butcher: Officials from my Department attended a meeting arranged on 19 October by the Advisory Council on Science and Technology with representatives of various sections of the space community.

A number of presentations were made and discussed, which were useful to the advisory council in forming a view on the space programme.

Airbus

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total sum contributed from public funds in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain respectively to the Airbus project; what assessment he has made of the viability and potential profitability of the project; and if he will be attending the forthcoming meeting with the United States trade representative, Mr. Yeutter, to discuss the project.

Mr. Butcher: Figures are not available for the total public contribution to all Airbus projects. The United Kingdom Government will provide up to £40 million in launch aid to enable British Aerospace to participate in the A330/A340 project. A full and critical project appraisal was carried out to determine that the project had sound prospects of achieving commercial viability. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will attend the meeting on 27 October between Dr. Yeutter, Commissioner de Clercq and Airbus Ministers.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what deficit in the manufacturing trade the United Kingdom experienced with the European Economic Community in the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available; and what were the total figures of manufactured goods exported to and imported from the European Economic Community during that 12-month period.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months to September 1987, exports of manufactures to the European Community amounted to £27·7 billion and imports to £38·5 billion resulting in a crude deficit of £10·8 billion. These figures are on the overseas trade statistic basis: imports, but not exports, include the cost of insurance and freight.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate jobshare, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Butcher: In the Department of Trade and Industry

(a) the equal opportunity officer (EOO) has spent about 50 per cent. of his working time in the past year on equal opportunities duties;

(b) the EOO is also the chief welfare officer and departmental nominated officer for staff restaurant matters;

(c) there is no departmental budget specifically for equal opportunities work; those responsible for relevant activities (eg training, recruitment) make appropriate provision in their budgets;

(d) the EOO meets all other EOOs at leat once a year: in addition there are ad hoc meetings and seminars of groups of EOOs on particular subjects;

(e) the departmental training officer and the EOO have received central guidance on all aspects of promoting equal opportunities including positive action which may be taken to provide "minority sex" training under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975;

(f) line managers have been encouraged to identify part-time working opportunities and staff to apply for such posts: maternity leave is available as well as special leave, where appropriate, to cover the care of children.

Inner Cities

Mr. Wray asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contingency plans Her Majesty's Government have in the event of failure of their appeal to private investors to help the inner cities crisis.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The private sector, and private investors, are already fully committed to the inner cities through a wide range of Government programmes which include their participation. I expect their support to develop and grow. We need to give it every encouragement, not speculate about what might happen if it were not there.

WALES

Sheep Sector

10. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet representatives of the farming unions in Wales to discuss the future of the sheep sector.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met the National Farmers Union in Wales on 28 September and I shall be meeting the Farmers Union of Wales in the near future. I intend to keep in close contact with the leaders of both unions during any negotiations affecting the sheepmeat regime.

Wales Advisory Body

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends meeting representatives of the Wales Advisory Body to discuss his proposals for further and higher education in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The next meeting of the committee of the Wales Advisory Body, which I chair, takes place on 6 November.

Labour Statistics

16. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the percentage of jobs in Wales which are in firms whose headquarters are outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Walker: An estimated 22 per cent. of jobs in manufacturing industry in Wales are in firms whose headquarters are outside the United Kingdom, reflecting the considerable success of our inward investment activity. Figures for non-manufacturing are not available.

17. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales: and if he will give the equivalent figure for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 10 September 1987, 8,649, 25,465 and 154,996 persons were unemployed in Newport district, Gwent and Wales respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the fall in unemployment in Wales during the past 12 months; and what has been the increase in notified job vacancies during the same period.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between 11 September 1986 and 10 September 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in Wales fell by 25,374. Between 5 September 1986 and 4 September 1987 the number of vacancies notified to jobcentres and careers offices in Wales increased by 357.

Craig-y-nos Castle

19. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to stop the authorisation of the sale of Craig-y-nos Castle by his Department, until he can guarantee the continuation of cultural activities there.

Mr. Peter Walker: Craig-y-nos Castle has a grade II* listing. It has been put to me that this may be correct for the main building, but that the theatre should have a higher listing. I have looked into this and decided that the theatre should indeed be listed grade I, but that the remainder of the building should be listed as grade II.

It is important that this hospital should be sold so that the resources released can be made available for the benefit of patient care in the Health Service. I hope that when it is put up for sale with this revised listing a purchaser will be found who can make effective use of this very important building.

Industrial Development

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure on industrial support and development in Wales between 1979 and 1983 and since 1983 to date.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance and regional development grants in Wales for the financial years 1979-80 to 1982-83 and 1983-84 to 1986-87 is as follows:

1979-80 to 1982-83 £ million	*1983-84 to 1986-87 £ million*
452	445

Welsh Language

18. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in favour of Welsh being included as a subject in the curriculum binding upon schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received about 100 representations which refer to the position of the Welsh language within the national curriculum, of which approximately three-quarters favour the inclusion of Welsh as a core or foundation subject throughout Wales. We are still considering our response to these representations.

Contraception

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many general practitioners in Wales hold the joint committee on contraception certificate in family planning;

(2) how many and which health authorities provide designated young people's birth control services in Wales;

(3) how many *(a)* National Health Service family planning clinics and *(b)* general practitioner health centres are designated as training centres for family planning in Wales.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available centrally.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment *(a)* by contraceptive method and *(b)* by source of treatment clinic or general practitioner in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: The available information for Wales is given in the following table. It is only possible to provide a split between IUD and other methods for patients receiving contraceptive services from general practitioners.

Persons receiving advice and treatment

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Family planning clinics[1]					
Oral contraceptives	43,163	45,937	45,565	42,134	39,767
IUD	11,512	10,754	11,156	11,348	10,280
Cap/diaphragm	4,539	4,392	5,309	5,295	5,005
Sheath	10,449	11,363	13,242	12,739	12,425
Chemicals	895	698	963	755	770
Rhythm	17	25	23	11	12
Female sterilization	68	85	81	675	666
Vasectomy	356	155	234	816	806
Other	1,744	2,336	2,421	2,432	2,617
None	3,731	3,695	4,153	4,623	4,579
Total	76,474	79,440	83,147	80,828	76,927
General medical practitioners[2]					
IUD	3,973	4,026	4,590	5,445	5,489
Other	101,726	107,412	114,069	113,555	122,838
Total	105,699	111,438	118,659	119,000	128,327

[1] Method recommended, chosen, or already in use at time of first visit during the year (including domiciliary service).

[2] Patients for whom payment was made during the quarter ending 30th March each year.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the rates of conception (i) inside, and (ii) outside marriage, by age of women, in each health authority in Wales in 1985.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available at a district health authority level.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the rates of conception and resultant maternity or abortion by age of women in 1985 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table. Details of the definitions and methods of estimation used were published in OPCS Monitor FMI 87/2 on 2 September 1987.

Conception rates per 1000 women resident in Wales: 1985

Age of mother at conception	*All conceptions*	*Leading to maternities*	*Leading to abortions under 1967 Act*
All ages[1]	73·5	62·2	11·3
Under 20[1]	66·4	47·9	18·6
20-24	125·1	109·4	15·7
25-29	135·2	123·0	12·1
30-34	70·0	61·2	8·8
35-39	24·2	17·5	6·7
40 and over[1]	6·2	3·1	3·1

[1] Rates for women of all ages, under 20 and 40 and over are based on the populations of women aged 15-44, 15-19 and 40-44 respectively.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of family planning clinics and family planning clinic sessions in each district health authority in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: The following table provides the number of premises used regularly at year-end by district health authorities for family planning sessions and the number of sessions held during the year.

Health Authority	*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*	
	Premises	*Sessions*	*Premises*	*Sessions*	*Premises*	*Sessions*	*Premises*	*Sessions*	*Premises*	*Sessions*
Clwyd	17	1,423	17	1,407	17	1,407	19	1,398	19	1,414
East Dyfed	10	406	10	391	11	462	11	471	11	505
Pembrokeshire	5	247	6	269	5	246	5	267	5	276
Gwent	38	2,306	38	2,382	38	2,407	38	2,367	35	2,333
Gwynedd	22	924	28	961	28	975	28	957	27	939
Mid Glamorgan	35	2,073	35	2,172	36	2,172	35	2,104	35	2,001
Powys	7	202	7	208	7	210	7	208	7	203
South Glamorgan	20	1,778	20	1,786	20	1,711	20	1,676	20	1,649
West Glamorgan	22	1,066	24	1,111	23	1,168	23	1,097	21	1,119

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a detailed breakdown of publicly funded subsidies to private residential establishments and nursing homes by authority in Wales for each of the last five years and the estimates for 1987.

Mr. Grist: The Department has no general powers to subsidise private residential establishments and nursing homes but a small number of projects have been supported through the urban programme and by means of urban development grant on the normal criteria applying to those schemes. I will write to the hon. Gentleman giving details.

Forestry Planting Licences

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for forestry planting licences in Wales were objected to by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* statutory bodies and *(c)* other bodies, respectively, in each of the last five years and 1987 to date; and how many were refused as a result.

Mr. Peter Walker: Only local authorities and other statutory bodies are formally consulted by the Forestry Commission over applications for grant aid for planting. For the years in question the information is as follows:

Year	*Number of applications objected to*	*Number of objections from Local authorities*	*Other statutory bodies*	*Decisions taken on these applications*
1982	—	—	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—
1984	4	4	2	All refused
1985	2	2	2	Both refused
1986	1	1	1	Refused
1987 to date	5	3	4	Two refused One approved Two pending

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each Welsh district health authority area the number of abortions undertaken in each year since 1967.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of legally induced abortions, notified under the Abortion Act 1967, by district health authority area of woman's usual residence for the years 1974-1986, are given in the following table:

Legal abortions to Welsh residents

	District/Area Health Authority of Usual Residence									
Year	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Pembrokeshire*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
1968[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,012
1969	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,530
1970	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,835
1971	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,798
1972	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,222
1973	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,116
1974	506	616		757	392	928	201	621	888	4,909
1975	510	561		817	354	846	188	669	887	4,832
1976	574	588		730	398	866	207	637	865	4,865
1977	664	599		685	398	935	187	660	880	5,008
1978	764	634		800	457	1,016	222	856	867	5,616
1979	792	463	246	872	484	1,237	232	832	1,051	6,209
1980	840	456	251	990	474	1,164	240	898	978	6,291
1981	832	501	259	968	558	1,055	235	908	1,025	6,341
1982	828	473	228	923	468	981	223	924	1,054	6,102
1983	889	492	237	811	477	911	233	923	891	5,864
1984	915	493	246	969	514	1,006	245	919	930	6,237
1985	1,008	514	253	1,015	507	1,109	257	1,001	933	6,597
1986	1,014	561	246	921	544	1,192	237	1,040	991	6,746

[1] (27 April-31 December).

Sources: "Abortion Statistics" Series AB, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1974-1986).
"Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales: Supplement on Abortion" (1968-1973).

Gynaecological Operations

Mr. Nicholas Bennet asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list by each Welsh district health authority the number of outstanding gynaecological operations waiting to be performed;

(2) if he will list by each district health authority the number of gynaecological operations waiting to be performed.

Mr. Grist: The following table gives the number of people on the gynaecological in-patient waiting list as at 31 March 1987:

Health Authority	*Waiting list (31 March 1987)*
Clwyd	701
East Dyfed	205
Pembrokeshire	187
Gwent	745
Gwynedd	247
Mid Glamorgan	1,026
Powys	—
South Glamorgan	502
West Glamorgan	880

Information on the number of these people who are waiting for an operation is not available centrally.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Curates

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what are the average current pay and emoluments of curates; what were the comparable figures in real terms five, 10, 15 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The current average stipend of an assistant curate is £7,469. In addition, he is provided with a house free of rent, rates, repairs and insurance. The comparative figures are given below. They show a substantial improvement in real terms over the period.

	Average stipend of Assistant Curates £	*Equivalent at April 1987 prices* £	*Average stipend in 1987* £	*Increase in real terms* *Per cent.*
1987[1]	7,469	7,469	7,469	—
1982	4,914	6,173	7,469	+21
1977	2,039	4,542	7,469	+64
1972	1,000	4,750	7,469	+57
1967[2]	800	5,500	7,469	+36

[1] For 1987-88 the recommended four year incremental scale for assistant curates is £6,966-£7,475.

[2] There was no national scale in 1967 nor comparable statistics. However, the record indicates that the average stipend of assistant curates was in the region of £800 (or £5,500 at April 1987 prices).

DEFENCE

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any special arrangements have been made for compensation and restoration in relation to any damage arising from Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Yes. In view of the scale of Exercise Purple Warrior, arrangements are being made to ensure that damage repair units and suitably qualified claims assessors will be on hand throughout the exercise period. They will either carry out any necessary repairs, or discuss the arrangements for any necessary compensation, as rapidly and effectively as possible.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the arrangements for monitoring of Exercise Purple Warrior by United Kingdom civil authorities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no arrangements for Exercise Purple Warrior to be monitored by civil authorities and no request for such arrangements has been received, although those authorities most closely involved in the exercise have been fully consulted in the course of exercise planning. Should problems arise which require further consultations with them, these will, of course, take place.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that the south-west of Scotland will not be used for further major exercises after Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. South-west Scotland will continue to be one of the areas which we will use for military training. However, it is unlikely that another exercise on the scale of Exercise Purple Warrior will be carried out for some years in the same area.

British Servicemen (Nuclear Tests)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any request from the National Radiological Protection Board for the names and last recorded addresses of British service personnel involved in British nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes, the National Radiological Protection Board has been given information on test participants from MOD service records. These normally contain the last recorded address of ex-service men.

Mr. Frank Larsen and Others (Prosecution)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Mr. Viggo Oerbak ever stayed at the Chelsea barracks in the capacity of a person employed by the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have not identified anyone of that name as having stayed at the Chelsea barracks.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions Messrs. *(a)* Viggo Oerbak, *(b)* Frank Larsen, *(c)* John Larsen, *(d)* Hans Christian Dahl and *(e)* Johann Neimoller have met serving British officers in the course of official duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have found no evidence of any such meetings.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Western Isles who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in East Lothian who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Aberdeen, South constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Cunninghame, North who have been refused benefit following a restart interview.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants at Ayr and Cumnock who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the scheme.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of claimants in the

Glasgow, Pollok constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Midlothian constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish an estimate of the number of claimants in Kilmarnock and Loudoun who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Dunfermline, West constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of claimants in Glasgow and Scotland, respectively, who have been removed from the register of unemployed persons following a restart interview in each month since restart began.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants in *(a)* Aberdeen, North constituency and *(b)* Aberdeen have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the beginning of the restart scheme.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the constituency of Falkirk, West who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Glasgow, Maryhill who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the constituency of Fife, Central who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Livingston who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Paisley, South constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the constituency of Cunninghame, South who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Monklands, East, who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the scheme.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the constituency of East Kilbride who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Dundee, East constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the restart scheme.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Dundee, West constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Dumbarton constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Paisley, North who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde constituency who have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

Scientists

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many scientists from other countries other than Britain worked in Scotland for more than four months for each year since 1975.

Mr. Lee: This information is not collated centrally.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of job vacancies in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area for the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who will reply as soon as possible.

Community Programme

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions in England and Wales since 1984 for offences relating to the fraudulent misuse or misappropriation of money advanced by the Manpower Services Commission in connection with community programme projects.

Mr. Lee: Since 1984 there have been 16 prosecutions, resulting in 10 convictions and one acquittal, with five cases still to be determined. The Manpower Services Commission vigorously investigates any allegations of misuse of public funds on the community programme, referring serious cases to the police and seeking recovery of the monies involved.

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the staff of a supermarket would be employed under the revised community programme.

Mr. Lee: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Standard Chartered Bank

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date he expects the publication of the results of the Bank of England's investigation into recent affairs of Standard Chartered bank.

Mr. Lilley: The inspectors appointed by the Bank of England under section 17 of the Banking Act 1979 have not yet completed their report. The findings contained in this report will be subject to Banking Act confidentiality requirements and it will be for the Bank of England to decide after consideration of the report what further action to take.

Child Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing for families with one to four children the income break-even levels, in pound sterling per week and as percentage of average male manual earnings, at which child benefit entitlement is the same as income tax liability.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October, c. *794*]: The information is in the table.

Levels of income at which child benefit entitlement equals income tax liability[1], *1987-88*

Number of Children	*Break-even levels of income*	
	£ per week	*As percentage of average male manual earnings*[2]
1	99·83	51·8
2	126·68	65·7
3	153·54	79·6
4	180·39	93·5

[1] Assuming husband in employment and no wife's earnings.

[2] Of full time males aged over 21.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he proposes any changes in the PEP regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have decided to make a number of changes to the regulations on personal equity plans designd to simplify the running of the scheme. The changes to take effect from 1 January 1988 are:

(i) Plan managers will be required to provide plan holders with copies of the report and accounts of each company only if the plan holder opts to receive them. Discretionary plan managers will also be required to provide a six monthly statement explaining why they have bought and sold particular shares.

(ii) Cash payments into PEPs above the £2,400 limit may be made in order to take up the rights issues or other entitlements arising from beneficial ownership of shares, provided the shares were purchased before the announcement of the rights issue or other entitlements.

(iii) The time period for which cash may be held after the first year of a plan is to be increased from 28 to 31 days.

(vi) A minor tehnical change will ensure that, as always intended, the CGT exemption should in all cases apply only to capital gains over and above the market price at the time the shares are purchased into the PEP.

I shall in due course table draft regulations to bring these changes into effect.

ENVIRONMENT

Improvement Grants

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the 1983 survey of improvement grants referred to in the Green Paper "Home Improvements—a New Approach", Cmnd 95B.

Mr. Waldegrave: A summary of the main findings of the Department's distribution of grant inquiry was published in May 1985 as an annex to the Green Paper on home improvement policy. A further report will be published as soon as possible.

Enterprise Boards

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what his policy is towards enterprise boards; what plans he has to encourage their activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The establishment of enterprise boards and other similar bodies is one means by which local authorities have made a contribution to local economic development. Their activities are relevant to recommendations of the Widdicombe committee which I am considering.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Ridley: *(a)* My Department has two equal opportunities officers, one for the central part of the Department (shared with the Department of Transport) and one for the Property Services Agency. Both are grade 5 heads of division. No specific proportion of their time is allocated to any of their functions. They are supported by six staff who work full-time on equal opportunities matters and have no other responsibilities.

(b) The equal opportunities officers themselves have wide ranging responsibilities for personnel management policies and services to staff.

(c) Every member of staff with management responsibilities is involved in the implementation of equal opportunities policy. It is not possible to assign a specific cost to the work.

(d) The equal opportunities officers and their staff have frequent meetings, both formal and informal, with their counterparts from other Government Departments.

(e) No specific guidelines have been issued.

(f) All requests for part-time working and job sharing are met wherever possible. Special leave arrangements exist to help staff deal with domestic responsibilities. Explanatory material has been published and made available to all staff.

Rate-capped Authorities

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those rate-capped authorities which have applied for redetermination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has received applications for a redetermination of their 1988-89 expenditure levels from the London boroughs of Southwark and Tower Hamlets. He expects to announce his decisions on these applications in December.

Weather Radars

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent his discussion document, "An Outline National Response Plan: Incidents involving a release of radioactivity to the environment: Monitoring and Data Assessment" of July 1987 takes account of the advice given by the Meteorological Office in its annual report 1986, to the effect on the inclusion of Scotland in the network of weather radars provided for the rest of the United Kingdom and what would be the cost of such inclusion.

Mr. Moynihan: In formulating the national response plan it was acknowledged that weather radar would be helpful in identifying areas most likely to be affected by fall-out in rain. The programmes of the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Defence now provide for the installation of three weather radar stations in Scotland in the early 1990s.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what detailed and researched information he has about the likely increased costs required by the community charge, as compared with the costs of collecting the present rates.

Mr. Howard: My officials are discussing with the local authority associations and others the likely cost of operating the new system. The cost to each local authority will depend largely on its success in reducing unit costs.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make compensation available to local authorities in the event of serious delays in the collection of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: There is no reason to expect such delays.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will detail the measures to be taken for the protection from abuse of the information about citizens and their families for the application of the community charge;

(2) what legal provisions he proposes to introduce to deal with abuse by people involved in the gathering of information for the poll tax with the knowledge so obtained.

Mr. Howard: I have no reason to believe that there will be any abuse by community charge registration officers of the information they obtain. The Data Protection Act 1984 places obligations on those who record and use personal data and gives rights to individuals about whom data are held.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures will he adopt in order to avoid potentially regressive effects of the community charge in England and Wales.

Mr. Howard: The Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) demonstrates that the community charge will be less regressive than domestic rates for those with low incomes.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the extent to which the proposed community charge will result in retirement pensioners being displaced from their family households as a result of increases in the local taxation burden on that household.

Mr. Howard: None. There is no reason why a retirement pensioner should place a greater financial burden on a family household than at present. The community charge will be an individual liability and each individual or couple within the household will be able to apply for a rebate.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the numbers of people who will be required to pay 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *818*]: Figure J9 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) estimated total housing benefit case load (GB) at 7·66 million when the community charge was fully in place. Of that total it is estimated that 4½-5½ million cases would be entitled to 80 per cent. rebates. These estimates of housing benefit case load are derived from a computer model and are sensitive to community charge levels, to income support rates and to the arrangements for transition to the community charge. The estimate, therefore, gives a broad indication only of the possible outcome.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reproduce figure J7 of Cmnd 9714 "Paying for Local Government", showing households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge by *(a)* region, *(b)* local authority, and *(c)* parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *818*]: The figures show the numbers of households projected to experience different levels of changes in "household tax bills". The projections use 1985-86 data, the latest currently available for use within the tax benefit model. They are based on the illustrative community charges published on 29 June 1987. Overall, they show 9·9 million households with reduced houehold tax bills and 7·7 million with increases. These projections are sensitive to assumptions about spending and grant levels about which it is not possible to make projections up to 1994 when implementation will be complete. A further disaggregation of these figures by households type could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Projections for individual local authority and constituency areas are not possible because of the limitations of the sample survey data on which the projections are based.

Figure J7 of Green Paper Paying for Local Government by region based on 1985-86 data
Number of Gainers and Losers: Thousands of Households

	Northern (*'000s*)	*Yorkshire and Humberside* (*'000s*)	*East Midlands* (*'000s*)	*East Anglia* (*'000s*)	*Greater London* (*'000s*)	*South East* (*'000s*)	*South Western* (*'000s*)	*West Midlands* (*'000s*)	*North Western* (*'000s*)	*England* (*'000s*)
POUNDS PER WEEK										
Losers										
10+	12	19	2	—	182	1	1	—	6	221
5-10	106	158	29	3	239	16	12	14	92	668
2-5	294	438	172	39	387	154	139	124	359	2,107
1-2	152	250	160	38	251	207	116	116	218	1,507
0-1	338	510	307	123	396	396	293	309	515	3,186
Total losers	901	1,375	669	203	1,455	773	561	563	1,190	7,690
Gainers										
0-1	222	340	389	239	392	928	432	588	591	4,121
1-2	57	88	186	131	160	547	199	286	202	1,857
2-5	69	131	220	155	239	1,054	279	399	302	2,849
5-10	14	39	43	43	77	423	70	119	101	929
10+	4	1	9	4	21	83	9	17	12	160
Total gainers	366	600	847	572	890	3,034	989	1,409	1,208	9,916
PERCENTAGE OF NET INCOME										
Losers										
10+	—	—	—	—	14	—	—	1	1	16
5-10	16	25	—	—	183	—	1	—	4	230
2-5	234	350	67	8	367	41	37	33	207	1,343
1-2	251	407	176	40	340	141	137	121	320	1,933
0-1	400	593	426	155	550	591	386	409	658	4,171
Total losers	902	1,375	669	203	1,455	773	561	564	1,191	7,694
Gainers										
0-1	251	385	485	319	477	1,327	552	710	691	5,198
1-2	66	129	229	146	208	896	240	387	285	2,586
2-5	38	78	117	94	167	694	171	256	199	1,814
5-10	10	8	14	12	32	106	26	49	29	284
10+	2	—	2	1	5	12	1	7	4	33
Total gainers	366	600	847	572	890	3,034	989	1,409	1,208	9,916

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will construct a table in the same form as figure J7 on page 125 of "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) showing the numbers of adults living in each of the households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *818*]: The table shows estimated numbers of households gaining and losing by household type on the basis of illustrative community charge figures for 1985-86. It is estimated that there are 17·1 million adults in households which are gainers and 16·7 million adults in households which are losers.

Impact of the introduction of the full community charge in England

	Thousands of gainers and losers: household types				
Pounds per week	*Single pensioner*	*Other single adult*	*Two adults*	*Three + adults*	*All households*
Losers					
10 +	—	—	98	123	222
5 to 10	2	25	254	387	669
2 to 5	20	91	1,291	704	2,108
1 to 2	45	115	1,056	292	1,509
0 to 1	404	283	2,217	284	3,187
TOTAL LOSERS	471	515	4,916	1,791	7,695
Gainers					
0 to 1	1,233	634	1,994	257	4,122
1 to 2	185	295	1,248	128	1,856
2 to 5	365	514	1,823	146	2,849
5 to 10	125	150	597	56	928
10 +	12	16	114	17	160
TOTAL GAINERS	1,920	1,609	5,776	605	9,915

Housing

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were built by the private sector in the United Kingdom for each year since 1980; and what were the comparable figures each year from 1973 to 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of dwelling completions in the United Kingdom in the years 1976 to 1986 appear in table 6.1(f) of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1976-1986" and those for 1973 to 1975 in the corresponding table of the 1973-1983 edition. Copies are available in the Library.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific measures he proposes to solve the problems of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid for from public funds.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is for local authorities to decide how they discharge their duties towards homeless people. The Government have advised very strongly that they should not put families in bed and breakfast accommodation, and many local authorities do not do so. The Government have offered extra resources to local authorities to bring empty properties back into use to house homeless families. We have developed new mixed funding arrangements with housing associations specifically for the benefit of homeless people.

Inner Cities

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking in order to involve local authorities closely in his search for a solution to inner city problems.

Mr. Trippier: Fifty seven authorities in England are invited to prepare co-ordinated inner area programmes to address local needs. Seventy five per cent. of approved expenditure is supported by urban programme grant.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to produce an Ordnance Survey map showing the annual increase in the extent of blanket afforestation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Ordnance Survey is responsible for the official surveying and mapping of Great Britain. It aims to maintain and update the topographic survey of the country but does not produce maps of annual land use change.

Calderdale

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be replying to Calderdale council's request for a meeting to discuss the council's GREA for highways.

Mr. Chope: My hon. and learned Friend, the Minister for Local Government, will be writing very soon.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide additional finance for local authorities to enable them to reintroduce intermediate repair and improvement grants.

Mr. Waldegrave: Grant expenditure at some £400 million a year remains at a historically high level. It is for local authorities to decide how much to spend on grants for repairs and improvements within the sums available to them from their housing investment programme allocation and from prescribed capital receipts.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each of the 57 English local authorities currently entitled to make applications for urban programme funding, for each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88 where appropriate *(a)* the amount of revenue and capital allocations in cash and current prices and *(b)* the amount of grant paid in cash and current prices.

Mr. Ridley: I provided in reply to a question by the hon. Member on 30 June 1987, at column *64*, details of grant paid in current prices. I will write to the hon. Member with updated details and with the further information requested on urban programme allocations.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each authority in England for each of the three years 1984-85 to 1986-87 their maximum permitted spending under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 showing for each authority gross revenue spending, gross capital spending, total gross spending, and net total spending.

Mr. Ridley: I shall send the hon. Member a print-out showing the available information for each principal council in England (section 137 also applies to all parish councils).

Bolton

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up a pilot urban development corporation scheme in Bolton as part of his initiative for revitalising the inner cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall bear the suggestion in mind.

Birtenshaw Farm, Bolton

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the further representations by local residents against development at Birtenshaw farm, Bolton; and when he will be announcing his decision about the covenant against building on the site.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local residents have been told that all their representations will be taken into account. These and the statements made by the main parties are being considered but I am unable yet to say how soon a decision can be announced.

Planning Appeals (Costs)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give further consideration to the payment of objectors' costs at green belt planning appeals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The Government's response to the fifth report of the Environment Committee (Cm 43) set out in paragraphs 63-65 our reasons for concluding against public funding of costs incurred by objectors in appearing at public inquiries. I see no grounds for making an exception in respect of planning appeals for development in the green belt.

Gun Shops

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for the introduction of planning regulations which would enable local authorities to control the siting of gun shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Local planning authorities have power to control the siting of a gun shop if a development proposal entails either erecting a new building or making a material change of use of an existing building. A proposal to sell guns from a building already used for one of the purposes in class A1 of the schedule to the Use Classes Order 1987, Shops, would not require planning permission. The development control system is concerned with land use planning matters and not with the use to which goods may be put once sold.

Large Panel System Dwellings (Mortgages)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has met representatives of the Building Societies Association with regard to the mortgageability of large panel system dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My officials had a helpful discussion on this subject with representatives of the Building Societies Association on Wednesday 9 September and have since written to them confirming the points made at that meeting. The BSA had already publicised to its member societies the Building Research Establishment's findings on large panel properties and will be issuing further guidance to societies in due course.

Rail Link (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the possibility of a rail link between Bradford Interchange and the Bradford Foster Square rail route was taken into account when drawing up plans for a courthouse development in Bradford on the former Exchange station site; whether the local authority made representations for the rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The possibility of a rail link (between Bradford Interchange and Bradford Foster Square rail route) was drawn to the attention of the Property Services Agency by the city of Bradford metropolitan council when it accepted in outline form the proposed development of a courthouse on the former Exchange station site. The PSA examined the implications of such a link on the proposed courthouse development and reported that in its view the two developments could not share the same site. This view was endorsed by the council earlier this year when it authorised PSA to proceed with the courthouse development as programmed.

Storm Damage

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance he will provide for the London borough of Waltham Forest to replace trees destroyed in the recent storm.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on Wednesday 21 October.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance he will provide to the London borough of Waltham Forest to make safe the approximately 700 dangerous structures in the borough as a result of the recent storm.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on Wednesday 21 October. A letter has been sent to the chief executive of the London borough of Waltham Forest, giving details of the arrangements for claiming assistance under the Bellwin scheme. My right hon. Friend's announcement also dealt with the question of additional capital allocations for damage to buildings.

Right to Buy

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses purchased under the right-to-buy legislation have been repossessed due to failure to repay the mortgages *(a)* total, *(b)* as a percentage of those sold and *(c)* in total as a percentage of those sold, listed by county.

Mr. Waldegrave: The available information on properties taken into possession by building societies and local authorities does not distinguish former council dwellings from other housing.

Mini-UDCs

Mr. Cran asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish full details of the proposal he made relating to mini-UDCs; and when he is going to designate the first tranche of those areas that are to receive them.

Mr. Trippier: As soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Surplus Food and Wine

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the amount being expended weekly by the European Economic Community on the storage, distribution and disposal, respectively of surplus food and wine; and what were the comparable sums spent per week on these services five and 10 years previously.

Mr. MacGregor: The table sets out weekly community expenditure on technical and financing costs of public intervention, and on export refunds and internal disposal subsidies (including loss on sale out of intervention) for commodities now in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, olive oil, wine, beef, milk and milk products). Community expenditure on distribution of products is not separately identifiable.

£ million per week

	1977	*1982*	*1987*
Public intervention storage	2	5	17
Disposal	26	75	185

Source: 1977, 1982 EAGGF Financial Report.
1987 Supplementary and Amending Budget.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his Department equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. MacGregor: My departmental equal opportunities officer is a grade 5 post and does not have an allocation of time as such for equal opportunities duties, but a significent proportion of her duties do fall within the equal opportunities sphere. Apart from administering policy on equal opportunities, the other main duties include: pay and related matters, welfare, staff training, appointments and industrial relations. No separate provision is made in the departmental budget for equal opportunities work. There are many formal and informal occasions when equal opportunities officers meet their colleagues in other Government Departments. No specific guidance has been issued to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act but my Department is guided by the recommendations in the programme of action on women. My Department creates part-time posts and job sharing arrangements wherever practical and those responsible for staffing have been asked to identify posts which are suitable. A notice has been issued to all staff inviting those interested in part-time work or job-sharing to register with their personnel officers. Leave is granted to cover such situations as maternity leave, adoption and the caring of children during school holidays. Special leave may also be granted for "domestic distress" which in some instances could be occasioned by the need to care for children.

Royal Botanic Gardens (Tree Losses)

Mr. Wray asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department will be making a substantial contribution to the royal botanic gardens at Kew to offset the recent loss of old and valuable trees.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As indicated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in his statement on 21 October, I have already decided to make special additional help available to Kew to assist in the process of recovery and restoration. But much of the value of what has been lost lay in the age, beauty, rarity or historical association of the trees concerned. It will take the passage of much time and a great deal of dedicated work to overcome this. I know that the director and his staff are already making every effort to do so and should like to pay tribute to them. We do not yet have a full assessment against which to judge what additional contribution would be appropriate.

EC (Food Aid)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals are being considered for further distribution of food aid to the needy by the European Community; what plans have been made for the distribution in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 22 October to my hon. Friend, the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is seeking urgent talks with the Governments of the front-line states in southern Africa and with leaders of the opposition to apartheid.

Mrs. Chalker: We have regular contacts with the Governments of the front-line states and also with a wide range of opinion throughout southern Africa. The problems of southern Africa were also discussed at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new diplomatic steps he is proposing at European Community level in order to help end apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue, with our European Community partners, to do all we can to promote dialogue between the parties in South Africa leading to fundamental peaceful change. Our goal remains the total abolition of apartheid as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the use of the Seychelles by South Africa to circumvent trading restrictions imposed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Central America

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part Her Majesty's Government will play in support of the special relationship between the European Economic Community and the Latin American countries of the Rio de Janeiro group.

Mr. Eggar: Together with his Community colleagues my right hon. and learned Friend attended the informal meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve and the Group of Eight on 23 September in New York. We will play a full part in any further contacts. The Foreign Affairs Council held in June 1987 agreed important conclusions concerning the links between the EC and Latin America.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will play an active and positive part in the emergency plans for the economic and political reconstruction of Central America as proposed by the Rio de Janeiro group of countries to the European Community.

Mr. Eggar: Together with our Community partners we already play a positive role in assisting Central America and supporting efforts to find a peaceful settlement in the region. EC aid commitments to the region have doubled since 1984 when the EC-Central American dialogue started. The co-operation agreement between the EC and Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, signed in 1985, will be reviewed further at the fourth ministerial meeting to be held early next year. The establishment of peace would facilitate the more effective use of aid resources.

Namibia

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has lately been achieved in obliging the Government of South Africa to cease the occupation of Namibia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Nations Secretary General and United States Administration are engaged in continuing negotiations for the implementation of the United Nations plan. We support their efforts.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will take steps in order to seek to put a stop to the reported damage to Namibian natural resources by British companies.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not intervene in the operation of British companies in Namibia. We have no reason to believe that they are behaving irresponsibly. In contrast, considerable damage is being caused to Namibia's natural resources by Soviet and East European over-fishing.

Chile

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information has been received from the British embassy in Santiago about recent repression carried out by military or para-military forces in Chile, and the further disappearance of dissenters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago is required to make frequent reports on human rights violations in Chile. It has informed us of the disappearance of five people in early September, and of other incidents and disturbances. We deplore violence from whatever quarter and have made clear to the Chilean Government that restoration of democracy in Chile is the best guarantee of human rights.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report has been received from the British embassy in Santiago on the signing by Chile of treaties against torture, both at the United Nations and at the Organisation of American States.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago has reported that on 23 September Chile signed the United Nations convention against torture and the Inter-American convention on the prevention of torture.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the British embassy in Santiago did not join the explicit and firm expressions of support for the democratic opposition in Chile given during the recent International Parliamentary Assembly held in Santiago.

Mr. Eggar: The International Parliamentary Assembly, a privately sponsored gathering of parliamentarians, did not invite Governments. But we have made clear on many occasions our support for the restoration of democracy in Chile and for the democratic opposition, most recently in the statement by the Twelve of 9 October, the text of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Government Communications Centre, London

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he is making as regard trade union membership for those working in the new Government communications centre in London.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 21 October, at column *762*.

Iran

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the effects of an economic embargo on Iran on the peace process in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: No proposals for an economic embargo of Iran are current, and hence no detailed study of its effects on the prospects for peace has been undertaken. The only embargo which has been proposed in the context of enforcing Security Council resolution 598 is an arms embargo. We have made clear our willingness to see such an embargo against non-complying parties. Our position on more general economic sanctions is well known and we would be extremely sceptical of any such proposal were it to be made.

Franco-German Military Agreement

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to make the United Kingdom a party to the Franco-German military agreement; what agreement he has made of the implications of the agreement for *(a)* the United Kingdom defence policy and *(b)* the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The establishment of a Franco-German defence council, recently announced by President Mitterrand, is an extension of the military co-operation provisions of the Elyseé treaty signed between them in 1963. There are no plans for the United Kingdom to become a party to this treaty. We welcome Franco-German co-operation in the defence field in so far as it contributes to the effectiveness of NATO as a whole.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent ministerial visit to India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh; and what practical assistance Her Majesty's Government plan to give to India in dealing with the problems arising from the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Eggar: The Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Mr. Renton), visited India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan from 3 to 17 September to examine the entry clearance systems operated by British missions in those countries.

We continue to give full support to the agreement signed on 29 July between India and Sri Lanka designed to bring an end to the tragic conflict in Sri Lanka.

We have made available £1·5 million for emergency relief and rehabilitation aid in Sri Lanka, and are in consultation with other aid donors with a view to playing a part in further rehabilitation work.

Falkland Islands Fisheries Zone

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the capital costs of implementing the Falkland Islands fisheries zone in 1987.

Mr. Eggar: Capital costs incurred to date are approximately £210,000, of which the major elements have been purchase of a harbour patrol boat and communications equipment for the fisheries department in Port Stanley. Costs of implementation of the Falkland Islands conservation zone are estimated at approximately £4 million for a full 12 months.

President Arias (Peace Prize)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will enter in the *Official Report* the full text of his message of congratulations to President Arias on his being awarded the Nobel prize for peace.

Mr. Eggar: It is not our practice to publish the text of such messages: my right hon. and learned Friend congratulated President Arias on the award and reiterated our support for the Guatemala agreement.

Bangkok

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* his latest estimate of the overall cost, including salaries, of maintaining Her Majesty's embassy and consular services in Bangkok.

Mr. Eggar: In the financial year 1986-87, the cost of Her Majesty's embassy in Bangkok was £2 million. Included in this cost was £126,000 for consular work, and £131,000 for entry clearance work.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time it takes for Her Majesty's consulate in Bangkok to issue visas to Thai business men and tourists to visit the United Kingdom; and how the formalities required of British visitors to Thailand compare with those required of Thai citizens seeking to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Average times are not available. Visitors who have previously been to the United Kingdom can normally expect visas within 48 hours of application. First-time visitors are normally interviewed. Depending on seasonal pressure, they may have to wait several weeks for interview. Business men demonstrating a genuinely urgent need to travel are, however, given special consideration. Information about the time taken by, and the procedures of, Thai missions in issuing visas to British visitors are not available.

Departmental Papers

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of his Departments' papers have been made available to the public since October 1986.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1 October 1986, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office — excluding the Overseas Development Administration — has made the following papers available to the public on request:

Africa

- Namibia: Chronology January—September 1986
- Namibia: Chronology October 1986—June 1987
- Relations between Libya and Sudan in the Qadhafi and —Nimerei Period
- Southern African transport routes

Americas

- Contadora Chronology: August 1985—October 1986
- Cuba: Party Congress and rectification
- Fishing around the Falklands
- Haiti A Year After Duvalier: A Chronology
- Latin American Regional Organisations

Asia

- Afghanistan in 1986
- Afghanistan: The Armed Forces
- Afghanistan Chronology: July 1985—October 1986
- Afghanistan: Human Rights
- Afghanistan Report: The Fighting
- Afghanistan Report: Regime's Peace Overtures
- Afghanistan: Soviet Media Coverage
- Afghanistan: United Nations Involvement
- ASEAN: Twenty Years On
- Cambodia in 1986
- General Information on Japan
- General Information on the Republic of Korea
- Refugees from Indochina
- Royal Visits to Hong Kong
- Vietnam: Prospects for Progress

China

- China's Energy Prospects
- China's External Economic Relations
- China's National Minorities
- General Information on the People's Republic of China
- Women in China

Europe

- Britain in Luxembourg
- Copenhagen Peace Congress in Retrospect
- East European Energy Prospects
- Poland: Analysis of the Gains and Losses Arising from the Solidarity Period
- The United Kingdom Presidency, July-December 1986
- Vienna CSCE Follow-up Meeting: Background and Chronology

Near and Middle East

- The Abu Nidhal Group and State Terrorism
- Arab-Israel Chronology: January 1986-February 1987
- The Arab League and Arab Summit Conferences
- Chronology of the Iran-Iraq Conflict
- General Information on Bahrain
- General Information on Oman
- General Information on Qatar
- General Information on Saudi Arabia
- The Hindawi Case: Syrian Connexions

Soviet Union

- Soviet Bloc Aid to Special Friends
- Soviet Communist Party's Role in External Propaganda
- Soviet Energy Prospects
- Soviet Fishing Off the Developing Countries
- Soviet Foreign Trade
- Survival of Islam in the Soviet Union
- The USSR and Events in the PDRY

United Nations

- Major United Nations Groups and Major Groupings Relating to the United Nations System
- United Nations Conference on Disarmament and Development
- United Nations Peace-keeping

Disarmament

- Arms Control and Disarmament: Quarterly Review No. 3
- Arms Control and Disarmament: Quarterly Review No.

4
Arms Control and Disarmament: Quarterly Review No. 5
Arms Control and Disarmament: Quarterly Review No. 6
Twenty Questions on Defence (prepared in conjunction with MOD)

Economic
- Aid to the Developing World
- World Fisheries
- World Food Supplies
- World Shipping Prospects

International
- International Response to Drug Abuse
- International Symposium on the Mass Media
- Non-Aligned Summit

General
- Acid Rain
- Is Intervention Ever Justified?
- Summary of Consular Trends in 1986

Colonel Robert Lowther

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason Colonel Robert Lowther, the former South African military attaché, was expelled from the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 24 July 1987, at column *570*.

Operation Layout

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the nature of Operation Layout.

Mrs. Chalker: I would refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 23 October, at column 1095.

Nicaragua

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, given the steps which the Government of Nicaragua have taken to comply with the Guatemala accord, Her Majesty's Government will now restore full support for economic and financial aid to that country.

Mr. Eggar: Aid is directed as far as possible to the poorest countries in the world and those with which we have traditional links. Nicaragua is in neither category but has continued to benefit from EC aid of which the United Kingdom contributes some 20 per cent. We also co-finance small development projects with British voluntary agencies and contribute to humanitarian relief work.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sheep and Lambs

Mr. Andrew Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost to public funds of compensation to farmers arising out of the recently imposed restrictions on movement of sheep and lambs in certain areas of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: It is estimated that in 1987-88 the cost of compensation to sheep farmers in Northern Ireland will amount to about £50,000. For the present, payments will be met by way of repayable advances from the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Fund, and parliamentary approval will be sought for the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

Castelwellan Factory

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Her Majesty's Government intend to provide industrial accommodation in the Castlewellan area of County Down.

Mr. Viggers: The Industrial Development Board has retained ownership of a two-acre site beside the former Moss Lane factory in Castlewellan. The IDB would consider the provision of accommodation for a specific employment-related project accepted for selective financial assistance. The site is also available to any property developer wishing to construct factory units for leasing to small businesses.

TRANSPORT

Parachuting

Miss Widdecombe asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many fatalities have occurred as a result of parachuting accidents involving civilian jumpers in the last 10 years;

(2) how many parachuting accidents resulting in serious injuries and involving civilian jumpers have occurred in the last 10 years;

(3) if the Government are planning to seek the voluntary agreement of charities not to use amateur and inexperienced participants for fund-raising parachute jumps; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if the Government are planning to introduce legislation to implement and enforce higher minimum standards of training before members of parachute clubs are allowed to make their first jumps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of accidents involving civilian jumpers are available only for the last six years. During that period there were 23 fatalities, a further 144 serious accidents, and over 1 million jumps. The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the safety of sport parachuting in the United Kingdom. It has reviewed safety and operating procedures with the British Parachuting Association and will be implementing improvements in the light of the recent fatal accident at Thruxton. The occasion on which a parachute jump is made has no bearing on the inherent risks of the activity and my right hon. Friend sees no case for introducing special restrictions on participation at charitable or fund raising events.

M1 (Roadworks)

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for Transport whether he will take steps to avoid the carrying out of roadworks on the M1 between London and Leeds during peak holiday traffic periods.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Roadworks involving lane closures on motorways and trunk roads are suspended during peak holiday periods wherever possible. It is not always possible to avoid having some roadworks at these times. Sometimes it is more inconvenient for road users if large contraflows are removed during peak holiday periods and then replaced because of the additional traffic restrictions required and the consequent overall increase in time taken to complete the works.

Any emergency repairs must go ahead.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for Transport how many man-hours he estimates to have been lost due to delays caused by roadworks on the M1 during the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Records are not kept of total delays at M1 roadworks. On major lane rental schemes —costing over £0·5 million—delay costs are assessed on a daily basis. During the 12 months to 30 September 1987 10 major maintenance schemes were carried out by lane rental (compared with four under conventional contracts). The total site occupation was 680 days resulting in delay costs of £15 million. Lane rental saved an estimated 250 days and about £7 million compared with the time and resources which would have been spent had all contracts been on a conventional basis.

Local Authority Transport Companies

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions he has issued a dispensation to local authority councillors to speak and vote on matters concerning local authority transport companies; for which local authorities these dispensations were authorised; and if he will itemise in each case the length of time from application to authorisation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Dispensations have been given by the Secretary of State (under section 74(4) and (5) of the Transport Act 1985) on four occasions to local authority councillors who were also directors of the public transport company controlled by their authority, to discuss and vote on certain matters concerning the company. The details are as follows:

Authorities given dispensations	*Number of working days between application being made and issue of dispensation*
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	[1]36
Langbaugh Borough Council	
Middlesbrough Borough Council	
Portsmouth City Council	3
Portsmouth City Council	4
Nottingham City Council	4

[1] Joint application.

Motor Cycles (Leg Protectors)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the cost of fitting leg protectors to motor bikes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultation on a draft specification for leg protectors is at an early stage. We are seeking expert comment, especially from motorcycle manufacturers. This may influence the final form of the specification. The cost of protectors will vary according to the type of motorcycle, its equipment, the manufacturer's design and production methods. I would expect the additional cost to be usually in the range 3 to 10 per cent. of the cost of a new motorcycle.

Casualty rates for motorcyclists are far higher than for any other group of road users. A large number of serious injuries suffered by motorcyclists are to their legs, often resulting in lengthy hospital treatment. We believe that correctly designed leg protectors will significantly reduce these injuries.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* what action taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: *(a)* The Department's equal opportunities officer also serves the Department of the Environment. He is a grade 5 head of division. No specific proportion of his time is allocated to any of his functions. He is supported by five staff who work full-time on equal opportunities matters and have no other responsibilities.

(b) The equal opportunities officer has wide ranging responsibilities for personnel management policies and services to staff.

(c) Every member of staff with management responsibilities is involved in the implementation of equal opportunities policy. It is not possible to assign a specific cost to the work.

(d) The equal opportunities officer and his staff have frequent meetings, both formal and informal, with their counterparts from other Government Departments.

(e) No specific guidelines have been issued.

(f) All requests for part-time working and job sharing are met wherever possible. Special leave arrangements exist to help staff deal with domestic responsibilities. Explanatory material has been published and made available to all staff.

I have regular meetings with the equal opportunities staff.

Tutbury Bypass

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive his inspector's report on the public inquiry into the proposed Tutbury bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report was received on 5 October. It is now being considered. I hope to be able to announce a decision shortly.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to introduce legislation on, and a nationality test for, the beneficial ownership of fishing vessels in the United Kingdom and dependencies as recommended by the working party which reported to him in the autumn of 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to my hon. Friends the Members for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 24 July.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to amend the regulations relating to safety matters on the carrying of immersion suits on United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department plan to introduce shortly regulations to implement specific provisions for the carriage of safety equipment on fishing vessels prescribed in the Safety at Sea Act 1986. In addition requirements for safety equipment generally on fishing vessels including immersion suits amongst other items is under examination by the Department in consultation with the fishing industry as part of a review of the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department is reviewing the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975 in consultation with the fishing industry.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with the representatives of the owners of United Kingdom and registered fishing vessels regarding the problem of noise levels of fishing vessel engines.

Mr. David Mitchell: No recent discussions have taken place with the fishing industry on the problem of noise.

Civil Aviation Authority

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if his Department has held recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority and commercial airlines regarding the removal of over-wing exit doors on Boeing 767 aircraft during emergency drill training by the crews of those aircraft; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has held recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority and commercial airlines regarding the carriage of smoke-hood protection for all crew members on United Kingdom registered commercial aircraft;

(3) if his Department has held recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding passenger and crew safety, training and emergency-drill procedures in United Kingdom-registered commercial passenger aircraft; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if his Department has had recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding the practice of storage of waste and waste disposal bags in passenger aircraft lavatories; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if his Department has held recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding crew work hours and on-board rest periods on commercial passenger aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Civil aviation safety regulation is wholly the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the necessary technical competence in these matters. I will drew the attention of the chairman of the authority to the hon. Member's inquiries.

Passenger Aircraft

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation governing the carriage of hand baggage by crews and passengers on United Kingdom registered commercial passenger aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Legislation governing the carriage of baggage in the passenger compartment of a United Kingdom registered public transport aircraft is already contained in article 34(2)*(e)*(ii) of the Air Navigation Order 1985 (S.I., No. 1985/1643).

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to provide work for British Rail Engineering Ltd. over the next 12 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: The amount of work secured by BREL is (as with most businesses) dependant on how successful they are in competing for whatever business is available. The British Railways Board plans to spend £1 billion on locomotives and rolling stock over the next five years. This provides the opportunity for substantial business for the railway supply industry although inevitably this will mean less heavy maintenance work. The Government will continue to support BREL's export efforts.

Heathrow (Light Aircraft)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to limit the number of light planes using Heathrow by placing a lower limit on the number of seats per aircraft which can use Heathrow except in emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the recent incident at Heathrow in which a light aircraft is alleged to have crossed the path of an airliner on take-off. As the hon. Member may know, that incident is under investigation by the CAA; I shall ask the chairman to write to him in due course.

Unmanned Railway Stations

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have occurred at unmanned railway stations in Scotland for each of the last five years; and how many of these have been fatal.

Mr. David Mitchell: Accidents that occur on the railways in Great Britain are reportable to the Department as prescribed by Statutory Instruments. This does not require the railways to declare whether or not an incident occurred at a manned station or otherwise. Accidents resulting in minor injury and not involving the movement of a train, eg. slipping, tripping, falling accidents, are reportable by bulk return only as numbers with no details of location.

Over the last five years, the accident data for movement and non-movement accidents on the Scottish region of British Railways are:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Fatal	2	2	3	2	1
Major	6	1	3	5	11
Minor	327	402	422	477	362

[1] Including September.

Only one of the fatal accidents occurred at a station; this was manned. The Scottish region has advised that, for 1987, none of the 11 major injuries reported occurred at unmanned stations but 32 of the 362 minor injuries did so.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases of assaults at unmanned railway stations in Scotland have been reported for each of the last five years; in how many of these cases prosecutions have followed; and how many convictions were obtained.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from the British Transport Police (BTP) that the total number of assaults on trains and stations in Scotland, and the number of persons prosecuted, were as follows:

Year	*Number reported*	*Persons prosecuted*
1982	269	137
1983	323	169
1984	362	157
1985	352	139
1986	411	165

Separate records of convictions, and of the number of assaults at unmanned railway stations in Scotland, are not maintained by BTP.

Electricity (BR)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he is having with British Rail regarding the effects on its electricity supplies of the privatisation of electricity, generation and supply system;

(2) what representations he has received from community organisations, consumer associations, and the general public regarding the effects of the privatisation of the electricity production and distribution system on the costs of the electricity supplies to the railways system;

(3) what assessment he has made of the implications for the efficiency of British Rail of the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no representations on this matter. It is in the first instance for the Railways Board to consider the possible implications for the operation of the railway.

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on behalf of air traffic controllers calling for an inquiry into air traffic services and whether he has any plans to set up such an inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has received representations from the Guild of Air Traffic Controllers for an independent inquiry into the infrastructure, organisation and efficiency of air traffic services in the United Kingdom. He was not persuaded that an inquiry of the kind suggested by the guild was justified.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will intervene to halt the practice of British Rail transporting nuclear materials through Morningside in Edinburgh, South constituency to and from Torness.

Mr. David Mitchell: The regulations which control the transport of radioactive materials require full protection to be built into the design of the containers so that the materials do not present a danger, even in the event of a severe accident. The choice of routes used is not therefore dependent on safety considerations.

Fallan Rescue Harness

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation has been made of the Fallan rescue harness and sling for use by emergency services in road traffic accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

I assume the question relates to harness equipment developed by a fire officer of the Strathclyde brigade. I am aware of this officer's initiative and I am at present seeking further information. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

SCOTLAND

Hunterston Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the reported incidents at Hunterston nuclear power station in 1987 to date, indicating *(a)* in which cases the alarm was sounded and *(b)* in which cases the alarm failed to be sounded.

Mr. Lang: The nuclear installations inspectorate's site incident register at Hunterston nuclear power station records a total of 50 incidents between 1 January and 14 October 1987. The date and nature of the incidents are shown in the tables below. The circumstances under which the nuclear site emergency alert alarm is required to be sounded are specified in the Hunterston emergency plan; in none of the incidents did these conditions arise.

Hunterston 'A' Power Station
Summary of site incident register entries:
1 January 1987 to 14 October 1987

Date	*Nature of incident*
17 January 1987	Failure of charge machine vessel safety valve flange led to minor release of CO_2 which was detected and alarmed by the Reactor 1 vault CO_2 detection system.
28 January 1987	A passing valve in the CO_2 plant caused a rise in the reactor pressure of 6·4 psi in 35 minutes.
10 April 1987	Contamination detected on Reactor 2 pipebridge. Maximum activity 100 counts per second (cps).

Date	*Nature of incident*
27 April 1987	Contamination detected at entry to Solid Active Waste Building. Maximum activity 400 cps.
8 May 1987	Contamination detected on charge machine rail near Solid Active Waste Building. Maximum activity 600 cps.
20 May 1987	Contamination detected on Health Physics instrument used at Reactor 2 Separation Room barrier. Maximum activity 300 cps.
9 June 1987	Spread of contaminated dust occurred when emptying Reactor 1 Separating Room cyclone filter. One person contaminated with maximum activity of 100 cps.
9 June 1987	Contamination detected on Health Physics instrument used during Reactor 1 Separating Room cyclone filter change. Maximum activity 50 cps.
14 June 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 25 cps.
16 June 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 10 cps.
23 June 1987	Personnel contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 300 cps.
23 June 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 425 cps.
24 June 1987	Contamination detected at barrier to Reactor 2 gas dryer. Maximum activity 200 cps.
30 June 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 15 cps.
3 July 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IMP7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 50 cps.
6 July 1987	Clothing contamination detected. Maximum activity 100 cps.
6 July 1987	Contamination detected on scaffolding below SRU entry manhole. Maximum activity 500 cps.
9 July 1987	Failure of a fuel element in Reactor 1 required a reduction in power whilst preparations were made for its removal.
10 July 1987	Personnel nasal contamination detected. Contamination level of 14·7 Becquerels.
17 July 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 Personnel Monitor. Maximum activity 1000 cps.
22 July 1987	Contamination detected at barrier of Lightly Active Waste Facility. Maximum activity 200 cps.
22 July 1987	Piece of magnox found on cooling pond roadway. Maximum activity 4000cps.
22 July 1987	Contamination detected on roadway adjacent to 5A gas circulator. Magnox activity 1800 cps.
27 July 1987	Contamination detected at HP drum level of 2B SRU. Maximum activity 350 cps.
27 July 1987	Clothing contamination detected at IPM7 personnel monitor. Maximum activity 200 cps.
10 August 1987	Leakage from tritium bottle during transit.
12 August 1987	Surface contamination found on 2B SRU pipework.
16 August 1987	Failure of rotameter on BCD system.
5 September 1987	Shortage of cooling water, due to an ingress of seaweed into the CW system, led to Reactor 1 being manually tripped.
5 September 1987	Shortage of cooling water, due to an ingress of seaweed into the CW system, led to Reactor 2 being manually tripped.
10 September 1987	Spread of contamination occured when emptying cyclone filter bag.

Hunterston 'B' Power Station
Summary of site incident register entries:
1 January 1987 to 14 October 1987

Date	*Nature of incident*
13 February 1987	Failure of coupling on CO_2 service supply hose on charge machine.
16 February 1987	Clean CO_2 from a vaporiser was transferred to the deaerator via the domestic steam system because of a leak in the steam heating pipework at the vaporiser and another in the deaerator heating coil.
17 February 1987	Problems in releasing the charge machine grab from a control rod after its removal from the reactor.
9 March 1987	Failure of both IGV drive motors on gas circulator 4A2.
18 March 1987	Broken wire on Reactor 3 channel 3 pulse counter had caused the channel to trip.
5 April 1987	Trip of 4C quadrant on low lubricating oil pressure.
7 April 1987	Fire due to an electrical fault on R3 ESS Short Break Sub-board 3B.
7 April 1987	Trip of 3A quadrant due to board fault in incident of 7 April 1987 above.
8 April 1987	Contamination detected on shock absorber of road transport flask E67A. Maximum activity 30 cps.
10 April 1987	Clean CO_2 leak from joint on No. 6 vaporiser.
17 April 1987	Loss of vacuum due to inadvertent opening of air suction valves on vacuum maintaining unit.
17 April 1987	Problem with the cooling pond skip transporter led to the tilting of a skip.
12 May 1987	Closing of fuel stringer gag instead of opening.
12 May 1987	Small leak of reactor CO_2 from BCD sample valve on channel R3-2060.
11 June 1987	Trip of 4D quadrant on very low lubricating oil levelled to unit trip.
7 August 1987	Trip of unit 3 due to turbine governor problems.
15 September 1987	Reactor 4 gas leakage over a period of 18 minutes due to the partial failure of a joint in the gas treatment plant area. Source of reactor CO_2 leak isolated, and reactor continued operating.
16 September 1987	Small fire in R3 oil bund of 3C quadrant.
3 October 1987	Trip of unit 4 when control rod fell into core.

Rates

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Kyle and Carrick and Cumnock and Doon Valley for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is as follows:

	Average Domestic Rate Bill £	*Percentage Change*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage Change*
Kyle and Carrick				
1978-79	161	—	327	—
1979-80	179	11	311	–5
1980-81	233	30	342	10
1981-82	337	45	450	32
1982-83	398	18	496	10
1983-84	408	3	487	–2
1984-85	433	6	495	2
1985-86	474	9	510	3
1986-87	501	6	524	3
1987-88	578	15	578	10

	Average Domestic Rate Bill £	Percentage Change	1987-88 prices £	Percentage Change
Cumnock and Doon Valley				
1978-79	112	—	227	—
1979-80	125	12	217	−4
1980-81	169	35	248	14
1981-82	236	40	315	27
1982-83	270	15	337	7
1983-84	275	2	328	−3
1984-85	289	5	330	1
1985-86	346	20	373	13
1986-87	370	7	387	4
1987-88	430	16	430	11

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review published by CIPFA.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage increase over the previous year in the domestic rates bill in the Edinburgh, South constituency for each year from 1977 to 1987;.

(2) if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Edinburgh, South constituency repriced for inflation for each year from 1977 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Edinburgh, South constituency for each year from 1977 to 1987.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the rate support grant paid to Aberdeen city district council in each of the financial years since 1978, expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms expressed at 1986-87 prices; and what percentage of total spending in each year this represents.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is as follows:

	R.S.G. cash £'000	R.S.G. 1986-87 Cost terms £'000	Percentage of expenditure
Aberdeen			
1978-79	3,193	6,213	36
1979-80	3,911	6,511	36
1980-81	4,968	6,976	35
1981-82	5,358	6,852	34
1982-83	4,916	5,865	27
1983-84	5,414	6,175	26
1984-85	5,505	6,014	25
1985-86	3,523	3,629	14
1986-87	2,749	2,749	11
1987-88	4,181	4,001	13

Notes:

1. The figures for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 are final. Those for 1984-85 to 1987-88 will be varied following the next rate support grant order. The figures reflect selective and general abatement of grant, except that for 1987-88 no adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored for authorities which bring their expenditure down to guidelines on outturn.
2. The G.D.P. deflator has been used to convert to 1987-88 prices. The expenditure figures used in the final column are those for relevant expenditure including loan charges.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the constituency of Falkirk, West for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Glasgow, Maryhill for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Dunfermline, West constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case cash, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the areas covered by Dunfermline, East constituency, repriced for inflation for each year since 1977.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage increase over the previous year in the domestic rates bill in the areas covered by Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1977.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the rate support grant figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the rate support figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the percentage change in rate support grant over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Scotland	Rate support grant cash £ million	Change Per cent.	Rate support grant 1987-88 cost terms £ million
1978-79	1,041	—	2,116
1979-80	1,195	15	2,079
1980-81	1,451	21	2,129
1981-82	1,543	6	2,062
1982-83	1,633	6	2,036
1983-84	1,718	5	2,048
1984-85	1,672	−3	1,908
1985-86	1,700	2	1,830
1986-87	1,664	−2	1,739
1987-88	1,897	14	1,897

Notes:

(1) The figures for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 are final. Those for 1984-85 to 1987-88 will be varied following the next rate support grant order. The figures reflect selective and general abatement of grant, except that for 1987-88 no adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored for authorities which bring their expenditure down to guidelines on outturn.

(2) The G.D.P. deflator has been used to convert to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the rate support grant figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the rate support grant figure, repriced for inflation, for Edinburgh for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the percentage change in rate support grant over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Edinburgh	R.S.G. Cash £'000	Change Per cent.	R.S.G. 1987-88 Cost terms £'000
1978-79	6,806	—	13,838
1979-80	7,547	11	13,129
1980-81	10,504	39	15,413
1981-82	11,489	9	15,354
1982-83	10,541	−8	13,141
1983-84	11,376	8	13,558
1984-85	6,601	−42	7,536
1985-86	9,567	45	10,299
1986-87	7,405	−23	7,738
1987-88	12,513	69	12,513

Notes

1. The figures for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 are final. Those for 1984-85 to 1987-88 will be varied following the next rate support grant order. The figures reflect selective and general abatement of grant, except that for 1987-88 no adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored for authorities which bring their expenditure down to guidelines on outturn.

2. The G.D.P. deflator has been used to convert to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give Edinburgh district council's rate support grant figure as a proportion of the total housing support grant figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1985.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Rate support grant as a percentage of Scotland housing support grant—Edinburgh

Year	Per cent.
1978-79	[1]—
1979-80	4
1980-81	5
1981-82	7
1982-83	10
1983-84	16
1984-85	10
1985-86	15

[1] Information not readily available.

Notes: The rate support grant figures for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 are final. Those for 1984-85 to 1987-88 will be varied following the next rate support grant order. The figures reflect selective and general abatement of grant, except that for 1987-88 no adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored for authorities which bring their expenditure down to guidelines on outturn.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the East Kilbride constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the attached table.

East Kilbride District Council	Average Domestic Rate-Bill £	Percentage Change Per cent.	1987-88 Prices £	Percentage Change Per cent.
1978-79	137	—	279	—
1979-80	153	12	266	−4
1980-81	214	40	314	18
1981-82	292	36	390	24
1982-83	337	15	420	8
1983-84	340	1	405	−4
1984-85	361	6	412	2
1985-86	442	22	476	15
1986-87	479	8	501	5
1987-88	563	18	563	12

Notes:

1. *Source*—Rating Review.

2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Dundee East constituency for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Dumbarton constituency for each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Dumbarton District Council	Average Domestic Rate-Bill £	Percentage Change Per cent.	1987-88 Prices £	Percentage Change Per cent.
1978-79	163		331	
1979-80	174	7	303	−9
1980-81	252	45	370	22
1981-82	337	34	450	22
1982-83	387	15	482	7
1983-84	381	−2	454	−6
1984-85	411	8	469	3
1985-86	489	19	526	12
1986-87	524	7	548	4
1987-88	582	11	582	6

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.

2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Dundee, West constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Cathcart constituency for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many properties in Scotland used as residences at the present time are wholly or partially exempt from paying rates; and for what reasons.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between the years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council	Average Domestic Rate-Bill	Percentage Change	1987-88 Prices	Percentage Change
	£	Per cent.		Per cent.
1978-79	133		270	
1979-80	143	8	249	−8
1980-81	195	36	286	15
1981-82	295	51	394	38
1982-83	343	16	428	8
1983-84	345	1	411	−4
1984-85	362	5	413	1
1985-86	420	16	452	9
1986-87	458	9	479	6
1987-88	544	19	544	14

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average domestic rates bill in the city of Glasgow for each year since 1978-79 in cash terms and in real terms, taking 1978-79 as the base year, and showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Glasgow District Council	Average domestic rate bill	Percentage change	1978-79 prices	Percentage change
	£	per cent.	£	per cent.
1978-79	129	—	129	—
1979-80	138	7	118	−8
1980-81	193	40	139	18
1981-82	270	40	177	27
1982-83	321	19	197	11
1983-84	324	1	190	−4
1984-85	340	5	191	1
1985-86	436	28	231	21
1986-87	462	6	237	3
1987-88	511	11	251	6

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Paisley, South constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the constituency of Cunninghame, South for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Livingston for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Monklands, East for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage charge between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table except for the figures for Greenock and Port Glasgow which are not held centrally.

	Average domestic rate bill	Percentage change	1987-88 prices	Percentage change
	£	Per cent.	£	Per cent.
Strathclyde Region				
1978-79	139	—	283	—
1979-80	154	11	268	−5
1980-81	210	36	308	15
1981-82	291	39	389	26
1982-83	343	18	428	10
1983-84	347	1	414	−3
1984-85	366	5	418	1
1985-86	446	22	480	15
1986-87	476	7	497	4
1987-88	536	13	536	8
Scotland				
1978-79	132	—	268	—
1979-80	149	13	259	−3
1980-81	199	34	292	13
1981-82	272	37	363	24
1982-83	310	14	386	6
1983-84	310	0	369	−4
1984-85	328	6	374	1
1985-86	392	20	422	13
1986-87	417	6	436	3
1987-88	480	15	480	10

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rate bill in Paisley, North for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Renfrew West and Inverclyde for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Rating Reform

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Kyle and Carrick and Cumnock and Doon Valley in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection, and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will required to employ in order to complete registration on the

community charge register in Kyle and Carrick and Cumnock and Doon Valley; and if he will estimate the annual extra costs involved.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his proposals to ensure that residents in properties liable to the collective community charge who have already paid their personal community charge elsewhere do not pay twice.

Mr. Lang: Section 11(16) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 makes provision for the repayment of sums paid by way of collective community charge contribution in these and comparable circumstances.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Dunfermline, West constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Dunfermline, West constituency.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Dundee, East constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will estimate the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Dundee, East constituency.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Dundee, West constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Dundee, West constituency.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average domestic rates bill in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing in each case, the percentage change between the years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Midlothian constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Midlothian District Council	*Average domestic rate bill* £	*Percentage change* *Per cent.*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change* *Per cent.*
1978-79	152	—	309	—
1979-80	181	19	315	2
1980-81	263	45	386	23
1981-82	377	43	504	31
1982-83	353	−6	440	−13
1983-84	325	−8	387	−12
1984-85	365	12	417	8
1985-86	425	16	458	10
1986-87	441	4	461	1
1987-88	515	17	515	12

Note:
1. *Source*—Rating Review.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Midlothian constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Midlothian constituency.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Hamilton constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of personal community charge in the Hamilton constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection, and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Hamilton constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is as follows:

Hamilton District Council	*Average domestic rate bill* £	*Percentage change* *Per cent.*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change* *Per cent.*
1978-79	149	—	303	—
1979-80	165	11	287	−5
1980-81	219	33	321	12
1981-82	317	45	424	32
1982-83	380	20	474	12
1983-84	369	−3	440	−7
1984-85	379	3	433	−2
1985-86	479	26	516	19
1986-87	516	8	539	5
1987-88	557	8	557	3

Notes:

1. *Source*—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Kilmarnock and Loudoun for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* in real terms, showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council	*Average domestic rate bill* £	*Percentage change* *per cent.*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change* *per cent.*
1978-79	129		262	
1979-80	148	15	257	−2
1980-81	200	35	293	14
1981-82	272	36	363	24
1982-83	321	18	400	10
1983-84	327	2	390	−3
1984-85	348	6	397	2
1985-86	402	16	433	9
1986-87	437	9	457	6
1987-88	484	11	484	6

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Central Fife constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration of the community charge register of all adults in the constituency of Central Fife.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Central Fife constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage charge between years.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the average domestic rates bill in the constituency of North Aberdeen for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the predicted level of the personal community charge in the constituency of North Aberdeen in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection, *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) how many numbers of staff will be required by the community registration officer in order to complete the registration of all adults in *(a)* Aberdeen and *(b)* the constituency of North Aberdeen; and what the extra cost will be.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the constituency of Falkirk, West in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 80 per cent. collection and *(d)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the constituency of Falkirk, West.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection, and (vii) 70 per cent collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Glasgow, Maryhill.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Glasgow, Hillhead constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Glasgow, Hillhead constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted amount of the personal community charge in Edinburgh Central to be collected in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Lothian region.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the estimated cost for the introduction of the community charge for each region, and the percentage of it taken up by salaries, office equipment, interest and capital repayments;

(2) if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage of the cost of introducing the community charge which will be paid for by central Government.

Mr. Lang: Provision for local authority current expenditure provision in 1988-89 includes £9 million for the cost of introducing the community charge and £3 million for the cost of related changes to housing benefit arrangements. Provision for subsequent years will reflect the cost of collecting the community charge in the same way as for the cost of rate collection at present. Local authority expenditure is supported by rate support grant from central Government. In 1989-90 this will be replaced by revenue support grant. Both of these are grants in aid of the general revenues of authorities and are not hypothecated to individual items of expenditure.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland by what means eligibility for improvement and repairs grants will be decided following introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 makes no change in the statutory criteria for eligibility for these grants. Section 5 to the Act makes provision for the construction, with effect from 1 April 1989, of references in enactments to the gross annual value, net annual value or rateable value of any property which constitutes domestic subjects and for the provision of a certificate by the assessor where necessary.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the number of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register for all adults in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Dunfermline, West constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. McAvoy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency in the financial year 1989 to 1990, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. McAvoy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency for each year in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Edinburgh, South constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in areas covered by Dunfermline, East constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (1) 100 per cent. collection, (2) 95 per cent. collection, (3) 90 per cent. collection, (4) 85 per cent. collection, (5) 80 per cent. collection, (6) 75 per cent. collection, and (7) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the East Kilbride constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the constituency of East Kilbride in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (1) 100 per cent. collection, (2) 95 per cent. collection, (3) 90 per cent. collection, (4) 85 per cent. collection, (5) 80 per cent. collection, (6) 75 per cent. collection and (7) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Dundee, East constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Dumbarton constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Dumbarton constituency.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Cathcart constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many changes in the community charge register he estimates will be needed each year after 1990 in order to ensure that it is always accurate.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimates.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many extra staff each regional and island council has told him will be necessary to compile the community charge register;

(2) if he has received from each regional and island council its estimate of the costs of compiling and maintaining the community charge register.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has not received this information from each regional and islands council.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his proposals to ensure that residents in properties liable to the collective community charge who are entitled to a rebate do not pay the full cost.

Mr. Lang: People resident in properties liable to the collective community charge will be liable to pay the landlord a collective community charge contribution at the same daily level as the personal community charge for the area. Rebates will be available for the collective community charge contribution at the same level as for the personal community charge.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of foreign nationals living in Scotland who will be liable to pay the community charge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimate.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the community charge liability of (i) foreign service men serving in Scotland and (ii) foreign diplomatic staff resident in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: In fulfilment of the NATO status of forces agreement, visiting forces are at present exempted from rates, as well as from British income tax and various other forms of taxation. Some contribution towards the rate liability of accommodation occupied by visiting forces is, however, made by the relevant Governments. Diplomats are in a similar position. The Government are now considering what arrangements should be made about payment in respect of visiting forces and diplomats under the community charge system.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland he estimates will be liable to pay the community charge.

Mr. Lang: Precise figures are not available, but it is broadly estimated that about 10,000 students in Scotland may fall into this category. All students attending full-time courses of education in Scotland will be liable to pay only 20 per cent. of the personal community charge.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from local authorities in England and Wales and from student organisations about his understanding that students' courses in Scottish institutions of further or higher education will receive grants that will fully compensate them for their community charge payments.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from the National Union of Students in Scotland and from various student representative councils. He has received no representations from local authorities in England and Wales on this issue.

Students in Scotland whose courses meet the definition of "a full-time course of education", which will be prescribed in regulations, will be liable to pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether students from foreign countries studying in Scotland will be liable to pay the community charge in full; and what steps he has taken to ensure that all institutions of further and higher education inform all such students coming to study after 1989 of this liability.

Mr. Forsyth: Students from outwith the United Kingdom studying at Scottish educational institutions will be deemed to be resident in Scotland and will be liable to pay the community charge. If the courses which they are following meet the definition of "a full-time course of education", which will be prescribed in regulations, their liability will be limited to 20 per cent.

It will be for the institutions concerned to determine how best they might incorporate this information in the general advice about Scotland which they commonly offer to such students.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students from foreign countries undertaking courses at Scottish institutions of further or higher education he estimates will be liable to pay the community charge.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that in Session 1985-86, the latest date for which figures are available, there were some 8,462 students from outwith the United Kingdom studying at institutions of further or higher education in Scotland.

All students from outwith the United Kingdom who are deemed to be resident in Scotland will be liable to pay the community charge, but if their courses meet the definition of "a full-time course of education" (which will be prescribed in regulations) their liability will be limited to 20 per cent.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what definition of the term severely mentally handicapped he proposes to use; and when he intends to issue guidelines for the determination of those who will be exempt from the community charge under this definition.

Mr. Lang: The exemption from personal community charge liability for the severely mentally handicapped will apply to persons suffering from a state of arrested or incomplete development of the mind which includes severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning.

A consultation paper on the procedures for identifying these people was issued by the Scottish Office on 22 October.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Livingston;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Livingston in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Paisley, South constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Paisley, South constituency.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the constituency of Cunninghame, South in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the constituency of Cunninghame, South.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the city of Glasgow in the year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection, and assuming in each case that the levels of expenditure by Glasgow district and Strathclyde regional council in 1989-90 and the same in real terms as those budgeted for 1987-88.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Monklands, East in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Monklands, East.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of premises in Scotland in relation to which payment of the standard community charge will be made.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimate.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will estimate the number of staff that the community charge registration scheme will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde Region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary for State for Scotland what is his best estimate of the average payment of the poll tax to be levied up on each adult in Inverclyde in each of the years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91, and *(c)* 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: My right and learned Friend has made no such estimate.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary for State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Paisley, North in the financial years 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the number of staff that the community charge registration office will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Renfew district.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary for State for Scotland which sources of information about citizens and their families will be available for scrutiny by civil servants for the purpose of applying the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Civil servants will not be involved in the registration, levying or collection procedures for the community charge system in Scotland.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary for State for Scotland which sources of information about citizens and their families will be available for scrutiny by civil servants for the purpose of applying the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Civil servants will not be involved in the registration, levying or collection procedures for the community charge system in Scotland.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary for State for Scotland what will be the nature and estimated amount of funding given to local authorities in Scotland for the purpose of collecting the proposed community charge.

Mr. Lang: Provision for local authority current expenditure provision in 1988-89 includes £9 million for the cost of introducing the community charge and £3 million for the cost of related changes to housing benefit arrangements. Provision for subsequent years will reflect the cost of collecting the community charge in the same way as for the cost of rate collection at present. Local authority expenditure is supported by rate support grant from central Government. In 1989-90 this will be replaced by revenue support grant. Both of these are grants in aid of the general revenues of authorities and are not hypothecated to individual items of expenditure.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland who will pay for the extra equipment and staff that the local authorities will require to administer the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: Provision for local authority current expenditure provision in 1988-89 includes £9 million for the cost of introducing the community charge and £3 million for the cost of related changes to housing benefit arrangements. Provision for subsequent years will reflect the cost of collecting the community charge in the same way as for the cost of rate collection at present. Local authority expenditure is supported by rate support grant from central Government. In 1989-90 this will be replaced by revenue support grant. Both of these are grants in aid of the general revenues of authorities and are not hypothecated to individual items of expenditure.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if an elderly parent is being cared for at home, whether he or she will have to pay the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: A person in this position who is solely or mainly resident at home will be liable to pay the personal community charge. A system of rebates of up to 80 per cent. of personal community charge liability will be available for those on low incomes and the levels of income support — which will replace supplementary benefit in April 1988 — will be raised to take account of the average minimum contribution to the charge.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what help will be given to those who are currently on family income supplement to pay the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: People in receipt of family credit—which will replace family income supplement on 1 April 1988—will be eligible, in appropriate cases, for rebates of up to 80 per cent. of their personal community charge liability.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the Government's estimates of the percentage of those eligible to pay poll tax who will do so.

Mr. Lang: I am confident that the systems provided for by the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 will allow for the efficient collection and recovery of the community charge.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, from Government figures, which groups will be worse off under the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: An analysis of households gaining and losing as a result of the introduction of the community charge was contained in Annex J of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sources of information will be used to establish and maintain the poll tax register.

Mr. Lang: Sections 17 and 18 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 sets out the arrangements for the provision of information to community charges registration officers. The main sources of information will be a "responsible person" who will respond to canvass inquiries in respect of each address, and individuals who are required to notify the registration officer when their registration details change. The registration officer will also have access to relevant records held by local authorities. Draft regulations on registration matters were recently issued by the Scottish Office for comment by interested bodies.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the effect on electoral roll registration of its possible use of a source of information for the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimate. The implementation of the community charge system is a quite separate process from electoral registration and should have no adverse impact on it.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what will happen to a young person, unemployed, and with no material possessions, who does not pay poll tax;

(2) what action will be taken against those who do not pay poll tax.

Mr. Lang: The procedures for the recovery of unpaid community charges by the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 are similar to those now available for unpaid rates, recently revised by the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987. People on the lowest incomes will be eligible for rebates of up to 80 per cent. of their personal community charge liability, and income support levels will be raised to take account of the average minimum contribution.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether those who are disabled will have to pay the poll tax;

(2) whether the unemployed will have to pay the poll tax;

(3) how the system will ensure that those on supplementary benefit are not pushed into further hardship;

(4) whether a person on YTS will have to pay poll tax;

(5) whether the low paid will have to pay the full amount of poll tax;

(6) what rebate from poll tax there will be for a part-time shopworker, with no other paid employment;

(7) whether participants on the community programme will have to pay poll tax.

Mr. Lang: The community charge will be payable by all those aged 18 and over who have their sole or main residence in each local authority area, apart from those in respect of whom child benefit is payable; the severely mentally handicapped; residents in nursing homes, residential care homes and hostels providing an equivalent level of care; long-term hospital patients; and prisoners. Rebates of up to 80 per cent. will be available to those on low incomes. They will be calculated on a basis which takes account of personal circumstances such as disability. Those receiving income support (which will replace supplementary benefit in April 1988) will receive the maximum rebate and the levels of income support will be raised to take account of the average 20 per cent minimum contribution.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether a merchant seaman away from home for months at a time will have to pay the full amount of poll tax.

Mr. Lang: It will be for community charge registration officers to determine, in the light of the facts and circumstances of each case, where a person is solely or mainly resident and hence what is his personal community charge liability. That determination will be subject to appeal to the registration officer in the first instance and from his decision to the sheriff.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the constituency of Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Kyle and Carrick and Cumnock and Doon Valley in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of dwellings belonging to the Scottish Special Housing Association in the areas of the district councils concerned at 31 March each year are as follows:

	Kyle and Carrick District Council	*Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council*
1979	1,512	2,305
1980	1,513	2,323
1981	1,473	2,313
1982	1,458	2,297
1983	1,421	2,284
1984	1,375	2,266
1985	1,323	2,250
1986	1,341	2,214

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of dwellings belonging to the Scottish Special Housing Association in the area of Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council at 31 March each year are as follows:

	Number
1979	2,327
1980	2,336
1981	2,322
1982	2,299
1983	2,269
1984	2,163
1985	2,062
1986	1,996

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of North Aberdeen for each year since 1979.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Falkirk, West in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Glasgow, Maryhill in each year since 1979.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead each year since 1979.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Fife, Central each year since 1979.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Edinburgh, Central each year since 1979.

Mr. McAvoy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Dundee, East constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Dumbarton constituency in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish Special Housing Association tenants there are in the Dunfermline, East constituency; and if he will list the numbers in each town of the constituency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area or for areas within local authority districts.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Dundee, West constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Dunfermline, West constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Paisley, South constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Cunninghame, South in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Monklands, East in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of dwellings belonging to the Scottish Special Housing Association in the district council area of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth each year is as follows:

	Number
1979	102
1980	102
1981	99
1982	99
1983	99
1984	96
1985	93
1986	89

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average rent levels of Scottish Special Housing Association houses in each year since 1979 in cash terms and in real terms, showing in each case the percentage changes between years.

Mr. Rifkind: The available information was published in SDD statistical bulletin No. 29 "Public Sector Rents in Scotland 1986-87" which is available in the House Library.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Livingston in each year since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Greenock and Port Glasgow in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) in the light of the consultation which took place with the Tenants Association over the Scottish Homes Proposals, if he will allow the Scottish Special Housing Association's tenants a ballot to see if they wish to stay Scottish Special Housing Association tenants;

(2) if he will allow Scottish Special Housing Association's tenants the right to choose who their landlords will be;

(3) if he will allow the tenants of Scottish Special Housing Association's houses as further consultation after the Government have discussed the findings to allow them to have a say in their future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A White Paper setting out the Government's proposals on future housing policy in Scotland will be published in the next few weeks. It will contain our response to the large number of useful comments received in response to the consultation document "Scottish Homes: A New Agency for Housing in Scotland", including explicit proposals concerning the future rights of those who are tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association at present. My right hon. Friend and I will continue to attach particular importance to ensuring that those tenants are properly informed about the Government's proposals and have the opportunity to express their views concerning them. It is regrettable that tenants have been caused unnecessary anxiety over recent months through the activities of those who have sought to misinform them about our proposals.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Aberdeen District Council (Capital Allocation and Spending)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital allocation was authorised for the City of Aberdeen district council in each of the years since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* in real terms at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

City of Aberdeen district council capital consent allocations

Year	*Cash terms*	*Real terms (at 1986-87 prices)*
	£000	*£000*
1978-79	1,530	2,977
1979-80	1,900	3,163
1980-81	1,600	2,247
1981-82	1,730	2,212
1982-83	2,050	2,446
1983-84	1,560	1,779
1984-85	1,410	1,540
1985-86	1,600	1,648
1986-87	1,700	1,700
1987-88	1,700	1,627

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital spending was authorised for housing purposes to the City of Aberdeen district council in each of the years since 1978 expressed in cash terms and in real terms at 1986-87 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Housing capital allocations to city of Aberdeen district council

	Cash terms £ million	*Real terms (1986-87 prices) £ million*
1978-79	14·801	28·798
1979-80	15·530	25·853
1980-81	13·939	19·572
1981-82	13·293	17·000
1982-83	10·574	12·614
1983-84	16·179	18·452
1984-85	18·510	20·221
1985-86	14·338	14·771
1986-87	16·765	16·765
1987-88	21·300	20·383

Grampian Regional Health Board (Capital Spending)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much capital spending was authorised to Grampian regional health board in each of the years since 1978 expressed in cash terms and in real terms in 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures are as follows:

Gross capital allocation

£000

	Cash	*At 1986-87 prices*
1979-80	1,624	2,702
1980-81	2,268	3,181
1981-82	2,736	3,494
1982-83	2,727	3,247
1983-84[1]	3,381	3,854
1984-85	4,832	5,282
1985-86	7,216	7,433
1986-87	6,823	6,823
1987-88	6,371	6,097

1. Since 1983-84 special funds have been allocated for repair and maintenance projects.
2. No separate capital allocation was issued in 1978-79.
3. These figures do not include projects in Grampian which form part of the national major building programme.

Grampian Regional Health Board (Capital Spending and Revenue Budget)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the revenue budget of Grampian regional health board for each of the years since 1978, expressed in cash terms and real terms at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Grampian health board's revenue expenditure allocation in each of these years for hospital and community health services was as follows:

£'000

	Cash	*At 1986-87 prices*
1978-79	51,646	100,414
1979-80	62,738	104,379
1980-81	82,953	116,349
1981-82	92,119	117,655
1982-83	101,011	120,288
1983-84	105,390	120,146
1984-85	116,859	127,742
1985-86	120,189	123,804
1986-87	130,366	130,366
1987-88	[1]143,128	136,965

[1] Provisional.

Housing Association Accommodation

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in public sector housing association rented accommodation in the Midlothian constituency in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in public sector housing association rented accommodation in the Hamilton constituency for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Housing Allocations

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the total issued capital allocations for Scottish housing in 1987-88 has come from estimated sales receipts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: £212 million of the total issued capital allocations for local authorities, SSHA and new towns is from estimated sales receipts.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the £8·3 million additional capital allocation for Scottish housing announced on 2 October comes from estimated sales receipts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the net capital allocation (non-housing revenue account) figure, repriced for inflation, for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(2) if he will give the percentage increase or decrease in capital allocation (non-housing revenue account) over the previous year for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(3) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency, repriced for inflation, for each year since 1978;

(4) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation housing revenue account over the previous year for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(5) if he will give the net capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure for district councils within the constituency for each year since 1978;

(6) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation non-housing revenue account over the previous year for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency;

(7) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(8) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation (housing revenue account) over the previous year for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(9) if he will give the gross capital allocation (non-housing revenue account) figure for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(10) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure, repriced for inflation, for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1978;

(11) if he will give the gross capital allocation — housing revenue account — figure for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency for each year since 1977;

(12) if he will give the gross capital allocation — housing revenue account — figure for district councils within the Dunfermline, East constituency, repriced for inflation, for each year since 1977.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answers to these questions are contained in the following tables:

Dunfermline District Council
HRA capital allocations

Year	*Gross £ million*	*Net £ million*	*Gross percentage change*	*Gross £ million 1987-88 constant prices*	*Net £ million 1987-88 constant prices*
1978-79	4·280	See note 2	—	8·702	—
1979-80	4·530	See note 2	+5·8	7·881	—
1980-81	3·807	See note 2	−16·0	5·586	—
1981-82	4·750	See note 2	+24·8	6·348	—
1982-83	6·248	2·218	+31·5	7·789	2·765
1983-84	9·357	0·830	+49·8	11·152	0·989
1984-85	6·979	1·756	−25·4	7·967	2·005
1985-86	8·304	4·127	+19·0	8·940	4·443
1986-87	9·039	4·877	+8·9	9·446	5·096
1987-88	11·000	6·545	+21·7	11·000	6·545

Note 1: The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.
Note 2: The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.

Dunfermline District Council Non-HRA capital allocations

Year	*Gross £ million*	*Net £ million*	*Gross percentage change*	*Gross (£ million) 1987-88 constant prices*	*Net (£ million) 1987-88 constant prices*
1978-79	0·265	See note 2	—	0·539	—
1979-80	0·430	See note 2	+62·3	0·748	—
1980-81	0·515	See note 2	+19·8	0·756	—
1981-82	0·987	See note 2	−91·7	1·319	—
1982-83	1·543	1·475	+56·3	1·934	1·839
1983-84	1·476	1·191	− 4·3	1·759	1·419
1984-85	0·905	0·330	−38·7	1·033	0·377
1985-86	0·703	0·651	−22·3	0·757	0·701
1986-87	0·998	0·982	+42·0	1·043	1·026
1987-88	1·125	0·975	+12·7	1·125	0·975

Note 1: The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.
Note 2: The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.
Note 3: Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent, subject to certain conditions.

Kirkcaldy District Council HRA Capital Allocations

Year	*Gross £ million*	*Net £ million*	*Gross percentage Change*	*Gross £ million 1987-88 constant prices*	*Net £ million 1987-88 constant prices*
1978-79	3·852	See Note 2	—	7·832	—
1979-80	4·700	See Note 2	+22·0	8·176	—
1980-81	5·156	See Note 2	+ 9·7	7·566	—
1981-82	7·119	See Note 2	+38·1	9·514	—
1982-83	9·046	5·335	+27·1	11·277	6·651
1983-84	7·207	2·342	−20·3	8·589	2·791
1984-85	6·955	0·300	− 3·5	7·940	0·342
1985-86	7·396	1·244	+ 6·3	7·962	1·339
1986-87	8·285	4·037	+12·0	8·658	4·219
1987-88	11·000	6·449	+32·8	11·000	6·449

Notes:
1. The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.
2. The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.

Kirkcaldy District Council non-HRA capital allocations

Year	*Gross £ million*	*Net £ million*	*Gross percentage change*	*Gross £ million 1987-88 constant prices*	*Net £ million 1987-88 constant prices*
1978-79	0·572	See Note 2	—	1.163	—
1979-80	0·990	Ditto	+73·1	1·722	—
1980-81	1·176	Ditto	+18·8	1·726	—
1981-82	1·597	Ditto	+35·8	2·134	—
1982-83	2·958	3·100	+85·2	3·688	3·865
1983-84	3·179	3·227	+7·5	3·789	3·846
1984-85	1·492	1·250	−53·1	1·703	1·427
1985-86	1·282	1·149	−14·1	1·380	1·237
1986-87	1·341	1·147	+4·6	1·401	1.199
1987-88	1·300	1·100	−3·1	1·300	1·100

Notes:
1. The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.
2. The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.
3. Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent, subject to certain conditions.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the net capital allocation (non-HRA) figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give Edinburgh district council's housing revenue account capital allocation for each year from 1978 to 1987 as a proportion of the total net capital allocation housing revenue account for Scotland in each year from 1978 to 1987;

(3) if he will give Edinburgh district council's non-housing revenue account capital allocation for each year from 1978 to 1987 as a proportion of the total net capital allocation for Scotland;

(4) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation non-housing revenue account over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(5) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation non-housing revenue account over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(6) if he will give net capital allocation—non housing revenue account — figure repriced for inflation, for Edinburgh district council each year from 1978 to 1987;

(7) if he will give Edinburgh district council's non-HRA capital allocation for each year from 1978 to 1987 as a proportion of the total gross capital allocation non-HRA for Scotland in that year;

(8) if he will give the percentage increase or decrease in capital allocation non-HRA over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(9) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-HRA figure, repriced for inflation, for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(10) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-HRA figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(11) if he will give Edinburgh district council's HRA capital allocation for each year from 1978 to 1987 as a proportion of the total gross capital allocation HRA for Scotland in that year;

(12) if he will give the percentage increase or decrease in capital allocation—housing revenue account—over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(13) if he will give the gross capital allocation—housing revenue account—figure for Edinburgh district council, repriced for inflation, for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(14) if he will give the gross capital allocation—housing revenue account—figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answers to these questions are contained in the following tables:

Edinburgh District Council HRA Gross Capital Allocations

Year	Allocation £ million	Percentage change	Percentage of total HRA resources	Allocation (£ million) 1987-88 constant prices
1978-79	8·025	—	4·2	16·317
1979-80	8·000	−0·3	3·5	13·917
1980-81	8·635	+7·9	3·7	12·670
1981-82	12·215	+41·5	4·9	16·324
1982-83	14·956	+22·4	5·3	18·645
1983-84	16·583	+10·9	5·3	19·764
1984-85	11·278	−32·0	4·6	12·875
1985-86	19·966	+77·0	6·9	21·494
1986-87	21·918	+9·8	6·4	22·904
1987-88	29·250	+33·5	7·0	29·250

Note 1: The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.

Edinburgh District Council
Non-HRA gross capital allocations

Year	Allocation £ million	Percentage change per cent.	Percentage of total non-HRA resources per cent.	Allocation 1987-88 constant prices £ million
1978-79	6·134	—	14·7	12·472
1979-80	7·560	+23·2	15·6	13·152
1980-81	10·800	+42·9	18·2	15·847
1981-82	14·146	+31·0	17·9	18·904
1982-83	18·833	+33·1	17·7	23·478
1983-84	14·000	−25·7	14·3	16·686
1984-85	17·795	+27·1	10·3	20·314
1985-86	21·264	+19·5	17·0	22·892
1986-87	17·634	−17·1	15·1	18·427
1987-88	34·520	+95·8	22·8	34·520

Notes:

1. The block allocation system was introduced in 1978-79.
2. Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent, subject to certain conditions.

Edinburgh District Council HRA net capital allocations

Year	Allocation (£ million)	Percentage of total HRA resources	Allocation (£ million) 1987-88 constant prices
1982-83	11·752	6·5	14·650
1983-84	6·500	3·7	7·747
1984-85	1·889	1·7	2·156
1985-86	0·814	0·5	0·876
1986-87	12·374	6·0	12·931
1987-88	19·261	7·4	19·261

Note 1: The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.

Edinburgh District Council non-HRA net capital allocations

Year	Allocation (£ million)	Percentage of total non-HRA resources	Allocation (£ million) 1987-88 constant prices
1982-83	11·550	13·4	14·399
1983-84	10·048	13·1	11·975
1984-85	12·900	8·7	14·726
1985-86	10·184	10·2	10·964
1986-87	18·370	16·5	19·197
1987-88	33·770	23·6	33·770

Note 1: The net allocation system was introduced in 1982-83.
Note 2: Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent, subject to certain conditions.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the net capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the net capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation housing revenue account over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(4) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(5) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(6) if he will give the percentage increase or decrease in capital allocation housing revenue account over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(7) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-HRA figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(8) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-HRA figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(9) if he will give the percentage increase or decrease in capital allocation non-HRA over the previous year for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(10) if he will give the gross capital allocation HRA figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(11) if he will give the gross capital allocation HRA figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(12) if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Edinburgh for each year from 1982 to 1987;

(13) if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Scotland for each year from 1982 to 1987;

(14) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for Edinburgh district council, repriced for inflation, for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(15) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for Edinbu[illegible] district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(16) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation housing revenue account over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give Edinburgh district council's non-housing revenue account capital allocation for each year since 1978 as a proportion of the total net capital allocation (non-housing revenue account) for Scotland in that year;

(2) if he will give Edinburgh district council's housing revenue account capital allocation for each year since 1978 as a proportion of the total net capital allocation housing revenue account for Scotland in that year;

(3) if he will give Edinburgh district council's non-housing revenue account capital allocation for each year since 1978 as a proportion of the total gross capital allocation non-housing revenue account for Scotland in that year;

(4) if he will give the net capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure for district councils within the constituency for each year since 1978;

(5) if he will give Edinburgh district council's (housing revenue account) capital allocation for each year since 1978 as a proportion of the total gross capital allocation housing revenue account for Scotland in that year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths).

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation — non-housing revenue account — over the previous year for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(2) if he will give the net capital allocation — non-housing revenue account — figure for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(3) if he will give the net capital allocation — non-housing revenue account — figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(4) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation housing revenue account over the previous year for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(5) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(6) if he will give the net capital allocation housing revenue account figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(7) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation non-housing revenue account over the previous year for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(8) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(9) if he will give the gross capital allocation non-housing revenue account figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year since 1978;

(10) if he will give the percentage change in capital allocation—housing revenue account—over the previous year for Scotland for each year since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answers to these questions are contained in the following tables:

Scotland HRA Capital Allocations

Year	*Gross* *£ million*	*Net* *£ million*	*Gross per cent. change*	*Gross 1987-88 constant prices £ million*	*Net 1987-88 constant prices £ million*
1978-79	191·051	[2]	—	388·449	[2]
1979-80	230·700	[2]	+20·8	401·336	[2]
1980-81	231·788	[2]	+0·5	340·109	[2]
1981-82	247·752	[2]	+6·9	331·091	[2]
1982-83	279·637	180·266	+12·9	348·605	224·726
1983-84	310·564	177·625	+11·1	370·138	211·700
1984-85	245·830	112·482	−20·8	280·634	128·407
1985-86	290·289	160·227	+18·1	312·512	172·493
1986-87	340·958	204·942	+17·5	356·300	214·164
1987-88	414·984	261·299	+21·7	414·984	261·299

Note [1]: Block allocation system introduced in 1978-79.
Note [2]: Net allocation system introduced in 1982-83.

Scotland
Non-HRA capital allocations

Year	*Gross* *£ million*	*Net* *£ million*	*Gross percentage change per cent.*	*Gross 1987-88 constant prices £ million*	*Net 1987-88 constant prices £ million*
1978-79	41·728	[2]	—	84·842	[2]
1979-80	48·600	[2]	+16·5	84·547	[2]
1980-81	59·432	[2]	+22·3	87·206	[2]
1981-82	79·126	[2]	+33·1	105·742	[2]
1982-83	106·590	86·133	+34·7	132·879	107·376
1983-84	98·061	76·432	−8·0	116·871	91·093
1984-85	172·052	148·699	+75·5	196·411	169·752
1985-86	125·055	99·321	−27·3	134·628	106·924
1986-87	116·599	111·508	−6·8	121·846	116·526
1987-88	151·700	143·144	+30·1	151·700	143·144

Notes:

[1] Block allocation system introduced in 1978-79.

[2] Net allocation system introduced in 1982-83.

[3] Special arrangements applied to 1983-84 when authorities were allowed to exceed consent subject to certain conditions.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Edinburgh for each year from 1982 to 1987;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Scotland for each year from 1982 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the following table:

Scottish Development Department HRA capital receipts estimate as percentage of gross capital allocation for Scotland and Edinburgh

	Scotland per cent.	*Edinburgh per cent.*
1982-83	31	24
1983-84	35	54
1984-85	53	84
1985-86	45	90
1986-87	36	39
1987-88	37	36

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Edinburgh for 1982.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of his Department's target for capital receipts on the housing revenue account, capital, as a proportion of borrowing consent, for Scotland for 1982.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department's housing revenue account—HRA—capital receipts estimates for 1982-83 comprised 31 per cent. of the HRA gross capital allocation for Scotland and 24 per cent. of the allocation for Edinburgh.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people unemployed in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency, by sex, who are *(a)* under 25 years of age, *(b)* 25 to 35 years, *(c)* 35 to 50 years and *(d)* over 50 years; and what were the numbers in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Ian Lang: The information is as follows:

Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency

Age Group	*July 1985* *Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*July 1986* *Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*July 1987* *Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Under 25	1,919	1,051	2,970	1,898	1,000	2,898	1,780	823	2,603
25-34	1,410	496	1,906	1,477	489	1,966	1,617	413	2,030
35-49	1,633	407	2,040	1,629	489	2,118	1,691	431	2,122
50 and over	1,024	276	1,300	1,036	304	1,340	1,029	282	1,311
All ages	5,986	2,230	8,216	6,040	2,282	8,322	6,117	1,949	8,066

Note:
The 1985, 1986 and 1987 figures are not comparable due to changes in the method of the count.

This information is available in the Library.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures showing unemployment by age group in Greenock and Port Glasgow for the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 9 July 1987 the number of unemployed claimants by age group in the Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency was as shown in the following table:

Age group	*Unemployed claimants*
Under 17	107
Aged 17	239
Aged 18	359
Aged 19	327
Aged 20 to 24	1,571
Aged 25 to 29	1,173
Aged 30 to 34	857
Aged 35 to 39	773
Aged 40 to 44	671
Aged 45 to 49	678
Aged 50 to 54	592
Aged 55 to 59	625
Aged 60 and over	94
TOTAL	8,066

This information is available in the Library.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of people registered as unemployed in numbers and in percentage terms in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Ayrshire and *(c)* Kilmarnock and Loudoun and compare this with (i) the 1979 figures and percentage and (ii) the 1983 figures and percentage.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, unemployment figures and rates for the Kilmarnock travel-to-work area — which since 1983 are the same as for the parliamentary constituency of Kilmarnock and Loudoun — together with the comparable figures for Scotland are shown in the table.

Year (September)	*Kilmarnock travel-to-work area* *Number*	*per cent.*	*Scotland* *Number*	*per cent.*
1979	3,277	9·5	163,585	7·2
1983	5,465	17·6	339,992	15·3
1987	5,374	17·1	332,684	14·8

The figures for the different years are not comparable due to changes in the method of the count.

This information is available in the Library.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all industrial and commercial redundancies which amount to 25 or more in *(a)* the constituency of North Aberdeen and *(b)* Aberdeen for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each employment office and ward district the numbers unemployed in the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The number of unemployed claimants for each Jobcentre and in each local authority district ward in Scotland cannot be provided except at a disproportionate cost.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under 25 years of age were unemployed in the Greenock travel-to-work area and Strathclyde region; and of these how many have been unemployed for more than one year, two years, three years and four years.

Mr. Lang: On 9 July 1987, the latest date for which information is available, the numbers of unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in the Greenock travel-to-work area and Strathclyde regional authority by duration were as shown in the table.

Duration unemployed	*Greenock travel-to-work area Number of unemployed claimants*	*Strathclyde regional authority Number of unemployed claimants*
Up to 1 year	2,014	47,564
1 to 2 years	552	11,240
2 to 3 years	237	4,370
3 to 4 years	108	2,249
over 4 years	150	3,218
Total	3,061	68,641

This information is available in the Library.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were placed in employment by the job centres in Greenock and Port Glasgow in the years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: Figures for Greenock and Port Glasgow jobcentre areas separately are not available for the whole period. The April-September 1985 figure is compiled on a different basis and is not directly comparable.

	Number of placings	*Of which community programme*
April 1985 to September 1985	2,187	n/a
October 1985 to March 1986		
Greenock	1,897	346
Port Glasgow	314	122
April 1986 to March 1987		
Greenock	4,148	762
Port Glasgow	703	164

Closures

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures reported to his Department that have resulted in 20 or more redundancies in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley in each year since 1979.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the constituency of Falkirk, West in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Glasgow, Pollock constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Midlothian constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Hamilton constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Glasgow, Maryhill in each year since 1979.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead in each year since 1979.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the constituency of Fife, Central in each year since 1979.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Edinburgh, Central in each year since 1979.

Mr. McAvoy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the East Kilbride constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Dundee, East constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Dumbarton constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Dundee, West constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Dunfermline, West constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Paisley, South constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Livingston in each year since 1979.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the closures or redundancies in Glasgow involving in each case more than 50 employees for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the constituency of Cunninghame, South in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Monklands, East in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth in each year since 1979.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all employment closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde Region and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each year since 1979.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in more than 25 redundancies in the Paisley, North constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Prison Violence

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether Special Air Service personnel were used to quell recent riots in Scottish prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It would be inappropriate, for security and operational reasons, to comment on the way in which the recent incidents were resolved or on the contingency plans for dealing with such incidents.

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he proposes to investigate the recent outbreaks of violence at Shotts prison, Motherwell, North constituency;

(2) if there is to be a Government inquiry into the causes of recent outbreaks of violence in Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The incident at Shotts prison, from 26 September to 27 September, is the subject of investigation by the police and procurator fiscal and may be the subject of criminal proceedings. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the nature or possible outcome of these investigations, or any criminal proceedings which might result. The implications of the recent incidents in Scottish prisons are at present being assessed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if there is to be a Government inquiry into the causes of recent outbreaks of violence in Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The implications of the recent incidents in Scottish prisons are at present being assessed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Prisons (Overcrowding)

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the levels of overcrowding in Perth, Inverness and Barlinnie prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at lock-up on Tuesday 20 October 1987, the position was as follows:

	Number of inmates	*Design capacity*	*Percentage overcrowding or places vacant Per cent.*
Perth[1]	422	[1]519	[2]18
Inverness	101	87	[3]16
Barlinnie	1,069	983	[3]9
All penal establishments in Scotland	5,409	[1]5,598	[2]3

[1] Some places at Perth prison, and other prisons, are temporarily out of use because of damage by inmates in recent incidents.

[2] Places vacant.

[3] Overcrowded.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the levels of overcrowding in Perth, Inverness, and Barlinnie prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at lock-up on Tuesday 20 October 1987, the position was as follows:

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[1] Some places at Perth prison, and other prisons, are temporarily out of use because of damage by inmates in recent incidents.

[2] Places vacant.

[3] Overcrowded.

NHS (Statistics)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Ayrshire and Arran, and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in full-time equivalent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information for Ayrshire and Arran Health Board is shown in the following table:

Year Figures as at 30 September	*Average available staffed beds*	*Staff*[3] *(whole time equivalent)*
1979	2,837	5,113·0
1980	2,822	5,237·8
1981	2,827	5,419·8
1982	2,794	5,842·9
1983	2,918	6,208·5
1984	3,059	6,050·9
1985	3,001	6,199·3
1986	2,974	6,241·9
[1]1987	[2]2,951	6,244·7

[1] Figures at 31 March, except the medical and dental component of the staff total which is at 30 September 1986.

[2] Provisional figure.

[3] Excludes General Practitioners.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patients beds in Livingston and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the constituency of Falkirk, West and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Glasgow, Maryhill and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Renfrewshire West and Inverclyde constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Dumbarton constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Glasgow, Pollock constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Services in-patient beds in the East Kilbride constituency and *(b)* the number of National Health Services staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Dundee, West constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Monklands, East and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Paisley, South constituency and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the constituency of Cunninghame, South and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Hospital Beds

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds were available for geriatric care in National Health Service hospitals in each of the years 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average number of staffed beds available in geriatric specialties in National Health Service hospitals is given below:

Year[1]	*Beds*
1980	9,617
1981	9,906
1982	10,080
1983	10,401
1984	10,700
1985	10,690
1986	10,812
1987	10,961

[1] All figures are as at 30 September except for 1987 which is 31 March.

Nurses

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage nurses to remain in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) today.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what policies are being proposed or carried out in order to *(a)* attract more nurses into the National Health Service in Scotland and *(b)* to give them incentives to stay and constantly improve their standards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Discussions are taking place at national and local level on how best to attract more recruits into nursing. In Scotland, recruitment initiatives undertaken by individual health boards on a local basis include "back to nursing" campaigns, advertising of part-time opportunities, co-operation with head teachers and career advisers on recruitment from schools and co-operation with job and skill centres on recruitment of mature entrants. We have reversed the decline which took place between 1974 and 1979, when the pay of nurses fell by 21 per cent. in real terms, and implemented increases in nurses' pay giving a rise of 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979. In addition the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council is reviewing grading structures in order to ensure that those working in clinical areas are appropriately rewarded.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* the number of nurses in post in Edinburgh Royal infirmary as at 1 April and *(b)* the Lothian health board established figure for nurses on 1 April.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information as at 15 April 1987 is:

	Nurses (whole-time equivalent) *In-post*	*Funded establishment*
Trained	737·75	733·6
Untrained	219·34	230·0

In addition there are on average 295 learner nurses and 15 post basic learner nurses at the hospital.

Health Problems (Ministerial Advice)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary for State of Scotland what advice he has received on the health problems brought about by homelessness or poor housing conditions, unemployment and deprivation in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties"—the SHAPE report — submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor in 1980, recommended that health boards should include in their top priorities services for the multiple deprived.

NHS Staff

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the new full-time, medical staff employed by the National Health Service in Scotland since 1979 are filling vacancies left by retirement or other similar causes; and how many correspond to the expansion or improvement of medical service in the Scottish National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available. However, since 1979 the number of full-time hospital and community medical staff has increased from 4,699 to 5,021, an increase of 7 per cent. This reflects the Government's continued commitment to the NHS by expanding and improving medical services.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979, *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Aberdeen and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the constituency of Central Fife and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency and *(b)* the numberof National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Greenock and Port Glasgow and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, by occupational designation and in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the overall increase in spending required by the National Health Service in Scotland due to increasing demands of the population on the service in 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Estimates of demand on the National Health Service in Scotland, including both hospital and primary care services, are being considered as part of the current review of public expenditure plans.

NHS

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on increasing the level of contracting out of National Health Service services to private concerns in Scotland.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on increasing the level of contracting out of National Health Service services to private concerns in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's policy is that, in order to provide the best care for patients, all services in the NHS should be provided in as cost-effective a way as possible; and that competitive tendering involving the private sector has a significant role to play in achieving that. I am discussing with health boards the steps that need to be taken to make better progress.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the overall increase in spending required by the National Health Service in Scotland due to the increasing demands of the population on the service in 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the revenue expenditure allocated to Lothian health board in 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I expect to announce the revenue expenditure allocations to Scottish health boards for 1988-89 in February.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider making available additional capital funds to Lothian health board to enable identified remedial and improvement work to be carried out to Edinburgh royal infirmary in 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board has been allocated £18,529,000 for capital expenditure in 1987-88 — including £9,821,000 earmarked for projects at the Western general hospital, Edinburgh, the West Lothian district general hospital, Livingston and the Edinburgh dental hospital. Apart from these earmarked funds, it is for the board to determine its spending priorities within its allocation. The board is due to submit a revised capital plan shortly and its capital allocation for 1988-89 will be announced early next year.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive Lothian health board's option appraisal on the future of the Edinburgh royal infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board is currently reviewing its acute service needs, and I expect to receive its proposals when it has completed this work.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Lothian health board with regard to its revenue and capital expenditure in *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian is among the best funded health authorities in Great Britain. Since the 1987-88 capital and revenue allocations were issued, my Department has received two letters from Lothian health board about capital allocations. In addition officials maintain regular contact about many aspects of the board's financial affairs.

Health Care International

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to give a figure for the reasonable additional costs incurred by the National Health Service for training nurses employed by Health Care International.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The detailed arrangements for nurse training are the subject of continuing discussion between HCI, Greater Glasgow health board and the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sanctions are available to him in the event of Health Care International failing to fulfil the undertakings given to him to apply National Health Service conditions of service to their staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no reason why Health Care International should not abide by the undertakings, which it volunteered, to apply NHS remuneration and conditions of service to medical, nursing, other professional and technical staff. There are sanctions, in terms of inability to register with Greater Glasgow health board in accordance with the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 if the terms of the authorisation have not been met.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the undertakings given to him by Health Care International that it will not compete with the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes. A copy of the Health Care International application and the terms of the Secretary of State's authorisation will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he received concerning the Health Care International proposal for a private hospital in Clydebank; how many of these favoured the proposal; how many opposed; how many sought safeguards for existing medical provision in west central Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Forty persons or bodies sent observations tc the Secretary of State about the application. Many of those consulted saw both benefits and drawbacks and the views varied as to the impact which the development might have on the National Health Service; the concerns most commonly addressed were those of the supply of qualified nurses and of blood and blood products. I believe that these concerns have been fully addressed by the conditions which have been attached to the authorisation.

Ambulances

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average waiting time for an ambulance responding to an emergency call in *(a)* rural areas and *(b)* urban areas; what arrangements exist for monitoring response times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish ambulance service carries out detailed monitoring of response times and submits quarterly returns to my Department. Ambulance areas are classified as either metropolitan or rural and in Scotland only the Glasgow area falls into the metropolitan category. The figures available show the percentage of emergency calls answered within specified time limits. In 1986-87, the response times were as follows:

Area	*8 minutes per cent.*	*14 minutes per cent.*	*20 minutes per cent.*
Highland and Western Isles	59·4	77·5	88·2
Grampian, Orkney and Shetland	69·0	87·8	94·5
Tayside	71·1	92·8	97·8
Fife, Lothian and Borders	57·8	87·5	96·5
Glasgow	44·5	81·3	93·6
Forth Valley and Lanarkshire	63·9	90·5	97·8
Argyll and Clyde	65·4	89·1	96·8
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	70·4	90·2	97·3
Scotland	58·8	86·9	95·8

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in achieving the double manning of ambulances throughout the Scottish ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government give high priority to reducing the number of emergency calls which are answered by single-manned ambulances. Extra money has been allocated to allow more rapid progress to be made to that end. As a result the Scottish ambulance service will spend about £250,000 in 1987-88 on reducing single manning of accident and emergency ambulances.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are on hospital waiting lists in Fife.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information centrally available, which relates to 31 March 1987 and is provisional, shows 5,198 people on waiting lists for hospital in-patient treatment in the Fife health board area.

NHS Beds

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of National Health Service beds in Renfrew district and compare in that table the current figure with 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a district basis.

Hospital Patients

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the care of elderly hospital patients in the east end of Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of geriatric services in east Glasgow is primarily a matter for the Greater Glasgow health board. The board is, however, conducting a strategic review of services for the elderly in the greater Glasgow area as a whole and any decisions on services for elderly patients in the east end of the city will be dependent on the outcome of that review.

Hospitals

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* private and *(b)* National Health Service hospitals have been built in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forsyth: *(a)* Two private hospital developments have been notified to the Secretary of State since 1979, one in 1981 and one in 1982. *(b)* Details of all hospital developments are not held centrally. The information for major capital projects is as follows:

Year	*Number of hospitals*
1979	2
1980	10
1981	6
1982	5
1983	10
1984	6
1985	4
1986	4
[1]1987	4
Total	51

[1] To date.

Abortions

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for each hospital which performed abortions in each health board area, in the latest year for which statistics are available, the ages of the women having the abortions, the numbers of those women resident in that health board area and the numbers who travelled from other parts of Scotland, other parts of the United Kingdom, other European Economic Community countries and other countries;

(2) if he will list for each hospital which performed abortions in each health board area, in the latest year for which statistics are available, the gestational ages of the foetuses;

(3) which hospitals within each health board area perform abortions; and how many abortions were performed in each hospital in the latest year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Forsyth: Information about the abortions performed in each health board area is published in "Scottish Health Statistics". It is not our practice to publish a breakdown of these figures by individual hospital.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by each district health authority area the number of abortions undertaken in each year since 1967.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of abortions by Health Board of treatment are given in "Scottish Health Statistics 1985" — page 58. The statistics are published annually.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give by Government Department the number of registered disabled persons employed as a percentage of the total work force for each year since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested for the departments for which I am responsible is as follows:

Disabled Staff as a percentage of total Staff

Department	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Scottish Office (excluding Scottish Prison Service)	1·72	1·84	1·66	1·65	1·32	1·53	1·46	1·66	1·69
Scottish Prison Service	0·27	0·41	0·40	0·38	0·33	0·29	0·28	0·23	0·19
General Register Office (Scotland)	3·44	3·76	3·37	2·92	2·80	2·77	2·69	2·30	1·96
Scottish Record Office	1·46	1·46	1·46	0·84	0·78	1·61	1·59	1·68	1·65
Scottish Courts Administration	1·76	1·28	1·13	1·07	0·91	0·57	0·46	0·46	0·35

I will write to the hon. Member with the relevant information for the Department of the Registers of Scotland.

Open-heart Surgery

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed his review of open-heart surgery facilities in Scotland; and if he will make a statement on the expansion of such facilities in the area of Grampian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The review has not yet been completed.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce a comprehensive scheme of screening for breast cancer among women aged below 50 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. We announced earlier this year that we accepted the recommendations of the Forrest report on breast cancer screening that there should be a comprehensive three-yearly screening programme for all women between the ages of 50 and 64. I recently announced that the first four breast cancer screening centres will be established in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee during 1988.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of breast cancer screening machines in each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Cervical Cancer Tests

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many clinics and laboratories are carrying out cervical cancer tests in Scotland; and where are they operating.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Many clinics and GPs take cervical cancer smears which must then be forwarded to laboratories for testing for cervical cancer. The 19 laboratories examining cervical cancer smears in Scotland are as follows:

Health Board	*Laboratory*
Argyll and Clyde	Inverclyde royal infirmary Royal Alexandra hospital Vale of Leven hospital
Ayrshire and Arran	Ayrshire central hospital
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary
Forth Valley	Stirling royal infirmary
Grampian	Foresterhill hospital
Greater Glasgow	Royal maternity hospital Glasgow royal infirmary Southern general hospital Stobhill hospital Victoria infirmary Western infirmary
Highland	Raigmore hospital Dunbar hospital
Lanarkshire	Monklands district general hospital
Lothian	Edinburgh royal infirmary
Tayside	Dundee royal infirmary Perth royal infirmary

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given health boards on cervical cancer screening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received and am presently considering the report of a Scottish Health Service Planning Council working group which reviewed the cervical cytology service in Scotland. Guidance to health boards will be issued in due course.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to curb drug abuse in Glasgow, Springburn.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's strategy and the measures being taken to tackle the problem of drug misuse throughout the United Kingdom are described in "Tackling Drug Misuse — A Summary of the Government's Strategy", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds have been spent in Glasgow, Springburn to rehabilitate drug addicts for the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to seek to prevent abuse by drug addicts of pain killing drugs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's strategy and the measures being taken to tackle the problem of drug misuse are described in "Tackling Drug Misuse — A Summary of the Government's Strategy", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new facilities the Scottish National Health Service has been given, since 1979, for the diagnosis and treatment of drug abusers, including their accommodation.

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new facilities have been made available to the National Health Service in Scotland for the treatment of heroin and related drug abuse since 1983.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, what new facilities have been made available to the National Health Service in Scotland for the treatment of heroin and related drug abuse since 1983.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: NHS services for drug misusers are generally provided as part of the usual range of community and hospital-based services. The Government have made substantial increases in resources available to health boards since 1979 and it is for individual health boards to determine the level of expenditure on particular services from within their overall financial allocations.

In 1984 and 1985 in addition the Government provided funds to establish a range of local drug projects run by health boards, local authorities and voluntary bodies in places where drug misuse was prevalent. The support of these projects was the responsibililty of the Scottish Office until April this year when this responsibility was devolved to the relevant health boards. The total cost of these projects which are listed below is about £0·75 million per year.

Greater Glasgow Health Board
Possil Drugs Project
The Place, Possilpark
Voluntary community groups, Possil and Springburn
Drug stopping programme, Southern General Hospital
Counselling and support service, Castlemilk
Community support project, Easterhouse
Detached worker, Duke Street Hospital

Lothian Health Board
Church of Scotland, Spectrum House, Tynepark
Church of Scotland, Simpson House
Social work support for drug misusers, Pilton/Muirhouse
SHADA
WEST
Leith Group
Lanarkshire Health Board
Social work support for drug misusers, Lanarkshire
Tayside Health Board
Wishart Drug Problems Centre
Health adviser, GUM Clinic, Dundee
Social work support for drug misusers, Tayside
Perth Family Support Group
Dundee Family Support Group
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
Social work support for drug misusers, Ayrshire

Contraception

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment *(a)* by contraceptive method, and *(b)* by source of treatment clinic or general practitioner in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	[2]*1986*
Family Planning (Clinic) Services					
People attending	137,245	[3]138,377	135,672	135,309	132,587
Contraceptive method chosen					
– Oral contraceptive	78,162	83,026	78,649	76,163	73,488
– IUD	21,981	22,158	21,574	20,676	19,086
– Cap/Diaphragm	7,991	8,255	9,129	9,794	9,837
– Condom	12,046	12,018	12,582	13,300	13,503
– Other/not known	5,735	4,192	8,270	9,090	10,607
– None	11,330	8,738	5,468	6,286	6,066
Family Planning (Domiciliary) Services					
Women seen	3,422	3,179	3,018	2,787	2,735
General Practitioner Contraceptive Services (as at 31 December)					
Women registered with a GP for ordinary contraceptive services or IUD fitting[1]	233,276	248,303	254,277	260,425	270,797

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[1] Excludes temporary residents.

[2] Provisional: 1985 data are used for Family Planning (Clinic) Services data in Greater Glasgow, whose 1986 data are not available.

[3] In 1983 10 people appear twice in the breakdown by contraceptive method because they used two methods during the year.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and which health boards provide designated young people's birth control services in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available. It is for individual health boards to determine the pattern of provision of these services and the extent to which designated facilities are provided.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of family planning clinics and family planning clinic sessions in each health board in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Premises in which Family Planning Clinics are held

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	[1]*1986*
SCOTLAND	182	181	183	184	185
Argyll and Clyde	15	15	15	15	17
Ayrshire and Arran	9	9	9	9	9
Borders	5	5	5	5	5
Dumfries and Galloway	13	13	13	13	13
Fife	14	14	14	14	15
Forth Valley	5	5	5	5	5
Grampian	13	13	12	12	12
Greater Glasgow	36	36	41	43	43
Highland	8	6	6	6	6
Lanarkshire	13	13	13	13	13
Lothian	28	30	28	27	26
Tayside	19	19	19	19	19
Islands[2]	4	3	3	3	2

[1] Provisional: 1985 data are used for Greater Glasgow Health Board whose 1986 data are not available.

[2] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles Health Boards.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many (1) National Health Service family planning clinics and (2) general practitioner health centres are designated as training centres for family planning in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of new patients in each health board diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of people in Scotland on the waiting list for kidney transplantation in each year from 1975 to the present.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available.

Housing

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last held talks with representatives of Scottish tenants' associations, housing co-operatives, Scottish housing associations and local authorities in order to discuss housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Both my right hon. and learned Friend and I have frequent discussions and informal meetings with a wide range of bodies involved in housing. Last month we met representatives of SSHA tenants and earlier this month I, myself, held meetings with COSLA and representatives of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations to discuss housing matters. I have also visited a number of housing co-operatives, housing associations and local authorities.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct local authorities to prepare estimates of the required housebuilding programme for warden-serviced sheltered housing for the elderly between 1988 and 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that health boards, housing authorities and social work departments make adequate provision for the provision of housing in the community for people who are mentally handicapped, mentally ill, elderly or disabled.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of housing for these groups is a matter for the agencies concerned having regard to their own assessments of local needs and priorities and available finance. For their part the Government have increased the general allocations of money available to local authorities and to health boards. In addition specific funding for housing for the disabled is made available to the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the total new housebuilding starts by Scottish councils in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the total new housebuilding starts by Scottish housing associations in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the average house prices in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for the years 1977 to 1986 was published in "Scottish Housing Statistics 1986" which is available in the House Library. Details for 1987 are not yet available.

Private Rented Houses

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage of houses privately rented in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the number of private rented houses in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage of houses privately rented in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the number of private rented houses in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for the years 1977 to 1986 is published in "Housing and Construction Statistics" which is available in the House Library. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

House Prices

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average house prices in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987, repriced for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Householders

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proportion of the population in Scotland are single adult householders;

(2) what proportion of single adult householders in Scotland are over the age of 60 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information was published in SDD statistical bulletin No. 23, July 1986, entitled "Scottish Household Projections: 1983 based." A copy is available from the House Library.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of single adult householders will pay (i) full rates, (ii) partial rates and (iii) no rates in the financial year 1987-88; and if he will list similar figures for the last 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the form requested.

Council Housing

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage of housing in each of the regions of Scotland which is council housing and the percentage of the capital allocation for council housing which is allocated to the districts in each of the regions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentage of housing in each region that is council housing is given column A of the following table and the percentage of the aggregate Scottish HRA capital allocations for 1987-88 made to the districts in each region is in column B.

Region or Islands Area	[1]*Column A*	*Column B*
Borders	30·44	1·76
Central	49·32	6·07
Dumfries and Galloway	31·96	3·54
Fife	35·94	6·26
Grampian	32·10	9·35
Highland	28·98	5·91
Lothian	31·60	12·1
Strathclyde	47·47	46·1
Tayside	40·06	6·41
Orkney	17·73	0·24
Shetland	29·28	1·25
Western Isles	18·26	1·01

[1] Source: CIPFA Rating Review.

Fair Rents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the average registered fair rents of unfurnished let properties in each year from 1977 to 1987 in Edinburgh;

(2) if he will give the average registered fair rents of furnished let properties in each year from 1977 to 1987 in Edinburgh;

(3) if he will give the average registered fair rents of housing association properties in each year from 1977 to 1987 in Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures in the categories are not kept separately for the city of Edinburgh and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the average registered fair rents of furnished let properties in each year from 1977 to 1987 in Scotland;

(2) if he will give the average registered fair rents of housing association properties in each year from 1977 to 1987 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested can be obtained for the years 1977 to 1986 from the Table on page 37 of "Scottish Housing Statistics 1986", copies of which are in the Library. The information for 1987 is not yet available.

Rents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the average rent rise over the previous year for council houses in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the average rent rise over the previous year for council houses in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the following table:

Average weekly council house rent increase

Year	*Edinburgh* £	*Scotland* £
1977-78	0·69	0·54
1978-79	0·54	0·44
1979-80	0·81	0·50
1980-81	1·11	0·96
1981-82	1·91	1·81
1982-83	1·50	1·33
1983-84	1·24	0·84
1984-85	1·25	0·60
1985-86	0·18	1·08
1986-87	0·04	1·45
1987-88	1·61	1·66

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of companies in the East Kilbride constituency which have received regional development grants in each year since 1984.

Mr. Lang: The number of companies receiving approvals of new regional development grant in the East Kilbride parliamentary constituency is given below:

Year	*Number*
1985	27
1986	82
1987[1]	58

[1] to end of June

Information on the number of companies receiving old regional development grant is not available.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total level of grant given to companies within the East Kilbride constituency under the regional development grant system in each year since 1984.

Mr. Lang: Total payments under the new regional development grant scheme to firms in the East Kilbride parliamentary constituency are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1985	0·3
1986	1·0
1987[1]	0·6

[1] to end of June.

Information on payments by constituency is not available for the old regional development grant scheme. However, payments of old RDG of over £25,000 to individual businesses in the East Kilbride employment office area are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1985	4·1
1986	10·3
1987[1]	0·5

[1] to end of June.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, by constituency, the total number of jobs involved in all applications under the regional development grant system in each year since 1984.

Mr. Lang: The information requested for new regional development grant is given in the table. The old regional development grant scheme was not linked directly to job creation.

Jobs associated with applications for new regional development grant

Parliamentary constituency	*Year of application*		
	1985	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Angus East	330	190	130
Ayr	30	10	*
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	380	360	90
Clydebank and Milngavie	530	660	470
Clydesdale	460	480	280
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,240	680	650
Cunninghame (North)	650	560	400
Cunninghame (South)	1,370	870	500
Dumbarton	110	880	170
Dundee East	290	610	70
Dundee West	580	820	420
East Kilbride	790	830	630
Eastwood	230	210	160
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	*	*	*
Glasgow Cathcart	220	100	190
Glasgow Central	930	1,580	830
Glasgow Garscadden	50	210	50
Glasgow Govan	220	470	240
Glasgow Hillhead	2,160	2,410	630
Glasgow Maryhill	360	460	190
Glasgow Pollock	140	210	60
Glasgow Provan	240	150	80
Glasgow Rutherglen	100	420	270
Glasgow Shettleston	340	930	250
Glasgow Springburn	80	440	80
Greenock and Port Glasgow	210	550	120
Hamilton	930	600	210
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	400	550	350
Linlithgow	380	220	140
Livingston	1,630	1,140	550
Monklands East	670	480	160
Monklands West	490	410	70
Motherwell North	340	1,140	270
Motherwell South	360	570	700
North East Fife	*	*	*
Paisley North	870	770	540
Paisley South	40	10	330
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	250	750	180
Stirling	*	10	10
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	220	360	370

[1] To end of June.

Notes:

(1) Some applications were received from firms in non-assisted areas.

(2) An asterisk denotes a figure which cannot be given in order to avoid disclosing information relating to individual businesses.

(3) The figures do not include additional jobs which may arise as a result of applications for capital grant not linked directly to job creation.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list at 1987 prices spending on *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Gross expenditure on regional selective assistance (section 7) and regional development grant between 1979-80 and 1986-87 at 1986-87 prices are estimated at £252 million and £1,365 million respectively.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on *(a)* RDG and *(b)* RSA in 1986-87 and so far in 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: Gross expenditure on regional development grant and regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 in 1986-87 and the first half of 1987-88 is as follows:

£ million

	1986-87	*[1]1987-88*
Regional Development Grant	170	33
Regional Selective Assistance	35	13

[1] April to September.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the budget allocated to Edinburgh by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the budget allocated to Edinburgh by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987, repriced for inflation;

(3) if he will give the budget allocated to Edinburgh by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987, as a percentage of the corporation's budget.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall ask the Housing Corporation to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the budget allocated to Scotland by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the budget allocated to Scotland by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987, repriced for inflation;

(3) if he will give the budget allocated to Scotland by the Housing Corporation in each year from 1977 to 1987, as a percentage of the corporation's budget.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The budget for the Housing Corporation in Scotland is provided by Scottish Office Ministers and resources made available are shown in the table below. Information about expenditure in Scotland as a percentage of expenditure by the Housing Corporation is published in the corporation's annual report.

Year	*Gross allocation £ million*	*Adjusted for inflation £ million*
1977-78	[1]27·1	61·0
1978-79	[1]31·4	63·8
1979-80	[1]48·6	84·5
1980-81	[1]65·7	96·4
1981-82	85·0	113·6
1982-83	108·5	135·3
1983-84	109·6	130·6
1984-85	101·3	115·6
1985-86	104·2	112·2
1986-87	113·8	118·3
1987-88	123·2	

[1] Actual expenditure. In these years expenditure was controlled on basis of housing units to be provided rather than budget allocation.

Housing Grant

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the equivalent housing support grant figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the equivalent or the housing support grant figure for Edinburgh for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Year	*Amount of grant paid £*
1978-79	[1]
1979-80	11,269,405
1980-81	12,517,913
1981-82	7,869,440
1982-83	2,327,904
1983-84	0
1984-85	0
1985-86	0
1986-87	0
1987-88	0

[1] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give Edinburgh district council's housing support grant or equivalent figure for each year from 1978 to 1985 as a proportion of the total housing support grant figure for Scotland in that year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Year	*Per cent.*
1978-79	[1]—
1979-80	5·3
1980-81	5·5
1981-82	4·9
1982-83	2·2
1983-84	0
1984-85	0
1985-86	0

[1] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the housing support grant or equivalent figure for Scotland, repriced for inflation, for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Amount of grant aid paid at 1987-88 average prices[1]

Year	*£*
1978-79	[2]—
1979-80	371,014,898
1980-81	334,474,377
1981-82	216,084,137
1982-83	130,208,047
1983-84	85,935,559
1984-85	76,776,675
1985-86	69,083,360
1986-87	46,470,744
1987-88	46,489,693

[1] Using GDP deflators.
[2] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the housing support grant or equivalent figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Year	*Amount of grant paid £*
1978-79	[1]—
1979-80	213,400,000
1980-81	228,200,000
1981-82	161,900,000
1982-83	104,632,870
1983-84	72,135,479
1984-85	67,211,241
1985-86	64,178,219
1986-87	44,469,760
1987-88	46,489,693

[1] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage change in housing support grant or equivalent over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Year	*Percentage change over previous year*
1978-79	[1]—
1979-80	[1]—
1980-81	+6·9
1981-82	−29·1
1982-83	−35·4
1983-84	−31·1
1984-85	−6·8
1985-86	−4·5
1986-87	−30·7
1987-88	+4·5

[1] Information is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage change in housing support grant or equivalent over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Percentage change over previous year

Year	*Per cent.*
1978-79	[1]—
1979-80	[1]—
1980-81	+11·1
1981-82	−37·1
1982-83	−70·4
1983-84	—
1984-85	—
1985-86	—
1986-87	—
1987-88	—

[1] Information is not readily available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the housing support grant or equivalent figure for Edinburgh district council, repriced for inflation for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Amount of grant paid at 1987-88 Average Prices[1]

Year	*(£)*
1978-79	[2]—
1979-80	19,592,864
1980-81	18,347,595
1981-82	10,503,157
1982-83	2,896,908
1983-84	0
1984-85	0
1985-86	0
1986-87	0
1997-88	0

[1] Using GDP deflators

[2] Information for 1978-79 is not readily available

Housing Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total of new housebuilding starts for private sale in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on houses built for sale is not available centrally. Details of house building starts for the years 1977 to 1986 was published in "Scottish Housing Statistics 1986" which is available in the House Library. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses have been started in the public and private section in Greenock and Port Glasgow and Strathclyde as a whole in the years 1979-1986.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for Greenock and Port Glasgow in not held centrally. Numbers of public and private sector housing starts for Strathclyde were published in "Scottish Housing Statistics" which is available in the House Library.

Housing Investment

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the housing investment allocations made to all housing authorities in Scotland for each of the years 1978-79 to 1987-88 at 1987-88 constant prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Housing Capital

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what principle basis he allocates capital for housing to each of the Scottish district councils.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Allocations are made on an assessment of councils' own programmes to tackle evident needs, within resources available, taking account of councils' housing plans and capital programmes and other information available.

Education Reform

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has received from parents, schools councils, regional councils and other organisations to his consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The consultation is still running; I have not yet made a complete analysis of the responses.

Schoolchildren

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it one of his priorities to encourage the interest of schoolchildren, and young Scots in general, in the learning of science, arts, music, history and of the technical professions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend's aim is to ensure that young people have the opportunity to study these and other subjects as part of a balanced curriculum, which will equip them for adult life.

Young People

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific projects he proposed in order to provide for the training, job creation, sport and cultural recreation of Scottish young people to discourage migration south of the border and to ameliorate its effects.

Mr. Lang: The Government have introduced a wide range of measures to improve and expand training provision and strengthen the employment prospects of young people in Scotland. With the guarantee of a YTS place for all 16 and 17-year-olds no one under 18 need be unemployed. Other measures include the new job training scheme which is primarily geared to the training needs of young people between the ages of 18 and 25; the expansion of the number of places available under the enterprise allowance scheme and the support to employers through the new workers scheme.

We channel aid for sport through the Scottish Sports Council which will receive £4·7 million in the current financial year including provision for promotional work to increase levels of participation, particularly among the

13 to 24-year-old age group. We promote cultural activities through the Scottish Arts Council, which will receive £14·1 million in the current financial year and through a range of organisations some of which, like the Scottish Youth Theatre and the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, are particularly for young people.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek advice from experts, specialised bodies, trade unions, churches and others in order to establish an all-party and Scottish approach to the problems of migration of young Scots to the south and abroad.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it a priority to give practical support to the efforts of scientific, artistic, musical and sporting organisations to attract, train and occupy young people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government support many organisations in all fields making efforts to attract, train and occupy young people.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to support a research programme for the building of low cost, durable, publicly owned homes, with basic amenities, shopping and recreational facilities, for single young people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Guidance on housing for young and other single people was published three years ago in the Scottish Housing Handbook No. 7 "Housing for Single People, Shared Accommodation and Hostels". That guidance was based upon Scottish Office research. In addition, a research report "Housing Conversion to meet changing Needs in the Public Sector", issued by the Building Directorate of the Scottish Office in July, described alternatives to new building, including discussion and examples of provision for single people through adaptation.

I have no plans at this time for further research into this type of housing.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had talks with the regional and local authorities in Scotland in order to co-ordinate a programme for cultural, educational and scientific activities of Scottish young people in the next four years, aimed at providing them with positive alternatives to drug abuse, hooliganism and at alleviating the impact of unemployment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area are on YTS schemes at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: Youth training scheme figures are not available on either a constituency or travel-to-work area basis. In Dundee local authority district 1,555 young people were participating in youth training schemes at 23 October 1987.

YTS

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in the Dundee, West constituency are on YTS schemes at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: YTS figures are not available on a constituency basis. In Dundee local authority district 1,555 young people were participating in YTS at 23 October 1987.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many pupils from Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Glasgow, Pollock constituency have obtained places in further or higher education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Midlothian constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what efforts he is making in order to attract European Community support for the Scottish higher education system.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Educational establishments in Scotland have been successful in attracting funds in the first round of the European programme for co-operation between education and industry in training for technology —COMETT—and I look forward to significant further funds in the next round.

I have ensured that all establishments of higher education in Scotland will be fully informed of the opportunities in the new programme to encourage mobility for students within the European Community — ERASMUS — and they have been invited by the ERASMUS bureau of the European Community to make application for inclusion of their courses in the scheme.

The European Community also offers funds in a range of research and development programmes, in which Scottish educational establishments have been actively encouraged to participate.

I shall continue to seek to attract European Community support for higher education in Scotland in these programmes and in further European Community initiatives which may be relevant.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Hamilton constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Kilmarnock and Loudoun have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the constituency of Central Fife have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils in *(a)* Aberdeen and *(b)* the constituency of Aberdeen, North have obtained places in higher or further education directly after leaving school for each year since 1979; and what percentage of the age group this represents in each year.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the constituency of Falkirk, West have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Lothian regional council secondary schools situated in Edinburgh Central have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Dunfermline, West constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. McAvoy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Livingston have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Paisley, South constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Cumbernauld and Kilsyth have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Monklands, East have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the constituency of Cunninghame, South have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Renfrew district have obtained places in higher or further education since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979, and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Shettleston constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Education

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of representations he has had on the Government's proposals for school boards and the number that are favourable.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The consultation is still running; I have not yet made a complete analysis of the responses.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of representations he has received on school placements since June and the number of them requesting revision of the legislation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 15 and 20 July. Representations take many forms; it would be impracticable to count or categorise them in the way requested.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Stratkelvin and Bearsden contituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the constituency of East Kilbride have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of applications made to (1) Scottish universities, (2) Scottish central institutions and (3) further education colleges in Scotland, and the number of places available in each of the above, for the years 1979 to 1987.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Dumbarton constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Dundee, West constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Pupils (Statistics)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on each school roll and the pupil-teacher ratio in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on individual schools can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

262. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of Falkirk, West for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Falkirk, West can be obtained from Central regional council.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Glasgow, Pollok can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Midlothian constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Midlothian can be obtained from Lothian regional council.

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Hamilton constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Hamilton can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Kilmarnock and Loudoun for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Kilmarnock and Loudoun can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of Fife, Central for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Fife, Central can be obtained from Fife regional council.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Aberdeen, North constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Aberdeen, North can be obtained from Grampian regional council.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Glasgow, Maryhill for each year since 1979, and also give the gender breakdown of both pupils and teachers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Glasgow, Maryhill can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Glasgow, Maryhill schools have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year; and if he will give a gender breakdown.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979, and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Glasgow, Hillhead can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Glasgow, Shettleston constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Glasgow, Shettleston can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, by education authorities, those primary schools in Scotland having fewer than 100 pupils, showing the school roll in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following table shows the number of primary schools, by education authority, with less than 100 pupils as at September 1986.

Education authority	*Number of schools*
Borders	48
Central	39
Dumfries and Galloway	79
Fife	45
Grampian	126
Highland	147

Education authority	*Number of schools*
Lothian	49
Strathclyde	174
Tayside	85
Orkney	19
Shetland	27
Western Isles	50
Scotland	888

Details of individual schools can be obtained from the authorities concerned.

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of East Kilbride for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in East Kilbride can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Dundee, East constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Dundee, East can be obtained from Tayside regional council.

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Dumbarton constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Dumbarton can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil- teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Dundee, West constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Dundee West can be obtained from Tayside regional council.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Dunfermline, West constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Dunfermline, West can be obtained from Fife regional council.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Monklands, East for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Monklands East can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the constituency of Cunninghame, South for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Cunninghame, South can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the pupil to teacher ratios for Glasgow and Strathclyde, respectively, for primary and secondary schools, respectively, in each year since 1979 and list alongside them the pupil to teacher ratios he assumed for each year in his calculation of relevant expenditure for rate support grant purposes.

Mr. Rifkind: Actual pupil-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in Glasgow division and Strathclyde region are published in the Scottish Education Department's annual statistical bulletin "Pupils and Teachers in Education Authority Primary and Secondary Schools", copies of which are available in the Library.

No assumption is made about pupil-teacher ratios for the purpose of determining relevant expenditure for rate support grant.

Mr. Buchan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Paisley, South constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Paisley, South can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Livingston for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Livingston can be obtained from Lothian regional council.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Greenock and Port Glasgow for each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Greenock and Port Glasgow can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils in Greenock and Port Glasgow have obtained places in higher and further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ration in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in Renfrew district for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Renfrew district can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of pupils in the Renfrew division of Strathclyde regional council who are currently at secondary school; and what is the pupil to teacher ratio in the Renfrew division.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information is contained in Statistical Bulletin No 4/B1/1987, a copy of which was sent to the hon. Member. A copy is also held in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Graham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in the constituency of Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

School Meals

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average price of a school meal charged by each of the education authorities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table.

Region	*Charge for a fixed price meal*		
	Primary *Pence*	*Secondary* *Pence*	*Primary and Secondary* *Pence*
Borders	—	—	50
Central	—	—	58
Dumfries/Galloway	—	—	61
Fife	—	—	50
Grampian	58	68	—
Highland	—	—	65
Lothian	50	55	—
Strathclyde	—	—	63
Tayside	—	—	60
Orkney	—	—	60
Shetland	—	—	60
Western Isles	—	—	65

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in *(a)* the Tayside region and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area are in receipt of free school meals; what percentage of the total number of children in each group this represents; and what are the comparable figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table.

	Tayside Region		*City of Dundee*[1]	
Year *(1)*	*Number of children in receipt of free school meals* *(2)*	*Column (2) as a percentage of pupils on the register* *(3)*	*Number of children in receipt of free school meals* *(4)*	*Column (4) as a percentage of pupils on the register* *(5)*
1979	9,234	12·8	5,622	16·3
1980	8,208	11·6	4,978	14·8
1981	5,610	8·1	—	—
1982	6,597	9·7	—	—
1983	7,380	11·1	—	—
1984	7,702	12·2	—	—
1985	7,854	12·7	—	—
1986	8,154	13·7	—	—
1987	7,921	13·6	—	—

[1] Figures were collected on a regional basis after 1980

Child Care

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the terms of reference of the special review body inquiring into the legal aspects of child care in Scotland under the auspices of the social work services group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The review body's terms of reference, which were announced in the press last August, are as follows:

> "1. To identify, in the light of developments since the implementation of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, options for change and improvement in child care law which would simplify and improve arrangements for protecting children at risk and care for children and families in need.
>
> 2. To assess the resource implications of any proposals for amendment of the law.
>
> 3. To report to the Secretary of State."

The review body will be invited to complete its work within two years. Its membership will be drawn from a wide range of individuals with a contribution to offer and will be led by the Social Work Services Group.

Child Abuse

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra resources his Department is making available to deal with the problems of child abuse.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In addition to paying rate support grant to regional and islands councils, whose social work responsibilities extend to child welfare, the Scottish Office provides substantial financial support for research into various aspects of child abuse, for voluntary organisations such as the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and for the Overnewton child sexual abuse project in Glasgow.

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of people to date, in each local authority district prosecuted under section 48 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance his Department issues to Her

Majesty's inspectors of education as to whether they should comment on whether the local authority allocates enough resources to the school.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Auctioneers

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to make the registration of auctioneers obligatory.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Fishery Protection Vessel

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to give approval for the ordering of a new fishery protection vessel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As the introduction of the new Norna at the beginning of 1988 will complete the current modernisation programme, the question of approving an order for a new fishery protection vessel does not arise.

Inshore Fishing (Loch Ryan)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to amend the regulation concerning Loch Ryan under the terms of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present but the matter will be considered during the review of the inshore fishing regime next year.

Alcohol Addiction

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was spent on reseach projects on alcohol addiction by the Home and Health Department in the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 5 February, column *745*. The figure for 1986-87 is £13,597.

Violent Crime

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of crimes of violence against the person in Scotland *(a)* in the 12 months ended April 1981 and *(b)* in the most recent 12 months for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures are as follows:

May 1980 to April 1981: 9,050
July 1986 to June 1987: 14,110

For the purpose of this reply, the terms 'crimes of violence against the person' is taken to include all non-sexual crimes of violence — group 1 of the standard classification — apart from robbery, those crimes of indecency—group 2—which contain a violent element, and certain crimes involving malicious and reckless conduct.

Mental Illness Hospitals

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were resident in mental illness hospitals in Scotland in each year from 1980 to 1986 and in the first six months of 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 31 December 1986 there were 14,901 residents in mental illness hospitals in Scotland. Comparable data for 1980-85 are given in "Scottish Health Statistics," copies of which are in the Library. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Enterprise Zone (Greenock and Port Glasgow)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received regarding the possibility of creating an enterprise zone in Greenock or Port Glasgow.

Mr. Lang: The only recent representations have been from Inverclyde district council. The case for an enterprise zone remains under consideration but, as my right hon. and learned Friend has indicated to the district council, no decision can be taken until the findings on the current evaluation of the enterprise zone experiment have been fully considered.

Gynaecological Operations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health district the number of gynaecological operations waiting to be performed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of persons waiting for in-patient hospital treatment — not necessarily operations—in the specialty of gynaecology is given for each health board at 31 March 1987 in the following table. The figures are provisional.

	Number
Argyll and Clyde	758
Ayrshire and Arran	591
Borders	27
Dumfries and Galloway	567
Fife	442
Forth Valley	378
Grampian	1,564
Greater Glasgow	1,664
Highland	410
Lanarkshire	394
Lothian	1,208
Orkney	0
Shetland	0
Tayside	192
Western Isles	24
Scotland	8,219

Health Authorities (Review of Priorities)

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Scottish health authorities' review of priorities for the eighties and nineties will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This report was prepared by a working group set up by the Scottish Health Service Planning Council and is a working document at present under consideration by the planning council which is collecting views about its recommendations from the organisations from which council members are drawn. The council has sent out over 1,000 copies of the report to all health board members and senior officials, the Common Services Agency, Scottish Home and Health Department, the universities with medical faculties, the chief scientist and the Association of Scottish Local Health Councils and to all members of the national consultative committees and their sub-committees. Arrangements have been made to place copies in the Library of the House.

Legal Aid Regulations

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to amend the Criminal Legal Aid Regulations so far as to remove those provisions which at present prevent an accused person from obtaining assistance at any subsequent diet when he has pleaded guilty without professional help, with the result that a person who has previously been sentenced to imprisonment and is at risk of having this liberty is totally disqualified from being represented under legal aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is one of several aspects of the legal aid regime on which I have received representations. I hope to reach a view on all the proposals made to me before the end of the year.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take at the expiry on 31 December of the agreement with United States Tobacco International Inc. with regard to the manufacture and sale of Skoal Bandits.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are currently considering the existing voluntary agreement on the promotion of Skoal Bandits. Negotiations have taken place between officials of the Department of Health and Social Security and the company about revising the agreement, but matters have not yet been concluded.

Prisoners

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current population in each of Scotland's prisons, young offenders' institutions and other detention centres; in each case how many of these prisoners are on remand; and what is the capacity of each institution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 20 October 1987 the position was as follows:

	Total population	*Of which: remand*	*Capacity*
Prisons			
Aberdeen	163	34	151
Barlinnie	1,069	366	983
Barlinnie Special Unit	7	—	8
Cornton Vale	157	43	177
Dungavel	143	—	147
Edinburgh	629	127	547
Friarton	81	—	82
Glenochil	397	—	496
Inverness	101	27	87
Low Moss	336	—	400
Noranside	104	—	115
Penninghame	65	—	75
Perth[1]	422	48	519
Peterhead	109	—	180
Shotts[2]	328	—	351
Young offenders institutions			
Castle Huntly	132	—	134
Cornton Vale	31	—	41
Dumfries	124	34	141
Greenock	170	—	180
Polmont	432	44	408
Detention Centre			
Glenochil	135	—	182
Remand unit			
Longriggend	274	248	194
TOTAL	5,409	971	5,598

[1] Only 440 places currently available.

[2] Two halls (177 places) at Shotts not yet available.

Ministerial Engagements (Members' Attendance)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his policy regarding attendance by hon. Members at ministerial engagements in their constituencies;

(2) what constituencies he and his junior Ministers have visited in the past year; and on which occasions the local hon. Member was invited to attend;

(3) what is his practice regarding the arrangements for notifying hon. Members that he or one of his Ministers is to visit their constituency; and what period of notice is normally given.

Mr. Rifkind: My ministerial colleagues and I aim to visit all parts of Scotland as regularly as opportunities arise and other ministerial commitments permit. Attendance at ministerial engagements, wherever they take place, is a matter for Ministers and their hosts. Hon. Members are however normally informed, and are given reasonable notice, whenever Ministers are attending public engagements within their constituencies.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the estimated increased public spending in Scotland as a result of the demands for accommodation for old-age pensioners for 1988 to 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated number of retirement pensioners who, during the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, will require accommodation provisions paid from public funds in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new retirement pensioners in Scotland required places in specialised homes provided by the National Health Service, for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Hospital Building

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many National Health Service hospitals have been built and put into operation in Scotland for each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Details of all hospital developments are not held centrally, as minor capital projects are detailed to health boards. The information for major capital projects is as follows:

Year	*Number of hospitals*
1980	10
1981	6
1982	5
1983	10
1984	6
1985	4
1986	4
[1]1987	4
Total	49

[1] To date.

NHS (Hamilton)

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Hamilton constituency and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Medical Teaching and Training

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed with the British Medical Association Scottish universities teaching medical staff the requirements and functioning of medical teaching and training in the light of the new demands of primary care and patient treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no meetings with the British Medical Association or representatives of the Scottish universities to discuss teaching and training. From time to time, he has informal meetings with representatives of these bodies at which many subjects are discussed and officials of my Department meet regularly postgraduate medical deans to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The undergraduate curriculum in medical schools is a matter for the universities to determine taking account of guidance issued from time to time by the General Medical Council. The Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practitioners has a similar responsibility for the standards of postgraduate training and these bodies will be well aware of the demands facing the medical profession.

Students

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students from countries other than Great Britain there are in Scottish universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no polytechnics in Scotland: the nearest equivalents are the central institutions. In 1985-86 the numbers of students, including postgraduates, from countries other than Great Britain who attended Scottish universities and central institutions were 5,580 and 1,180 respectively.

Medical Staff (Glasgow)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of new full-time medical staff serving the medical needs of the population of Glasgow for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Ward Closures

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many National Health Service hospital wards closed either permanently or temporarily in Scotland during 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) how many National Health Service hospital wards have been closed in Scotland, for each year since 1975, either temporarily or permanently due to *(a)* shortage of medical staff, *(b)* shortage of deficient equipment, or *(c)* lack of funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Operational management of hospitals is a matter for individual health boards. Whilst from time to time we become aware of temporary bed or ward closures which may occur for a variety of reasons, there is no central record which is either comprehensive or detailed.

Scottish Assembly

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy urgently to publish a consultative paper regarding a Scottish assembly.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Grampian Region (Specialist Treatment)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what areas of specialist medicine or surgery require to be provided for residents of Grampian outwith the area of Grampian health board; how many patients have had to be so treated for each of the years since 1979; what has been the average waiting time for each specialty; and what plans he has to remedy the situation to provide adequate treatment within the area of Grampian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The areas of specialist medicine or surgery in which Grampian residents are treated outwith Grampian health board area are cardiac surgery, orthopaedic surgery, neuro surgery and spina paralysis.

The statistical information requested is as follows:

Cardiac Surgery
(Figures available in this category from 1981)

	Number of operations	*Average waiting time (in weeks) for operations Glasgow*
1981	36	15
1982	26	19
1983	11	19
1984	74	17
1985	30	11
1986	112	21
1987[1]	101	23

[1] To 31 August.

Other specialties

	Orthopaedics	*Neuro surgery*	*Spinal paralysis*
1979	843	46	—
1980	843	49	—
1981	876	43	—
1982	846	25	—
1983	1030	32	7
1984	1106	28	15
1985[1]	1137	10	6

[1] Latest available figures.

The figures relate to patients treated in each specialty outwith Grampian. Orthopaedic patients are treated in Stracathro hospital, Tayside by Grampian surgeons. Waiting list figures are not available for these specialties.

As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there is at present a committee examining cardiac surgery in Scotland. With regard to the other specialties, it is a matter for individual boards to decide on the level of service necessary taking account of the number of patients requiring treatment. I understand, however, that Grampian health board has long-term plans to provide accommodation in Grampian for its orthopaedic patients presently treated in Stracathro hospital, Brechin.

Aberdeen, North (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which Ministers at his Department have visited the constituency of Aberdeen, North on how many occasions and for what purpose since 1979; and when such visits took place.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is not readily available.

Grampian Regional Council (Social Work Department)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to privatise the services of the social work department of Grampian regional council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Scottish Homes (Government's Proposals)

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the number of responses he has received on the Government's proposals on Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my answer today to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of people in sheltered accommodation in each local authority district.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Sexual Assault

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to implement the recommendations of the Scottish Home and Health Department's report on prosecuting sexual assault.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend has today given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Wray).

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations that have sent him comments on the Scottish Home and Health Department's report "Prosecuting Sexual Assaults" and if he intends to implement the recommendations in the report.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking, following publication of the Scottish Home and Health Department's report "Prosecuting Sexual Assault"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have to date received comments from the rape crisis centres for Edinburgh and Strathclyde on the Scottish Office social research study "Prosecuting Sexual Assault". The report did not contain formal recommendations but a number of changes in procedures relating to the prosecution of alleged sexual assaults have been taken in the light of the conclusions of the study. In particular, restrictions on evidence at trials of rape and other sexual offences have been introduced by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985. The effects of these changes are now being monitored as part of an independent research study funded by my Department.

Dogs

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to deal with the problems of stray dogs and canine fouling of public places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 13 March 1987, at column *334* and on 24 April 1987, at column *705*.

A74

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what date he estimates that work will start on bringing up to motorway standards all the remaining stretches of the A74 between Glasgow and Carlisle; and by what date he estimates that this work will be completed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The timetable for upgrading of the A74 to motorway will depend on the outcome of feasibility studies that are under way, and on the time taken to complete any necessary statutory procedures.

Forfar Bypass

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the up-to-date position on the Forfar bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have already implemented a number of adjustments to the signing and road markings at the junctions which should greatly assist drivers and, as a result of discussions with the Tayside police, who have monitored the situation since the opening of the bypass, I have now decided to provide deceleration lanes at both of the staggered junctions. It is hoped that this work will be completed by Christmas.

M80 Motorway

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the line of the proposed M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Detailed consideration of alternative viable routes is continuing, but it will be some time before a decision on a preferred route can be made.

Building Agency

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to devote central Government funds to creating a building agency similar to the English Estates Agency funded by the Department of Trade and Industry in England.

Mr. Lang: No. the Scottish Development Agency already performs the same function in Scotland as does English Estates in England.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will be seeking funds from central Government for a crime prevention campaign in Glasgow similar to that recently funded by the Home Department in London for the Metropolitan police campaign.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In common with the rest of Scotland, Glasgow already benefits from the substantial contribution which the Government make towards crime prevention through, for example, the 51 per cent. specific grant on police expenditure, the community programme national crime prevention initiative and the urban programme. In addition, the Government have allocated £250,000 to crime prevention publicity measures in Scotland in the current financial year.

Green Belt (Edinburgh)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review his decision of February 1985 to force the incorporation of 2,300 more private housing units on green-belt and green infill sites in and around Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such decision. He approved in February 1986 the revised Lothian region structure plan. One of the policies in the plan requires the City of Edinburgh district council to identify sites for a further 2,300 houses to be available after 1991. Where these sites are found is essentially a matter for the district council. It is the responsibility of the regional council to monitor the implementation of the plan and bring forward alterations.

Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will intervene to resolve the staffing shortage at the Royal Edinburgh hospital and provide the health board with the funding necessary to maintain the welfare of patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The staffing of the Royal Edinburgh hospital is a matter for the Lothian health board, which is among the best funded health authorities in Great Britain.

Multiple Tenancies

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to introduce legislation to enable local councils more effectively to prevent the undesirable proliferation of multiple tenancies in tenements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans to do so.

Anti-Dampness Measures

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make provision for local authorities to undertake effective anti-dampness measures in houses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for the local authorities themselves to decide what measures to take to combat dampness in their housing stocks and what proportion of the resources available to them to spend on the problem. In deciding on levels of capital allocations for next year, we will again pay particular attention to authorities' plans to deal with dampness.

System-built Housing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make provision for local authorities to tackle Orlit and similar system-build defects.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is one of the types of work that local authorities tackle, according to their own priorities, from within the unhypothecated capital allocations made available to them.

Schools (Charges)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to introduce charges for certain subjects into Scottish schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no plans to change the present arrangements in Scotland which seem to be generally well understood and to work satisfactorily.

Arthritis

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the number of specialist units in Scotland available for the treatment of children suffering from serious arthritis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current practice and policy is to treat children suffering from arthritis in facilities specifically designed for children and not in specialist arthritis units.

Schools (Sport)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what inquiries are currently being undertaken by his Department concerning the promotion of sport in schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have encouraged the Scottish Sports Council to promote new sporting opportunities for school children and to give a new impetus to competitive sport. I hope the seminar on this subject which they are organising on 28 October will be well supported and followed through by education and sporting bodies.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made for liaison between his Department, the education authorities and the Scottish Sports Council for the promotion of sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Promoting sport is primarily a matter for the Scottish Sports Council. Arrangements for liaison between the Scottish Office, the Council and the many other bodies concerned with sport, including the education authorities, are kept under continual review.

Social Work Departments

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements exist for consultation between local authority social work departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My officials are regularly in touch with Social Work Directors and their Departments but arrangements for consultation between local authorities are not a matter for my right hon. Friend.

Scottish Tourist Board

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the decision by the Scottish Tourist Board to give financial assistance to the redevelopment of Butlins holiday centre at Ayr was subject to ministerial approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Ministerial approval was given to the Scottish tourist board's financial assistance of £1·2 million to the re-development of the Butlin's site at the Heads of Ayr. Investment decisions of this scale demonstrate growing confidence in the tourism industry in Scotland. The private sector commitment is essential if such developments are to proceed. The government is pleased to be able to bring such projects—with clear economic benefits—to fruition with financial support through the Scottish tourist board.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Chairman of the Scottish tourist board at Scotland's travel fair on 6 May. My noble Friend the Minister of State regularly meets the chairman to discuss tourism policy and strategic issues of importance to the industry.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of the Scottish Tourist Board, stating the date of their original appointment, the date of their present appointment and when their current term of office expires.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Name	*Date of first appointment*	*Date of present appointment*	*Term of office expires*
A. R. Devereux (Chairman)	1 March 1980	1 March 1985	28 February 1990
R. D. Cramond (Member)	1 January 1985	1 January 1985	31 March 1988
Mrs. S. G. Bell (Member)	1 October 1983	1 October 1986	30 September 1989
J. B. B. Stewart (Member)	5 November 1985	5 November 1985	4 November 1988
D. Kinloch Anderson (Member)	1 October 1986	1 October 1986	30 September 1989
N. Renfrew (Member)	1 October 1986	1 October 1986	30 September 1989

The board normally consists of a chairman and six members. The current vacancy will be filled shortly.

Health Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has for consulting with the chairpersons of health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I meet all health board chairmen together three times a year. I meet individual chairmen at other times to discuss particular issues.

School Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether the cost of preparing, printing and distributing 800,000 leaflets, dealing with Her Majesty's Government's proposals for school boards will be borne wholly by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the total cost of preparing, printing and distributing 800,000 leaflets dealing with Her Majesty's Government's proposals for school boards in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total cost of printing and distribution was £23,225. This will be met from Scottish Office votes.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children are receiving free school meals in each of the education authorities in Scotland, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children taking school meals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information taken from the annual census of school meals undertaken in January 1987 is set out in the table.

Number of Children receiving free meals as a percentage of the total number of children taking school meals

Region	*Per cent.*
Borders	24·0
Central	46·6
Dumfries and Galloway	24·3
Fife	40·2
Grampian	20·0
Highland	31·7
Lothian	30·4
Strathclyde	56·8
Tayside	37·2
Orkney	25·4
Shetland	10·0
Western Isles	42·6
Scotland	43·5

Civil Service

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of Civil Service posts, by constituency and by Department, listed by grade and sex in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is not available in the form requested.

Rented Accommodation

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in public sector rented accommodation in the constituency of East Kilbride in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally by constituency area.

Rosyth Bypass

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Rosyth bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A study of the route options has been completed and a preferred line for the proposed bypass has been identified. It is hoped that draft orders will be published early in 1988.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on Scottish Homes; and if he will list the organisations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have received 247 responses to the consultation paper "Scottish Homes—A New Agency for Housing in Scotland" from organisations. The organisations are listed as follows. In addition, a number of letters referring wholly or partly to Scottish Homes have been received from individuals but these have not generally offered any comment on the substance of the proposals contained in the consultation document.

Scottish Special Housing Association
The Housing Corporation
Hillhead (Glasgow) Community Council
The Central Springburn Community Council
Faifley Community Council
Springboig Community Council
Shettleston Community Council
Toryglen Community Council
Dumbarton East Community Council
Wyndford and District Community Council
Harthill and Eastfield Community Council
Linnvale, North and South Drumry Community Council
Barrhead Community Council
North Motherwell Community Council
Govan Community Council
Hillhead Community Council
Ettrick and Lauderdale District Council
Kincardine and Deeside District Council
City of Aberdeen
Falkirk District Council

Argyll and Bute District Council
Kyle and Carrick District Council
Stewartry District Council
Annandale and Eskdale District Council
Cunninghame District Council
North East Fife District Council
Renfrew District Council
Clackmannan District Council
City of Edinburgh District Council
Nithsdale District Council
Gordon District Council
East Kilbride District Council
Banff and Buchan District Council
Inverness District Council
Badenoch and Strathspey District Council
Sutherland District Council
City of Dundee District Council
West Lothian District Council
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council
Angus District Council
City of Glasgow
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council
Roxburgh District Council
Dunfermline District Council
Stirling District Council
Inverclyde District Council
East Lothian District Council
Bearsden and Milngavie District Council
Perth and Kinross District Council
Clydesdale District Council
Moray District Council
Berwickshire District Council
Strathclyde Campaign for Investment in Council Housing
Glenrothes Development Corporation
Livingston Development Corporation
Irvine Development Corporation
East Kilbride Development Corporation
Shetland Islands Council
Orkney Islands Council

Western Isles Islands Council
Strathclyde Regional Council
Lothian Regional Council Social Work Department
SLANT (Scottish Local Authorities with New Towns)
Strathclyde Chief Housing Officers Group
Institute of Housing (Scottish Housing Training Advisory Board)
Institute of Housing Scottish Branch
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Chief Officers Housing Group Scottish Branch
Broomhouse Housing Association (1986) Ltd.
Milnbank Housing Association Ltd.
Viewpoint Housing Association (Benevolent) Ltd.
Queen's Cross Housing Association Ltd.
Kingdom Housing Association Ltd.
The New Housing Association Ltd.
Key Housing Association Ltd.
SHARE Training for Housing Associations
Edinvar Housing Association Ltd.
Partick Housing Association Ltd.
Hjaltland Housing Association Ltd.
Dalmuir Park Housing Association Ltd.
Caledonian: Self-Builder's: Housing Association Ltd.
Servite Housing Association (Scotland) Ltd.
Port of Leith Housing Association Ltd.

James Watt Housing Association Ltd.
Central and East Clydebank Housing Association Ltd.
Granton Housing Association Ltd.
Hillcrest Housing Association Ltd.
Springburn and Possilpark Housing Association Ltd.
Link Housing Association Ltd.
Hillhead Housing Association Ltd.
Maryhill Housing Association Ltd.
Govanhill Housing Association Ltd.
Eildon Housing Association Ltd.
Fountainbridge Housing Association Ltd.
Philemon Housing Association Ltd.
Meadowside and Thornwood Housing Association Ltd.
Linthouse Housing Association Ltd.
The Ark Housing Association Ltd.
Grampian Housing Association Ltd.
Charing Cross Housing Association Ltd.
Culdion Housing Association Ltd.
Edinburgh Housing Management Forum
Loreburn Housing Association Ltd.
Cloch Housing Association Ltd.
Kirk Care Housing Association Ltd.
Lorn and Mull Housing Association Ltd.
Reidvale Housing Association Ltd.
Viewpoint Housing Association Ltd.
Rutherglen Housing Association
Clydeside Federation of Community Based Housing Associations
Central Govan Housing Association Ltd.
Barony Housing Association Ltd.
Williamsburgh Housing Association Ltd.
Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
Parkhead Housing Association Ltd.
Langstane Housing Association Ltd.
Castlehill Housing Association Ltd.
Elderpark Housing Association Ltd.
Gorgie/Dalry Housing Association Ltd.
Bield Housing Association Ltd.
Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd.
Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing Association Ltd.
Orkney Housing Association Ltd.
Shettleston Housing Association Ltd.
Pollockshields Housing Association Ltd.
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Speirs Housing Management Co-operative
New Generation Housing Society Limited
Calvay Co-operative Limited
Castlemilk East Housing Co-operative Ltd.
Southdeen Co-operative
Lister Housing Co-operative Ltd.
Confederation of Scottish Housing Co-ops
West Gear Elderly Forum
Shelter (Scottish Campaign for the Homeless)
Scottish Council for Single Homeless
Glasgow Council for Single Homeless
The Salvation Army
Edinburgh Council for the Single Homeless
Scottish Council for Single Parents
Priesthill Nitshill Community Housing Working Party
Rights Office, FIFE
Glasgow Group (International Year of Shelter for the Homeless)
Homes and Jobs
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Scottish Council YWCA Housing Society Ltd.
Scottish Consumer Council
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Glasgow Special Housing Group
Age Concern Scotland
Scottish Homeless Group
The Scottish Council Development and Industry
British Linen Bank Limited
The Building Societies Association
Scottish Landscape Industry Group
CASCO Consultants on Urban Renewal
T. R. McDougall Property Agents
Assist Architects Ltd.
Strathclyde Community Business Limited
Gardner Information Services Ltd.
Property Owners and Factors Associations, Scotland, Ltd.
Edinburgh College of Art School of Town and Country Planning
Community Business Scotland
Barratt Scotland Ltd.
Scottish Building Employers' Federation
Landscape Institute Scotland
Speyhawk Public Limited Company
Dumfries Community Housing
The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland
Clazy Enterprises
James Cunning, Young and Partners
The Training Charter
GEAR Appraisal Group (GAG)
Highlands and Islands Development Board
Scottish Development Agency
Housing Association Liaison Project (HALO)
5 Broomhill Lane Tenants Committee
North Motherwell SSHA Tenants Association
Orlit Residents Association
Shortlees Tenants Association
Hillhouse Tenants Association
Renfrew District Tenants Co-ordinating Group
Partick Tenants & Residents Association
Broomhill Lane Residents Association
Moredun Community Association
Dumbarton & Clydebank SSHA Tenants Federation
Fortrose House Tenants Association
Seamore Street Tenants Association
Cochran Castle Tenants & Residents Association
Balornock East Tenants Association
SSHA Niddrie Mill Tenants Association
Mountfleurie SSHA Tenants Association
Barrhead & Neilston Federation of Tenants Association
Shettleston SSHA Tenants Association
Pathead Tenants Association
Ruchazie Tenants Association
O'Wood Residents Association
10 Broomhill Lane Tenants Committee
Rigside SSHA Tenants Association
Findlay Residents Association SSHA
Easthouses SSHA Residents Association
Wylie Street Tenants' Association
Dumbarton District Housing Federation
Orlit Action Group
Wheatlands Estate Association
Whitfields Multis Residents Association
Lothian Federation of SSHA Tenants Associations
Glasgow South SSHA Tenants Forum
Inverclyde Tenants Group
SSHA Residents' Group
Tenant Participation Advisory Group
Whitfield Steering Council
Wester Hailes Representative Group
Harthill SSHA Tenants Association
Castlepark and Eglinton Community Association
Larkfield Social Strategy Group
Bilston Tenants Residents Association
Wyndford Tenants Association
Muirhead SSHA Tenants/Residents Association
Shortlees Tenants Association
Scottish Tenants Organisation
Cambuslang Tenants Action Combine
Westhouses Residents Association
Craigbank Tenants Association
Inverkeithing SSHA Tenants Association
Graeme Park, Editor of Liberal Focus
Shetland Labour Party
Councillor Alex Graham, Inverness District Council
Scottish National Party Renfrew West/Inverclyde Constituency Association
Scottish Liberal Party
Scottish Committee Communist Party
Labour Party Scottish Council
Stirling District Council Conservative Group
David Marshall MP
Councillor William Handie, Lothian Regional Council
Councillor James Rutherford JP Renfrewshire District Council

City of Dundee District Council Conservative Group
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Transport and General Workers' Union
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs
National and Local Government Officers Association (Scottish)
Supervisory, Technical, Administrative, Managerial and Professional Section of UCATT
NALGO Scottish Special Housing Association Branch
Technical Officers and the Housing Corporation in Scotland
SSHA North Region Technical Group

Electronics Industry

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are employed in the electronics industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Total employment in the electronics industry in Scotland in 1986 is provisionally estimated to be some 42,600. The estimates are derived from the regional data system.

Jordanhill College of Education

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the report of the feasibility study into the use of Jordanhill college of education to accommodate paramedical courses.

Mr. Rifkind: Copies of the report are available from the Scottish Education Department on request.

Education (Consultative Document)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations which have so far commented on his recent consultative document on school boards as being in favour of the proposed ceiling lowers and those who have opposed the proposal ceiling lowers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The consultation is still running; I have not yet made a complete analysis of the responses.

X-ray Equipment

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department last conducted a survey of safety standards of National Health Service X-ray equipment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: X-ray equipment in use in the Scottish Health Service is subjected to regular maintenance and safety checks under maintenance agreements made by health boards. In addition, the equipment is subject to regular inspections by the board's radiation protection adviser to check radiation output levels and radiation safety aspects.

Community Care

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Community care is an important issue on which my right hon. and learned Friend receives from time to time representations from a range of interests including Members of Parliament, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and members of the public. We have consistently made it clear that we are committed to promoting a policy of care in the community for such groups as the mentally and physically handicapped, the mentally ill and the elderly.

Woodilee Hospital

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement reporting the proposals for a new build policy at Woodilee hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My Department is currently considering proposals submitted by the Greater Glasgow health board.

Leukaemia

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the incidence of leukaemia as reported by each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the number of cases of leukaemia occurring each year in Scotland and the incidence of the condition is contained in "Scottish Health Statistics" which is published annually by the information services division of the common services agency of the Scottish Health Service. A copy is available in the Library.

Springburn Job Initiative

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he estimates that the Springburn job initiative will begin.

Mr. Lang: STRIDE, the job-creation enterprise set-up by British Rail, is already in operation and discussions on a wider economic initiative involving the Scottish Development Agency, local authorities and other local interests continue. The agency shares our wish to see the initiative launched as soon as possible, but this depends on agreement being reached on a programme of action and the necessary administrative arrangements.

STRIDE

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what Government funds have been made available to STRIDE in order to re-employ redundant railway workers.

Mr. Lang: None. STRIDE is funded solely by British Rail.

Nursery Education

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of nursery school education in Glasgow, Springburn and on what steps he intends to take in increasing nursery school places.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statute affords regional and islands councils discretion over the level and form of nursery education provided in their areas. I am not disposed to intervene in this matter.

Job Creation

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to improve job opportunities for under 25s in Glasgow, Springburn.

Mr. Lang: We shall continue with our successful policies of keeping inflation down, stimulating enterprise, sustaining competitiveness in industry and strengthening the private sector, which are the key to creating a stronger economy and reducing unemployment in Springburn as elsewhere. The youth training scheme for 16 and 17-year-olds, the new job training scheme aimed primarily at 18 to 25-year-olds together with the expansion of places available under the enterprise allowance scheme and the assistance to employers through the new workers scheme will all help young people into employment.

Council Housing (Glasgow)

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he is giving to Glasgow district council in order to enable it to improve the housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Glasgow district council has received capital allocations in the current financial year of £85·65 million for expenditure on its own housing stock and £53 million for expenditure on housing in the private sector. Furthermore, the council will augment its mainstream expenditure on housing projects by an additional £140 million over the next three to four years through the use of a covenant scheme facility which we made available last year.

Community Programmes (Fraud)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* persons proceeded against and *(b)* convictions in Scotland since 1984 for offences relating to the fraudulent misuse of misappropriation of moneys advanced by the Manpower Services Commission in connection with community programmes.

Mr. Lang: I understand from the Manpower Services Commission that, according to its central records, there is no record of a case in Scotland resulting in prosecution or conviction since 1984.

Inverclyde Initiative

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is able to estimate the number of full-time jobs, or full-time equivalents, created by the Inverclyde initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to estimate the number of jobs created directly by the Inverclyde initiative. I am satisfied that the initiative is making sound progress and that major projects in prospect, such as the Customs House quay development, will significantly increase employment prospects in the area.

Manufacturing Investment

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate for the percentage fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in Scotland between 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Lang: The percentage fall in the real value of net capital expenditure by manufacturing industry in Scotland between 1980 and 1985 is estimated to have been 2·5 per cent.

Private Medicine

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals, exclusively for the practice of private medicine, have been built since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two private hospital developments have been notified to the Secretary of State since 1979, one in 1981 and one in 1982.

House Building

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total new house building starts for private sale in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on houses built for sale is not available centrally. Details of housebuilding starts for the years 1977 to 1986 was published in "Scottish Housing Statistics 1986" which is available in the House Library. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Contraception

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and which contraceptives are listed on the drug tariff for general medical practitioners.

Mr. Newton: There are currently 35 contraceptive drugs which can be dispensed free of charge. These are listed in part XVI of the drug tariff. In addition, there is a range of contraceptive appliances set out in part IXA of the tariff. A copy of the tariff is available in the Library.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many general practitioners in England hold the Joint Committee on Contraception certificate in family planning;

(2) how many and what percentage of general practitioners have formal training which would equip them to insert intra-uterine devices.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not held centrally. Advice from the Joint Committee on Contraception indicates that up to 16 October 1987 a total of about 22,500 certificates had been issued to doctors in the United Kingdom. It is not possible to be more specific.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment (1) by contraceptive method and (2) by source of treatment clinic or general practitioners in England for the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The available information is contained in the tables. A detailed analysis of contraceptive services provided by general medical practitioners is not held centrally.

Health authority family planning services—England clinic and domiciliary
Numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment by primary birth control method chosen or already in use

	1984	*1985*
Oral contraceptives	831,000	788,000
IUD	235,000	224,000
Cap/Diaphragm	128,000	133,000
Sheath	183,000	187,000
Chemicals	8,000	8,000
Rhythm	300	600
Female sterilisation	3,100	1,700
Vasectomy	15,000	14,000

	1984	*1985*
Other	13,000	16,000
None	106,000	122,000
TOTAL	1,523,000	1,494,000

Contraceptive services provided by general medical practitioners in England

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Total number of patients	2,374,400	2,455,800	2,571,000
Fitting IUD	131,800	127,000	120,400
Other than IUD	2,242,600	2,328,800	2,450,600

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals exist for general practitioners to prescribe condoms as part of the AIDS prevention campaign.

Mr. Newton: We have no such proposals.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on National Health Service family planning clinics making a charge for condoms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Our guidance to health authorities in DHSS circular HSC(1S)32 states that there should be no charge for contraceptive supplies which are prescribed and dispensed, but that in cases where a patient does not wish to consult the doctor, supplies of non-medical methods should be available on sale at clinics. Our advice is that the charge should reflect the purchase price paid by the health authority plus 10 per cent. for handling expenses, and VAT.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the provision of free National Health Service contraceptive advice, treatment and supplies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to impose a prescription charge for contraceptive supplies provided by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Contraceptive services are available free of charge as part of the National Health Service and we have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average annual cost per person to the National Health Service of providing *(a)* the oral contraceptive, and *(b)* the intra-uterine device through (i) National Health Service family planning clinics, and (ii) general medical practitioner.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. For all health authority family planning services the average annual cost per person is £21·30.

For general medical practitioner services the average annual costs per person, excluding pharmacists costs, which are not available, are as follows:

Intra uterine device—£39·40
Other contraceptives—£16·50

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many condoms have been distributed through National Health Service family planning clinics in each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Births (Costs)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the public sector of the average birth.

Mrs. Currie: The estimated gross current health and personal social services expenditure per birth in 1985-86 was around £1,220.

Family Planning Services

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total annual cost of National Health Service family planning services for each of the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: The expenditure on family planning provided through the community health services and general medical practitioners (fees and drugs) for England for each of the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 is as follows:

Expenditure on Family Planning Services—England

	£ million
1982-83	59
1983-84	66
1984-85	71
1985-86	76

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and which district health authorities provide designated young people's birth control advisory sessions in England.

Mr. Newton: I regret that we do not collect this information centrally.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many doctors' sessions Brook Advisory Centres has held in each of its centres in each of the last five years: and what is the estimate for the number of doctors' sessions for the coming financial year.

Mr. Newton: Brook Advisory Centres' annual reports record that the number of doctors' sessions in each of their centres in each of the last 5 calendar years was as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Avon	715	653	610	573	575
Birmingham	2,739	2,814	2,742	2,682	2,776
Coventry	124	131	136	127	103
Edinburgh	1,122	1,116	939	914	846
London	3,019	3,238	3,320	3,173	3,081
Merseyside	83	92	110	152	153
North East Lancashire[1]	—	—	—	—	28

[1] Opened June 1986.

We have no estimate of the numbers for 1987 and 1988.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of family planning clinics and family planning clinic sessions in each regional health authority in England for the last five years.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the tables.

Family Planning Services 1981-85: England

Region	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Family planning sessions					
Northern	11,211	10,590	10,791	11,113	10,436
Yorkshire	11,731	12,410	12,106	11,998	11,966
Trent	13,572	15,027	15,151	15,286	14,994
East Anglia	5,827	5,819	5,848	5,853	5,674
North West Thames	22,119	19,562	20,200	20,069	20,048
North East Thames	20,088	20,805	21,643	20,363	21,970
South East Thames	18,795	18,134	19,944	19,920	19,024
South West Thames	16,921	16,341	16,452	16,041	15,346
Wessex	9,957	10,136	9,952	10,006	10,500
Oxford	9,758	9,006	7,755	7,704	7,739
South Western	11,310	11,445	11,233	10,541	10,454
West Midlands	21,549	21,994	21,958	22,225	21,338
Mersey	9,383	10,120	10,149	9,965	9,850
North Western	14,737	16,083	15,918	16,043	16,736
Total	196,958	197,472	199,100	197,127	196,075
Premises in regular use for family planning sessions					
Northern	131	131	132	136	129
Yorkshire	146	150	152	154	148
Trent	139	136	138	134	135
East Anglia	59	58	58	57	56
North West Thames	160	165	168	170	158
North East Thames	145	155	159	163	167
South East Thames	133	124	138	141	136
South West Thames	130	119	120	122	122
Wessex	87	87	86	87	89
Oxford	68	65	59	54	53
South Western	114	114	114	111	112
West Midlands	168	171	164	167	170
Mersey	106	103	105	104	105
North Western	158	161	162	168	166
Total	1,744	1,739	1,755	1,768	1,746

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate financial provision for the continuation of family planning clinics in view of the important role family planning clinics play in prevention of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: The allocation of funds for local family planning services is a matter for individual health authorities, subject to the defined consultation procedures if substantial variations in services are proposed. Authorities will be aware of the implications of AIDS for family planning services, for example through the provisional guidance prepared by the Family Planning Association and the National Association of Family Planning Doctors.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and which regional health authorities in England include young people's birth control advisory services as a priority in their strategic plans.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member may wish to approach regional health authorities direct about their policies towards these services as their strategic plans do not deal with such matters in detail.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the degree of choice to be offered in National Health Service family planning provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Our policy is that people should be free to choose their source of family planning advice. The detailed arrangements for the provision of health authority family planning services is a matter for individual health authorities. DHSS guidance on family planning services recommends that a choice of sources of advice and provisions should be available and that people should be free to change from one source to another and to attend clinics outside the geographic area of the health authority if they wish.

Women wishing to receive contraceptive services from a general medical practitioner may apply either to their own doctor or to another who has indicated willingness to accept patients other than their own for this service. The doctor has discretion to accept or decline individual applications.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many (1) National Health Services family planning clinics and (2) general practitioner health centres are designated as training centres for family planning in England.

Mr. Newton: The following information is recorded by the Joint Committee on Contraception, which is concerned with family planning training for doctors and on which the DHSS is one of six bodies represented. The figures refer to the number of approved premises for family planning training and United Kingdom totals only are available.

	Number
Community and Hospital Clinics	1,035
GP premises	30

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Government policy on funding for young people's birth control advisory services, including Brook Advisory Centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities are advised to consider the need for separate facilities for young people but the allocation of funds for such arrangements is a matter for them. We are, also, currently funding three family planning and pregnancy counselling projects for young people under 25 years which it is hoped will identify models of good practice which can be disseminated to the National Health Service. The Department has given grants towards the headquarters administrative costs of Brook advisory centres since 1978 and an application for a renewed grant is currently being considered.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what role National Health Service family planning clinics are playing in the Government's campaign against AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We recognise the relevance and importance of family planning work to the AIDS issue. Family planning staff are well placed to offer advice and guidance to the public, and condoms are available free of charge on prescription in clinics.

We have provided a grant of £7,960 to the Family Planning Association towards the cost of pilot training courses in five health authorities on the AIDS aspects of the work of family planning staff.

The "Handbook of Contraceptive Practice", prepared by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of General Practitioners and issued to family planning doctors and other family planning professionals, is currently being revised to take account of AIDS.

Conception Rates

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the rates of conception (i) inside and (ii) outside marriage, by age of women, in each regional health authority in England in 1985.

Mr. Newton: The table gives the information for England and Wales as a whole. Details of the definitions and methods of estimation used are given in OPCS monitor FMI 87/2. The rates for each regional health authority of England are not available because the annual estimate of the populations by marital status are made only for England and Wales as a whole.

Conception rates to women resident in England and Wales: 1985

Age of mother at conception	*Conceptions outside marriage per 1,000 unmarried women*	*Conceptions inside marriage per 1,000 married women*
All ages	60·0	85·0
Under 20	53·8	326·7
20–24	73·7	214·0
25–29	82·8	161·8
30–34	63·6	81·1
35–39	33·0	25·1
40 and over	9·2	5·8

Note: Rates for women of all ages, under 20 and 40 and over are based upon the populations of unmarried and married women aged 15-44, 15-19 and 40-44 respectively.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the rates of conception and resultant maternity or abortion by age of women in 1985 in England.

Mr. Newton: The table gives the information. Details of the definitions and methods of estimation used are given in OPCS monitor FMI 87/2.

Conception rates per 1,000 women resident in England: 1985

Age of mother at conception	*All conceptions*	*Leading to maternities*	*Leading to abortions under 1967 Act*
All ages	74·1	60·7	13·4
Under 20	61·4	40·4	21·0
20-24	121·2	100·4	20·8
25-29	136·2	121·4	14·8
30-34	77·8	67·3	10·5
35-39	26·6	19·7	6·9
40 and over	6·4	3·4	3·0

Rates for women of all ages, under 20 and 40 and over are based on the population of women aged 15-44, 15-19 and 40-44 respectively.

Male Sterilisations

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many male sterilisations have been carried out in (1) National Health Service family planning clinics, and (2) National Health Service hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested, for the last five available years is as follows:

Numbers of ligation or vasectomy of vas deferens performed in NHS non-psychiatric hospitals and clinics, England, 1981-1985

Year	*Number in NHS hospitals (thousands)*	*Number in NHS family planning clinics (thousands)*
1985	45·8	13·3
1984	42·1	14·7
1983	39·9	13·8
1982[1]	28·1	12·7
1981	35·7	13·8

[1] Surgical activity in the NHS was depressed in 1982 due to industrial action.

Female Sterilisations

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many female sterilisations were performed in each regional health authority in England in each of the last five years; how many and what percentage were day cases; how many and what percentage were in conjunction with abortion; how many and what percentage were on medical grounds; and how many and what percentage were carried out (1) on the National Health Service (2) privately, and (3) as agency agreement.

Mr. Newton: I regret I cannot give the hon. Member all the information she seeks. The information so far as it is available centrally, is given in the tables.

The Number of Female Sterilisations Performed in NHS Hospitals, by Region of Residence, England, 1981

	Interval sterilisations					*Sterilisations associated with abortions*[1] [2]	
	In-patients A	*Day cases* B	*Sterilisations associated with delivery* C	*Total sterilisations other than associated with abortion* D	*Day cases as a percentage of column D* E	*Performed in NHS hospitals*	*Performed in private hospitals*
Northern	4,020	350	n/a	—	—	412	6
Yorks	3,750	1,770	n/a	—	—	471	64
Trent	6,680	390	n/a	—	—	849	39
East Anglian	2,860	310	n/a	—	—	521	20
North West Thames	3,720	140	n/a	—	—	465	66
North East Thames	3,250	60	n/a	—	—	595	204
South East Thames	3,880	540	n/a	—	—	569	374
South West Thames	3,330	180	n/a	—	—	234	8
Wessex	3,370	630	n/a	—	—	501	4
Oxford	3,380	390	n/a	—	—	388	20
South Western	3,970	260	n/a	—	—	402	55
West Midlands	5,030	580	n/a	—	—	522	299
Mersey	1,660	110	n/a	—	—	243	103
North Western	5,150	70	n/a	—	—	716	64
England[3]	54,040	5,770	n/a	—	—	6,888	1,306

[1] Analysed by region of treatment.

[2] Includes day cases, if any.

[3] England totals may not equal sum of regions due to roundings.

n/a Not available.

The number of female sterilisations performed in NHS hospitals, by region of residence, England, 1982[4]

	Interval Sterilisations					*Sterilisations associated with abortions*[1] [2]	
	In-patients A	*Day cases* B	*Sterilisations associated with delivery* C	*Total sterilisations other than associated with abortion* D	*Day cases as a percentage of column D* E	*Performed in NHS hospitals*	*Performed in private hospitals*
Northern	2,210	370	787	3,367	10·9	417	3
Yorks	2,490	470	723	3,683	12·8	444	39
Trent	5,200	100	1,445	6,745	1·5	817	33
East Anglian	2,050	260	334	2,644	9·8	435	22
North West Thames	3,350	40	518	3,908	1·0	412	52
North East Thames	3,190	130	744	4,064	3·2	588	240
South East Thames	3,450	520	690	4,660	11·2	479	326
South West Thames	2,650	150	453	3,253	4·6	226	24
Wessex	2,960	460	388	3,808	12·1	415	68
Oxford	2,880	190	604	3,674	5·2	334	20
South Western	3,050	50	572	3,672	1·4	390	54
West Midlands	4,170	350	938	5,458	6·4	494	347
Mersey	1,720	60	636	2,416	2·5	181	88
North Western	4,210	50	1,370	5,630	0·9	661	64
England[3] [5]	43,620	3,210	10,303	57,133	5·6	6,293	1,380

[1] Analysed by region of treatment.

[2] Include day cases, if any.

[3] England totals may not equal sum of regions due to roundings.

[4] Surgical activity in NHS depressed in 1982 due to industrial action.

[5] Includes 40 cases region not known.

The number of female sterlisations performed in National Health Service hospitals, by region of residence, England, 1983

	Interval sterilisations					*Sterlisations associated with abortions*[1] [2]	
	In-patients A	*Day cases* B	*Sterlisations associated with delivery* C	*Total sterlisations other than associated with abortion* D	*Day cases as a percentage of column D* E	*Performed in NHS hospitals*	*Performed in private hospitals*
Northern	3,980	520	1,062	5,562	9·3	379	2
Yorkshire	3,750	1,210	788	5,748	21·1	413	107
Trent	7,010	290	1,205	8,505	3·4	695	79
East Anglian	3,070	510	307	3,887	13·1	449	11
North West Thames	3,330	60	613	4,003	1·5	357	23

	Interval sterilisations		Sterlisations associated with delivery	Total sterlisations other than associated with abortion	Day cases as a percentage of column D	Sterlisations associated with abortions[1] [2]	
	In-patients A	Day cases B	C	D	E	Performed in NHS hospitals	Performed in private hospitals
North East Thames	3,140	100	723	3,963	2·5	443	258
South East Thames	3,230	480	493	4,203	11·4	412	292
South West Thames	3,010	230	471	3,711	6·2	204	44
Wessex	2,750	170	372	3,292	5·2	362	64
Oxford	2,640	460	493	3,593	12·8	354	17
South Western	3,620	310	559	4,489	6·9	392	36
West Midlands	4,650	420	1,029	6,099	6·9	419	368
Mersey	2,400	40	591	3,031	1·3	199	90
North Western	5,110	110	1,336	6,556	1·7	600	52
England[3]	51,670	4,910	10,042	66,622	7·4	5,678	1,443

[1] Analysed by region of treatment.

[2] Includes day cases, if any.

[3] England totals may not equal sum of regions due to roundings.

The number of female sterilisations performed in NHS hospitals, by region of residence, England, 1984

	Interval Sterilisations		Sterilisations associated with delivery	Total sterilisations other than associated with abortior	Day cases as a percentage of column D	Sterilisations associated with abortions[1][2]	
	In-patients A	Day cases B	C	D	E	performed in NHS hospitals	performed in private hospitals
Northern	3,060	330	739	4,129	7·9	407	2
Yorks	3,540	840	1,032	5,412	15·5	373	177
Trent	6,500	380	1,347	8,227	4·6	663	94
East Anglian	3,140	830	272	4,242	19·5	462	14
North West Thames	3,920	140	522	4,582	3·1	376	32
North East Thames	3,580	90	750	4,420	2·0	459	315
South East Thames	4,070	550	489	5,109	10·8	359	281
South West Thames	2,750	310	380	3,440	9·0	223	82
Wessex	3,810	480	206	4,496	10·7	353	92
Oxford	2,460	420	543	3,423	12·3	339	20
South Western	4,120	290	380	4,790	6·1	345	20
West Midlands	4,380	270	1,195	5,845	4·6	393	433
Mersey	1,730	90	717	2,537	3·5	128	93
North Western	5,280	150	1,293	6,723	2·2	599	94
England[3][4]	52,340	5,170	9,865	67,375	7·7	5,479	1,749

[1] Analysed by region of treatment.

[2] Includes day cases, if any.

[3] England totals may not equal sum of regions due to roundings.

[4] Includes estimated 20 cases, region not known.

The number of female sterilisations performed in National Health Service hospitals, by region of residence, England, 1985

	Interval sterilisations					Sterilisations associated with abortions[2] [3]	
	In-patients A	Day cases B	Sterilisations associated with delivery[1] C	Total sterilisations other than associated with abortion D	Day cases as a percentage of column D E	Performed in NHS hospitals	Performed in private hospitals
Northern	3,200	n.a.	849	—	—	301	6
Yorkshire	3,550	n.a.	1,121	—	—	400	154
Trent	6,360	n.a.	1,372	—	—	608	69
East Anglian	2,700	n.a.	196	—	—	420	15
North West Thames	3,810	n.a.	653	—	—	315	32
North East Thames	2,880	n.a.	719	—	—	490	291
South East Thames	3,300	n.a.	555	—	—	279	322
South West Thames	2,770	n.a.	435	—	—	190	75
Wessex	3,350	n.a.	327	—	—	295	99
Oxford	3,110	n.a.	468	—	—	319	13
South Western	3,210	n.a.	392	—	—	350	13
West Midlands	4,960	n.a.	1,110	—	—	360	443
Mersey	1,790	n.a.	664	—	—	145	93
North Western	4,910	n.a.	1,110	—	—	552	69
England[4] [5]	49,910	n.a.	9,972	—	—	5,024	1,694

[1] Provisional.
[2] Analysed by region of treatment.
[3] Includes day cases, if any.
[4] England totals may not equal sum of regions due to roundings.
[5] Includes estimated 10 cases region not known.
n.a.—Not available.

Medical Research

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has had talks with his European counterparts aimed at common medical research arrangements to enhance the prospects of scientific advance in treatment to improve the use of funds for such purposes.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster recently attended the Council of Ministers of the European Communities in Brussels on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

The Council adopted a new framework programme of research and development which makes provision for a programme of medical and health research to include work on AIDS, cancer and preventive medicine. That programme is expected to be approved in the near future.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated number of retirement pensioners who will need special care by the National Health Service between 1988 and 1991.

Mrs. Currie: It is not clear what the hon. Member means by the term "special care". If he writes to me with details, I will do my best to respond to him.

NHS (Staff)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is reviewing the economic and financial conditions necessary to keep National Health Service medical staff from emigrating to countries where their pay is higher.

Mr. Newton: Doctors' pay is reviewed annually by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body which takes account of all relevant factors in bringing forward its advice. We are not aware of significant emigration of medical staff, but the evidence is being reviewed by an advisory committee on medical manpower planning.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital wards had to close for lack of doctors or nurses in 1986; and what were the comparable figures in 1978.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally. The day-to-day management of hospitals is the responsibility of local health authorities.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many private hospitals have been built and put into operation in the London region for each year since 1979;

(2) how many hospitals for the practice of private medicine have been built and put into operation since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not available in the form requested. However, I understand from the Independent Hospitals Association that since 1979 there has been a net increase of 50 private hospitals in England, nine of which are within the area covered by the four Thames regional health authorities. Information for Scotland and Wales is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS (Private Patients)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the accumulated debt owed to the National Health Service for services given to private patients since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: This information is not collected centrally. However, from the summarised accounts of health authorities in England for 1986-87 (as yet unaudited) we estimate that some £11 million was outstanding at 31 March 1987, the vast majority of which health authorities expect to recover. Departmental guidance, issued in March 1986, should ensure that proper statutory charges are levied and collected.

Hospitals

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service hospitals have been built and put into operation since 1975.

Mrs. Currie: Hospitals are normally built in stages, comprising a series of individual building schemes. Information held centrally shows that in England since 1975, 308 National Health Service hospital building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed and brought into operation. National Health Service building elsewhere in the United Kingdom is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

NHS Establishments (Hygiene)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of deficient hygiene were found for each year since 1985 in National Health Service establishments now served by private contractors.

Mr. Newton: Information on any occasional lapses from the National Health Service's normally high standards of hygiene, whether by contractors or by directly employed staff, is not collected centrally.

Hospitals (Cleaning and Maintenance)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him on the minimum of personnel needed in each hospital for cleansing and maintenance operations.

Mr. Newton: The staffing levels required for such services are a matter for those responsible for providing them.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what *(a)* medical and *(b)* other specialised advice is given to private contractors for the cleaning and maintenance of National Health Service installations and equipment.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for health authorities who, before awarding contracts, have to satisfy themselves about contractors' competence to meet the detailed specifications set out in tender documents. These specifications include details of any special procedures, requirements or policies which apply to the service under contract.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what penalties are imposed on private contractors in charge of the cleaning and maintenance of National Health Service installations who have been found to provide deficient services.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for health authorities. Normally when putting such services out to tender an authority will include in the contract documents detailed specifications of the service required of the contractor and the action to be taken should the contractor fail to meet the specifications.

NHS (Doctors)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new full-time doctors the National Health Service has employed for each year since 1979 to work in hospitals.

Mr. Newton: Information requested is not available centrally in the precise form requested. However, the table sets out numbers of doctors in the pre-registration house officer grade in England. Doctors in this grade are mainly United Kingdom graduates in the course of their first year in medical practice. It is estimated that in addition some 1,200 overseas qualified doctors enter the training grades each year, mainly at senior houe officer and registrar level, for a limited period of postgraduate training.

Numbers of Pre-registration House Officers[1] *in post at 30 September: England*

Year	*Number*
1979	2,610
1980	2,564
1981	2,716
1982	2,710
1983	2,826
1984	2,773
1985	2,838
1986	2,813

[1] Includes a small number of overseas-graduated doctors with full or limited registration with the General Medical Council.

Tracheo-oesophageal Fistula

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial support his Department will be giving to aid research into the medical condition known as TOF (tracheo-oesophageal fistula) which affects one in 3,000 babies in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has no plans at present to provide financial support for research into tracheo-oesophageal fistula but is always willing to consider well-founded applications for research grants.

The main Government-funded body carrying out biomedical research in this country however is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Low Income Households

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the 1985 family expenditure survey data on the number of low income households.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 7 July, at column *115*.

Abortions

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names, addresses, directors or licensees of each private abortion clinic or agency operating in Britain, together with the number of beds available in each.

Mr. Newton: Places in England approved under the Abortion Act, the proprietors and numbers of approved beds are shown in the table. Details about directors, like any other commercial information, is supplied to the Department on an "in confidence" basis.

Information about premises in Scotland and Wales is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Approved Places	*Approved beds*	*Name of Proprietor*
Acland Nuffield Hospital, Banbury Road, Oxford	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire	1	AMI Health Services Limited
Alexandra Hospital, Impton Lane, Walderslade, Kent	6	NME Hospitals (UK) Limited
Avenue Clinic, 14 New Church Road, Hove, Sussex	6	Avenue Clinic Limited
Bath Clinic Claverton Down Road, Combe Down	5	Bath Private Hospital Limited
Beechwood Private Clinic, Norton Church Road, Norton, Sheffield	20	Beechwood Private Clinic Limited
Belvedere Nursing Home, Belvedere Road, Scarborough	3	Belvedere Nursing Home Limited
Blackdown Nursing Home, Old Milverton Lane, Blackdown, Leamington Spa	33	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Blackheath Hospital 40-42 Lee Terrace, London SE3	2	AMI Health Services Limited

Approved Places	Approved beds	Name of Proprietor
Bromhead Nursing Home, Nettleham Road, Lincoln	1	Bromhead Nursing Home Trust Limited
BUPA Hospital, Heathbourne Road, Bushey, Watford, Herts	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Holmwood Drive, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
BUPA Hospital, Old Watton Road, Colney, Norwich	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
Calthorpe Nursing Home 4 Arthur Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham	24	Calthorpe Nursing Home Limited
Chalybeate Hospital, Chalybeate Close, Tremona Road, Southampton, Hants	5	HCA UK Limited
Chatsworth Clinic, 76-78 Park Road, New Barnet, Herts. EN4 9QT	1	Chatsworth Clinic Ltd.
Chaucer Hospital, Nackington Road, Canterbury, Kent	2	AMI Health Services Limited
Chesterfield Nuffield Hospital, Clifton Hill, Bristol	5	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Clare Park Clinic, Clare Park, Crondall Lane, Crondall, Farnham Surrey	2	HCA UK Limited
Cleveland Nuffield Hospital, Junction Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Cotswold Nuffield Hospital, Talbot Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Danum Lodge Nursing Home, 123 Thorne Road, Doncaster	24	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Dean Park Nursing Home, 23-25 Ophir Road, Bournemouth, Dorset	26	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Duchy Hospital, Penventinnie Lane, Treliske, Truro	5	The Cornwall Independent Hospitals Trust Limited
Duchy House Nuffield Hospital, Queen's Road, Harrogate	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Evelyn Hospital, Trumpington Road, Cambridge	4	Committee of Management of Hospital
Exeter Nuffield Hospital, Wonford Road, Exeter	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Fairfield Nursing Home, 68 Russell Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex	29	Fairfield Nursing Home Limited
Falloden Private Nursing Home, 4 Allerton Park, Leeds	21	Leeds Private Hospital Limited
Fitzwilliam Hospital, Milton Way, South Bretton, Peterborough	4	Fitzwilliam Hospital Limited
Foscote Private Hospital, Foscote Road, Banbury	2	Foscote Court (Banbury) Trust Limited
Fulford Grange Hospital, Micklefield Lane, Rawdon, Leeds	2	Fulford Grange Hospital Limited
Garden Hospital, 46-50 Sunny Gardens Road, Hendon, London NW4	3	Health Care Services PLC
Hampshire Clinic, Basing Road, Basingstoke, Hants	2	Basingstoke Private Hospital Limited
Highfield Private Hospital, Manchester Road, Rochdale	3	Highfield Private Nursing Home Limited and Rochdale Surgical Unit Limited
HRH Princess Christian's Hospital, 12 Clarence Road, Windsor, Berks	5	Trustees of Hospital
Hull Nuffield Hospital, Westbourne Avenue, Hull	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Ipswich Surgical Nursing Home, 57 Fonnereau Road, Ipswich, Suffolk	2	Ipswich Surgical Home Association (Guarantee) Limited
King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst, West Sussex	5	Trustees of Hospital
Leicester Nuffield Hospital, Scraptoft Lane, Leicester	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Leigham Private Clinic, 76 Leigham Court Road, London SW16	29	Liegham Private Clinic Limited (Railford Limited)

Approved Places	*Approved beds*	*Name of Proprietor*
Marie Stopes Nursing Home, 10 Manstone Road, London NW2	13	Population Services Family Planning Programmes Limited
Merseyside Nursing Home, 32 Parkfield Road, Liverpool	30	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital, Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newscastle-upon-Tyne	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
New Hall Hospital, Bodenham, Salisbury, Wiltshire	4	Salisbury Independent Hospital and Medical Services Limited
New Victoria Hospital, 184 Coombe Lane West, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey	2	Trustees of Hospital
Park Hospital, Sherwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham	6	Nottingham Private Consultants Limited
Parkfield Private Hospital, Parkfield Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire	4	Mr. A. R. Mead
Parkview Clinic, 87 Mattock Lane, Ealing, London W5	30	Shawline Medical Developments Limited
Plymouth Nuffied Hospital, Derriford Road, Derriford, Plymouth	2	Nuffied Nursing Homes Trust
The Portland Hospital for Women and Children, 209 Great Portland Street, London W1	4	London Childrens and Womens Hospital Limited
Raleigh Nursing Home, 1A Raleigh Gardens, Brixton Hill, London SW2	19	Population Services Family Planning Programmes Limited
Robert Nursing Home, 162 Station Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham	14	Robert Nursing Home Limited
Rosslyn Nursing Home, 15-17 Rosslyn Road, East Twickenham, Middlesex	37	Pregnancy Advisory Services Limited
Royal Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt Park, London W6 0TN	4	Committee of Hospital
Salop Nuffield Hospital, Longden Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9DP	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Sarum Road Private Nursing Home, Sarum Road, Winchester, Hampshire	4	Bedrose Properties Limited
Somerset Nuffield Hospital, Staplegrove Elm, Taunton, Somerset	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
South Bank Hospital, 139 Bath Road, Worcester	2	HCA UK Limited
South Manchester Private Clinic, 136 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport	21	Dalreagh Private Nursing Home Limited
St. Wilfrid's Nursing Home, 51 Bawtry Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster	2	D. S. Nursing Homes (Doncaster) Limited
Thames Valley Nuffield Hospital, Wexham Street, Slough	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Victoria House Nursing Home, Victoria Street, Rochester, Kent	6	Dr. H. Elman JP
Wellesley Hospital, Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea	2	Wellesley Hospital Limited
Wessex Nuffield Hospital, Winchester Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants.	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
West Sussex Clinic, 48 Shelley Road, Worthing	2	G. M. Health Care Limited
Winterbourne Hospital, Herringston Road, Dorchester, Dorset	4	Winterbourne Hospital Limited
Wistons Nursing Home, 138 Dyke Road, Brighton	51	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Working Nuffield Hospital, Shores Road, Woking	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Wye Valley Nuffield Hospital, Venns Lane, Hereford	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Yorkshire Clinic, Bradford Road, Bingley, West Yorkshire	2	West Yorkshire Independent Hospital PLC

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now update the evidence which his Department supplied to the 1976 Select Committee on Abortion concerning the financial links between doctors and agencies who refer women for abortions and the clinics in which such abortions are performed by approaching the agencies concerned and asking that the normal commercial confidentiality be waived in this instance.

Mr. Newton: We see no need to do so. My hon. Friend is free to approach the agencies for this information if he wishes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what specific steps have been taken by his Department to monitor the occurrence and treatment of post-abortion stress disorder;

(2) whether he will introduce a system of notification so that his Department is kept informed of the incidence of post-abortion stress disorder and other abortion-related conditions.

Mr. Newton: The Department has funded since 1976 a long-term study by Manchester research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners on attitudes to pregnancy. This unit is preparing a paper about psychiatric morbidity experienced by women having abortion treatment.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to alter the conditions governing the financial links between doctors and agencies who refer women for abortions and the clinics in which such abortions are performed.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions performed in the last year for which figures are available upon non-resident women in England and Wales were performed in non-National Health Service facilities or in pay beds in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Newton: In 1986, 24,589 (99·7 per cent.) of abortions to non-resident women were performed in non-National Health Service facilities. Figures are not available centrally to show how many of the remaining 78 (0·3 per cent.) abortions which were performed in NHS hospitals were done in private beds.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department requires licensed abortion clinics to keep on the after-care which is provided for non-resident women who have abortions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: Information is not recorded on the after-care provided to non-resident patients, but they are provided with an information sheet and a discharge letter to their own doctor, usually in their own language.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions performed at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available were performed because the child was likely to be born handicapped.

Mr. Newton: In 1986 there were 8,276 notifications of abortions which took place with a gestation period of 18 weeks or more. Of these, 648 contained a mention of ground 4 of the 1967 Abortion Act, which states,

> "there is a substantial risk that if the child was born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped".

This represents a percentage of all abortion notifications of 7·8.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why his Department does not make available information concerning the numbers of abortions which are performed in pay beds in National Health Service facilities;

(2) what would be the cost of collecting and publishing information on a regular basis concerning the numbers of abortions which are performed in pay beds in National Health Service facilities;

(3) whether his Department will arrange for the collection and publication of information concerning the number of abortions which are performed in pay beds in National Health Service facilities if the cost of such an exercise is met by the private sector.

Mr. Newton: A special analysis of a 10 per cent. sample of in-patient records has shown that in 1985 there were an estimated 560 abortions, including spontaneous abortions, in private beds in NHS hospitals in England. This compares with the total of 65,254 legal abortions done in NHS hospitals in that year. We see no reason to collect and publish this information on a regular basis.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the abortion counselling agencies of which his Department is aware currently have any financial link with abortion clinics.

Mr. Newton: Eight.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases of which he is aware any individual is both a director or trustee of a company or charity providing abortion counselling and also of a clinic providing abortions.

Mr. Newton: The Department's records show that there are 32 such individuals.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that the administrative condition that financial arrangements between abortion agencies and clinics are reported is fulfilled.

Mr. Newton: All nursing homes are required to give an assurance to the Secretary of State that they will notify any changes to existing financial arrangements between the nursing home and any medical practitioner, pregnancy advice bureau or referral agency and to report, as soon as it is made, any new arrangement. Pregnancy advice bureaux also are required to identify financial links with other businesses. These requirements are drawn to the attention of administrators of premises when the first visit of inspection is made. Checks continue to be made on subsequent visits and company searches are carried out as necessary. Proprietors and administrators are well aware that failure to comply with an assurance could constitute grounds for withdrawal of registration of bureaux or approval of nursing homes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases an individual doctor who performs abortions at any clinic is also a director or trustee of a company or charity which provides an abortion counselling service.

Mr. Newton: We know of no such cases.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will confirm that the present administrative condition relating to financial links in the abortion industry permits a doctor working on a salaried or retainer basis at an abortion agency to perform abortions upon the women whom he has referred for abortions elsewhere.

Mr. Newton: It is not a requirement that a doctor working on a salaried or retainer basis at a bureau should not also perform abortions on these patients in a nursing home/clinic. It is, however, a requirement that doctors employed on a per capita basis should not also operate upon the women whom they see at the bureau.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions were done privately on National Health Services premises at 18 weeks and over in the last year for which figures are available; and what were the statutory grounds on which the abortions were performed.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available: the abortion notification form does not seek information about the private or other status of patients in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions performed at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available were performed *(a)* in emergency to save the life of the mother and *(b)* in cases of rape.

Mr. Newton: Information on abortion notifications mentioning ground 5 of the Abortion Act 1967 (which allows abortions in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman) by details of gestation weeks for individual years cannot be released for reasons of confidentiality. However, in the five years 1982-86 there were 26 such notifications, of which 13 were performed at 18 weeks or more gestation.

Prior to 1987 it is not possible to identify reliably all those notifications of abortion which mention rape. Arrangements are being made in order to provide this for current and future abortions.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions his Department has had with the health services of other countries in the European Economic Community in order to ensure that after-care is available for non-resident women who travel to the United Kingdom for abortions.

Mr. Newton: None. The after care of non-resident abortion patients is a matter for the doctors and medical institutions involved in any individual case.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of a National Health Service abortion performed at *(a)* under 12 weeks, *(b)* under 18 weeks, *(c)* 18 weeks or more and *(d)* 20 weeks or more.

Mr. Newton: The estimated revenue cost of an abortion in National Health Service hospitals is £170. Information on the average cost at different gestations is not available centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department collects concerning the fees charged by abortion agencies.

Mr. Newton: The Department approves the level of fees in the case of pregnancy advice bureaux and nursing homes with more than six beds approved for use for abortion cases, or with more than 25 per cent. of its total beds so approved.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the source of the evidence available to him to support the claim that a high percentage of pregnant women who go to pregnancy advice bureaux do proceed to have an abortion.

Mr. Newton: Pregnancy advice bureaux are required to maintain registers which show, inter alia, whether or not women are referred for abortion. These registers are inspected by the Department's investigative officers in the course of their inspection visits.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available on pregnancies of 18 weeks or more was performed upon single women.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Single women as a percentage of all abortions, 18-28 weeks gestation, residents and non-residents, England and Wales 1986

	Number
All abortions	8,276
Single women	6,123
Percentage	74

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available on pregnancies of 18 weeks or more was performed on women with *(a)* no previous children, *(b)* one previous child, *(c)* two previous children, *(d)* three previous children, *(e)* four previous children, *(f)* five previous children and *(g)* six previous children.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available in precisely the form requested; the available information for 1986 is shown in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions at 18 weeks or more gestation by parity, England and Wales, 1986

Number of previous children	*Number of notifications of abortions*	*Percentage*
All abortions	8,276	100
0	5,770	69·7
1	1,181	14·3
2	696	8·4
3	352	4·2
4	157	1·9
5 and over	70	0·8
Unknown	50	0·6

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by each English district health authority area the number of abortions undertaken in each year since 1967.

Mr. Newton: Information on abortions by district health authority of termination is not released for reasons of confidentiality. Tables showing data by district health authority of usual residence for 1983-86 are available in the OPCS annual Series AB, "Abortion Statistics"; for 1975-82, the same series gives data for health districts; for 1974, data are available only for regional health authorities. The years 1968-73 are covered for hospital regions in the Registrar General's "Supplement on Abortion" for the annual "Statistical Review of England and Wales". These publications are available in the Library.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision have the Government made for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority to implement pay rises whilst remaining within its expenditure budget.

Mrs. Currie: Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority has received a cash allocation this year of £79·6 million, 8·6 per cent. more than in 1986-87. The allocation includes a special addition to help health authorities maintain and develop services following this year's review body awards. Health authorities must take the necessary steps to balance the cost of service developments against other cost pressures.

Benefits

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate *(a)* the net cost to each local authority of housing benefit payment made to tenants in private sector housing 1986-87, *(b)* the amount paid by each authority in respect of individual rents which were in excess of 180 per cent. of the average registered rent in the respective DHSS area in 1986-87 and *(c)* the anticipated net cost to each authority of making such payments following the introduction of housing benefit subsidy arrangements set out in circular LHB(87)5.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information sought in relation to the current housing benefit scheme is not held centrally. It is not possible to predict the net cost to individual local authorities of the proposed subsidy arrangements under the reformed scheme since that cost will be strongly influenced by such factors as the extent to which each authority succeeds in limiting benefit on unreasonably high private sector rents.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the backlog of outstanding claims to social security benefits in the local offices of his Department in Greenock and Port Glasgow in August.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows the number of outstanding claims to social security benefits in Greenock and Port Glasgow in August.

	Greenock ILO	*Port Glasgow ILO*
Sickness/Invalidity benefit	33	35
Maternity allowance	4	6
Retirement pension	159	42
Severe disablement allowance	22	12
Supplementary benefit	35	55
TOTAL	253	150

Source: Social security management information statistics for four week period ending 25 August 1987.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will review the subsidy granted to Leeds city council for housing benefit 1988 preparation costs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the criteria used by his Department to settle the allocations for local authorities in respect of the preparation costs involved in the 1988 housing benefit charges.

Mr. Portillo: Following discussions with the local authority associations, it was decided that the £25 million grant which is being made available to local authorities to support their costs in preparing for the reformed housing benefit scheme should be allocated to authorities on the basis of a formula which took account of their recent administration costs and caseloads. The formula was adjusted so that the relationship between authorities' estimates and their allocations would be broadly comparable for each size of authority. The share of £231,289 due to be paid to Leeds city council has been calculated on this basis. We have no plans to review the amount of the grant payable to the council.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the United Kingdom are currently in receipt of housing benefit; what plans he has to ensure that all entitled to such benefit will receive it; what assistance he is willing to give to the take-up campaigns organised by voluntary organisations and local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Figures are readily available only on a Great Britain basis. Our latest estimate is that in autumn 1986, some 7·2 million households were in receipt of housing benefit. Responsibility for administering housing benefit rests with local authorities, who have a statutory duty to publicise the scheme. It would be for the authority concerned to decide how to respond to a locally organised take-up campaign.

At a national level, housing benefit is one of the benefits which will feature in the new series of leaflets being redesigned as part of our communications strategy. It will also feature in the advertising campaign we are planning to explain the social security reforms.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of claimants in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole who have been refused benefit following a restart interview.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under longstanding legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to uprate child benefit in line with inflation at the forthcoming up-rating.

Mr. Scott: An announcement about benefit rates will be made shortly.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a letter from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith dated 27 April regarding the withdrawal of the estate heating allowance for a number of constituents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that I have no record of having received this letter.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total amount of supplementary benefit paid to claimants in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland in the financial year 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information is not available in respect of Greenock and Port Glasgow or Strathclyde region. Information in respect of Scotland is as follows:

Financial year	*Amount £ million*
1979-80	218
1980-81	286
1981-82	464
1982-83	599
1983-84	570
1984-85	639
1985-86	743

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount paid to social security claimants in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow for additional requirements in the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information to answer part *(a)* of the question is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. No information is available to answer parts *(b)* and *(c)*.

Single Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals against decisions relating to single payments for those people in supplementary benefit are currently being dealt with by the local offices serving *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Strathclyde region; and what were the comparable numbers for June 1985 and June 1986.

Mr. Portillo: It is regretted that not all of the information requested is readily available. For Scotland as a whole the latest figures for single payment appeals at local offices awaiting submission to social security appeal tribunals are as follows:

	Number
June 1985	1,047
June 1986	2,081
December 1986	6,176

Statistics about types of decision appealed against are not collected below regional level. Information specific to Strathclyde area could therefore only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Staff

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are currently employed in the local offices of his Department in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Strathclyde region and *(d)* Greenock and Port Glasgow: and how many staff in each of these are planned for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo: The latest comprehensive information on the number of staff in post in local offices of the Department relates to 1 October 1987 and is as follows:

	Number
(a) England and Wales	62,471·5
(b) Scotland	8,270·5
(c) Strathclyde Region	4,622·0
(d) Greenock ILO	176·5
Port Glasgow ILO	81·5

The number of staff planned for the end of 1987-88 takes account of workload reductions and is as follows:

	Number
(a) England and Wales	60,884
(b) Scotland	8,188
(c) Strathclyde Region	4,572
(d) Greenock ILO	174
Port Glasgow ILO	80

The number of staff planned for 1988-89 for each of these areas is not yet available

Notes: Figures exclude cleaners

ILO = Integrated Local Office

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received calling for more assistance in dealing with the work load in his Department's local offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A provisional claim for more staff in local offices has been lodged by the trade unions and this is currently under consideration.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff have been employed in local offices of his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The number of full-time staff equivalents in the Department's local offices on the 1 April each year was as follows:

	Number
1979	65,207
1980	64,036·5
1981	66,847
1982	64,159
1983	63,650
1984	60,861
1985	63,136
1986	62,911
1987	64,888·5

Included in these totals are part-time staff but it is not possible to give a breakdown as information on part-time staff in local offices is not held centrally.

Mobility Allowance and Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government plan to amalgamate the mobility allowance tribunals and social security appeal tribunals, as recommended in the Oglesby report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Under the present system, non-medical questions arising on mobility allowance claims are decided, on appeal, by social security appeal tribunals; medical questions are decided by medical boards and thereafter, if necessary, by medical appeal tribunals. We have no plans at present to revise this aspect of medical adjudication.

Deaf People (Communication)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of funding for the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People for each of the past three years.

Mr. Portillo: The Department awarded the council a grant of £40,000 in each of the past three years.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed withdrawal of funding by his Department to the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People.

Mr. Scott: This Department is by far the largest single contributor to the funds of this voluntary organisation and funding is not being withdrawn. On the contrary, we are making a grant of £40,000 in 1987-88, the same amount as in the previous three years. The council has explained its current financial difficulties. We have extended further help by bringing forward the first three quarterly instalments of our grant. We are also actively discussing with the council and others with an interest longer term financial arrangements for supporting the council's work.

Eye Treatment (North-West)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultant ophthalmologists there are in *(a)* England, *(b)* North West regional health authority and *(c)* central Manchester district; what is the current waiting list at the Manchester royal eye hospital; what is the current shortfall in *(a)* medical and *(b)* nursing staff at that hospital; and if he will now take steps to provide further medical staff to the hospital to seek to reduce this waiting list.

Mr. Newton: The information held centrally is as follows:

(i) Consultant ophthalmologists, whole time equivalents, at 30 September 1986

England	*North Western Regional Health Authority*	*Central Manchester Health Authority*
382	30	6

(ii) Inpatient waiting list for Manchester Royal Eye Hospital at 31 December 1986: 1,917. Information is not held centrally on the waiting time of these patients or whether they are urgent or non-urgent cases.

Information is not held centrally on medical or nursing manpower at the Manchester royal eye hospital. Numbers and appointments are matters for the authorities locally.

The hon. Member may wish to seek further information from the chairman of the central Manchester health authority, which is responsible for managing the Manchester royal eye hospital.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Jack asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change the arrangements for the exceptionally cold weather payments scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The current arrangements, based on clear criteria, can be expected to give extra help more often and more quickly to those most at risk from the cold than any previous systems since the scheme was first put on a regulated basis in 1980. Last winter, we estimate that over 950,000 people received help, more than twice as many as in any previous year. The total cost of benefit paid was £10·2 million.

For this winter we plan to make it easier for claimants to get help during repeat periods of exceptionally cold weather. We intend to provide that, where a successful claim is made in respect of one period of exceptionally cold weather, that claim will remain valid in respect of subsequent periods of cold weather during the winter. At the same time, we will be correcting a number of technical errors in the description of areas covered by particular weather stations. This will not change the links between local offices and weather stations themselves. Regulations to make these changes will be laid before the House shortly.

These arrangements will apply for the coming winter. For subsequent winters, the Social Security Bill proposes an amendment to the Social Security Act 1986 to provide for help to be given towards the cost of heating in cold weather when single payments have been abolished, and replaced by loans and grants from the social fund. This help with heating will be regulated, and paid as of right in a similar way to the arrangements for maternity and funeral payments within the social fund. This amendment provides reassurance that help will continue to be available following the social security reforms next April.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why the hospital waiting list figures for England for March issued by his Department included no figures for Hampstead district health authority;

(2) what estimates of hospital waiting lists for Hampstead district health authority for March were included in the national, regional and sub-regional figures;

(3) what were the actual hospital waiting list figures for Hampstead district health authority for March.

Mr. Newton: Computing problems prevented the Hampstead district health authority from producing hospital waiting list figures for March 1987.

The table shows the estimates which were included in the national and regional summaries. These were produced by assuming that the Hampstead waiting lists experienced the same percentage changes since September 1986 as the rest of North East Thames region.

Estimated number of Patients on in-patient waiting list at 31 March 1987
District health authority: Hampstead

					Numbers	*Percentage*
		Urgent cases		*Non-urgent cases*		*Non-urgent cases on list*
Specialty	*Total*	*All*	*On list more than one month*	*All*	*On list more than one year*	*more than one year as percentage of total*
General medicine	27	11	6	16	2	7·4
Paediatrics	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Thoracic medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Dermatology	10	3	2	7	0	0·0
Neurology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Cardiology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Rehabilitation	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Genito-urinary medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Rheumatology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Geriatrics	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Units for younger disabled	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
General surgery	388	36	18	352	86	22·2
Ear, nose and throat	400	25	16	375	104	26·0
Traumatic and orthopaedic	798	104	80	694	276	34·6
Ophthalmology	294	19	12	275	37	12·6
Radiotherapy	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Urology	104	19	10	85	17	16·3
Plastic surgery	265	30	22	235	136	51·3
Thoracic surgery	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Oral surgery	180	9	5	171	89	49·4
Orthodontics	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Neurosurgery	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Gynaecology	192	22	14	170	18	9·4
Psychiatry children	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Mental handicap	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Mental illness	42	4	3	38	14	33·3
Adolescent psychiatry units	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
G.P. other	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
G.P. dental	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Accident and emergency	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Anaesthetics	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Audiological medicine	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Cardiac surgery	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Child assessment unit	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Clin. ph'macology and therapeutics	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Endocrinology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Forensic psychiatry	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Gastroenterology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Haematology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Medical oncology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Nephrology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Paediatric surgery	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Psychogeriatric	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Radiology	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Restorative dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Spinal injuries unit	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Paediatric dentistry	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0·0
Surgical specialties—sub-total	2,621	264	177	2,357	763	29·1
All specialties—total	2,700	282	188	2,418	779	28·9

Public Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on table 3.15.1 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm 56-II) with all the figures converted to 1986-76 prices;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on table 3.15 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm 56-II) with all figures converted to 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the tables. The figures have been converted to 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflators (a different price deflator from the one used for uprating benefits) for assumed future inflation underlying the figures in Cm 56.

Table 1 Social Security expenditure

£ million (1986-87 prices)

	1981-82 outturn	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 estimated outturn*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*[1]	*1989-90 plans*[1]
CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS (ie THOSE PAID FROM THE NATIONAL INSURANCE FUND)									
Pension benefits									
Retirement pension									
—basic element	15,415	16,072	16,570	16,592	16,871	17,538	17,710	17,500	17,700
—earnings-related component	24	48	68	95	145	201	263	300	400
Christmas bonus	129	121	117	115	108	107	104	100	100
Widows' benefits, etc									
—basic element	875	852	861	830	787	797	767	800	700
—earnings-related component	5	11	17	28	34	42	50	100	100
Unemployment, incapacity and other benefits									
Unemployment benefit	2,167	1,785	1,705	1,723	1,637	1,704	1,513	1,500	1,500
Sickness benefit	866	659	302	305	284	157	126	100	100
Invalidity benefit									
—basic element	1,711	1,832	2,055	2,237	2,308	2,446	2,537	2,600	2,700
—earnings related component	33	63	76	109	131	166	197	200	300
Death grant	22	20	19	19	19	18	—	—	—
Industrial injuries benefit									
Industrial disablement benefit	401	408	420	416	420	425	390	400	400
Industrial death benefit	60	61	61	60	61	62	61	100	100
Other industrial injuries benefits	6	6	6	5	4	4	3	—	—
Family benefits									
Maternity allowance	201	181	161	176	169	167	66	—	—
Guardian's allowance and child's special allowance	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	—	—
Total contributory benefit expenditure	21,915	22,121	22,441	22,713	22,978	23,836	23,789	23,700	24,100
NON-CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS (ie THOSE MET FROM VOTED EXPENDITURE OR PAID BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES ETC.									
Pension benefits									
Non-contributory retirement pension	50	48	47	43	42	38	37	—	—
Christmas bonus	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	—	—
War pension	610	600	597	594	598	572	573	600	500
Disability benefits									
Attendance allowance	420	479	564	629	707	776	806	800	900
Invalid care allowance	8	10	11	12	13	191	90	100	100
Non-contributory invalidity pension/severe disablement allowance	166	183	207	253	254	260	259	300	300
Mobility allowance	220	281	346	389	435	507	538	600	600
Supplementary benefit[2]*/income support/social fund*									
Supplementary pension	1,805	1,722	808	972	1,107	1,123	1,178	—	—
Supplementary allowance									
—long-term rate	1,047	1,487	1,485	1,692	1,762	1,861	1,923	8,000	8,000
—short-term rate	3,310	4,240	4,074	4,402	4,868	5,038	4,920	—	—
Family benefits									
Child benefit	4,293	4,355	4,541	4,669	4,602	4,515	4,457	4,300	4,300
One parent benefit	97	108	122	131	138	148	150	200	200
Family income supplement/family credit	84	112	140	138	134	148	133	400	400
Maternity grant	20	19	19	20	18	17	—	—	—
Housing benefit[3]									
Rent rebate	633	1,105	2,254	2,343	2,363	2,434	2,413	2,300	2,400
Rent allowance	83	88	611	750	857	1,020	978	900	1,000
Total non-contributory benefit expenditure	12,854	14,843	15,830	17,041	17,906	18,655	18,459	18,500	18,500

	1981-82 outturn	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 estimated outturn*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*[1]	*1989-90 plans*[1]
Total benefit expenditure	34,770	36,966	38,271	39,753	40,884	42,491	42,249	42,200	42,600
ADMINISTRATION AND MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES									
Administration and miscellaneous services[4]									
National Insurance Fund administration (collection of contributions and payment of contributory benefits)	933	872	790	882	821	755	820	790	790
Non-contributory benefit administration (payment of non-contributory benefits)[5]	634	689	853	848	901	1,060	1,088	1,050	1,040
Housing benefit									
Local authority etc. administration[6]	53	82	120	152	152	168	183	160	160
Total administration	1,621	1,643	1,763	1,882	1,875	1,983	2,092	2,000	1,990
Total Department of Health and Social Security—Social Security	36,390	38,609	40,034	41,655	42,758	44,474	41,340	44,200	44,600

[1] Benefit expenditure rounded to nearest 100 (no entry where under 50) and administration costs to nearest 10.

[2] Includes assistance with costs of rents and rates in 1981-82 and 1982-83.

[3] Local authority rent rebates and allowances 1981-82 to November 1982. From November 1982 for some and from April 1983 for all cases includes assistance with rent formerly met through supplementary benefit. Rate rebates are excluded from the table as they are not public expenditure.

[4] All costs of administration, including payments by the National Insurance Fund or by the DHSS to the various Government Departments involved.

[5] From April 1983 Departments have repaid PSA for accommodation and certain other services, under the Property Repayment Service.

[6] Additional costs to local authorities arising in implementing the new housing benefit scheme from 1 April 1988 are included in 1987-88.

Table 2 Analysis of Social Security expenditure by broad economic category

£ million (1986-87 prices)

	1981-82 outturn	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 estimated outturn*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*[1]	*1989-90 plans*[1]
Departmental running costs	1,164	1,177	1,282	1,388	1,307	1,352	1,409	1,300	1,400
Running costs receipts[2]	−775	−726	−729	−796	−731	−660	−726	−700	−700
Other public sector pay	32	50	72	91	92	101	95	100	100
Transfers to the personal sector	34,440	36,636	37,912	39,378	40,499	42,081	41,821	41,700	42,100
Purchases of assets, goods and services[3]	1,211	1,153	1,169	1,210	1,215	1,193	1,312	1,300	1,300
Transfers to the corporate sector	−5	−5	−27	−4	−3	—	—	—	—
Payments overseas	325	325	354	370	381	408	429	500	500
Total expenditure	36,390	38,609	40,034	41,636	42,758	44,474	44,340	44,200	44,600
Contribution to total public sector capital spending	19	11	26	24	56	71	83	100	100

[1] Rounded to the nearest 100.

[2] Includes recovery from the National Insurance Fund of expenditure on administering the Fund included under Departmental running costs above.

[3] Includes repayment by the National Insurance Fund for expenditure incurred by government departments in administering the Fund. The expenditure is included in the departmental running costs, etc, of DHSS (in this table) and of other relevant departments.

Glaucoma

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to see that all three of the necessary tests for glaucoma are made a mandatory part of the National Health Service test for spectacles for those in the over 40 years risk group; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The use of ophthalmoscopy which can detect glaucoma is already part of the routine NHS sight test. It is open to practitioners to carry out any other tests they judge to be appropriate in individual cases.

AIDS

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which voluntary organisations have received grants as part of the Government's AIDS prevention and education campaign; and how much each organisation has received.

Mr. Newton: The following voluntary organisations have received grants since the start of the Government's AIDS public education campaign. The figures include planned spending in the current financial year. Grants paid to some organisations such as the Terence Higgins Trust cover both support for those infected with HIV or suffering AIDS and for preventative and educational work.

	£
AIDS Ahead (organisation representing the hearing impaired)	75,000
The Royal National Institute for the Blind	13,000
The Terrence Higgins Trust	453,000
Healthline	298,023
Standing Committee on Drug Abuse	43,000
London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard	13,735
Family Planning Association	20,860
The Brook Advisory Service	33,800
British Association for Counselling	5,600
Accept services United Kingdom	102,690
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux	17,000
London Lighthouse	600,000
St. Catherine's Hospice	60,000
Mildmay Mission	200,000

£1,339,829 has been paid to three organisations, Broadcasting Support Services, Network (Scotland) Ltd and AIDS Helpline (Northern Ireland), which jointly provide free 24-hour telephone advice and information services as part of the national AIDS helpline.

The Scottish Home and Health Department has provided a grant of £46,400 in 1987/88 to the Scottish AIDS Monitor, a voluntary body which provides information, counselling and support for AIDS sufferers in Scotland, people infected with the AIDS virus, those who fear they are at risk of infection and to families and friends of AIDS patients.

The National AIDS Trust has been set up with Government support totalling £800,000 to provide funding to voluntary bodies and co-ordinate their activities.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate, for England and Wales, for the most recent month for which figures are available, and in addition on a cumulative basis *(a)* the number of persons who have died from AIDS-related causes, *(b)* the number of persons diagnosed as suffering from AIDS and *(c)* the number of persons estimated to be HIV-positive.

Mr. Newton: Figures for the reported cases of AIDS are published monthly. Figures for the number of people reported to be HIV antibody positive are published quartely. Copies of the figures are available in the Library.

There are a number of unknowns involved in the estimation of the number of people who are HIV antibody positive. These include the number who may be susceptible to infection, the proportion of those infected who go on to develop AIDS, the varying incubation period and the proportion of those infected who present themselves for testing. At the moment, therefore, it is not possible to make an accurate estimate of the number of people who are HIV antibody positive.

National Health Service Operations

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors, nurses and other medical staff were involved in operations performed on National Health Service patients during 1986; and what were the numbers performing similar operations in 1978.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available centrally. We are unable to identify staff actually involved in operations. The table includes figures for medical staff in surgical specialties and anaesthetics and operating department assistants for the relevant years. Information on nursing staff in operating theatres is not available prior to 1981.

National Health Service professional staff working operating theatres: staff in post at 30 September—England

Whole time equivalents[1]

	1978	*1981*	*1986*
Medical and dental[2]			
Surgical	7,500	8,100	8,200
Anaesthetic	3,300	3,600	3,900
Nursing			
Theatre[3]	n.a.	8,000	11,400
Professional and technical			
Operating Department Assistants[4]	2,300	2,700	2,700

Notes:

Source: DHSS annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100) whole time equivalents.

[2] Excludes part-time Medical Officers and Hospital Practitioners.

[3] Includes all nursing staff working in "Theatre" area of work.

[4] On 1 April 1984 Operating Department Assistants were re-classified from Ancillary to Professional and Technical Staff Group. Figures include trainees.

n.a.—Not available.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major operations were performed on National Health Service patients during 1986.

Mrs. Currie: No information is yet available centrally on the number of operations performed on National Health Service patients during 1986. The National Health Service in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were hospitalised for more than seven days in National Health Service hospitals during 1986.

Mrs. Currie: There were 1·95 million discharges following an in-patient spell of more than seven days during 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally.

Laboratories (Medical Tests)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many laboratories there are doing National Health Service medical tests, and of what classification;

(2) how many National Health Service medical and test laboratories there are.

Mrs. Currie: There were 385 NHS laboratories in England in 1986. The number of such laboratories undertaking work in each main specialty in 1985 (the latest year for which information was available) was:

	Number
Chemical Pathology	300
Cytogenetics	27
Haematology	341
Histopathology	267
Immunology	50
Microbiology	299

Cancer Screening

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how the existing laboratories for the testing of cervical cancer are distributed;

(2) how many laboratories there are which test for cervical cancer.

Mrs. Currie: The available information for England is given in the table. Figures for Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Region and District Health Authorities	*Number of laboratories*
England	196
Northern RHA	11
Hartlepool	1
North Tees	1
South Tees	1
East Cumbria	1
West Cumbria	1
Darlington	1
North West Durham	1
Gateshead	1
Newcastle	2
Sunderland	1
Yorkshire RHA	16
East Yorkshire	1
Grimsby	1
Scunthorpe	1
Northallerton	1
York	1
Scarborough	1
Harrogate	1
Bradford	1
Calderdale	1
Huddersfield	1
Dewsbury	1
Leeds Western	2
Leeds Eastern	1
Wakefield	1
Pontefract	1
Trent RHA	13
North Derbyshire	1
Southern Derbyshire	1
Leicestershire	1
North Lincolnshire	1
South Lincolnshire	1
Bassetlaw	1
Central Nottinghamshire	1
Nottingham	1
Barnsley	1
Doncaster	1
Rotherham	1
Sheffield	2
East Anglian RHA	7
Cambridge	1
Peterborough	1
West Suffolk	1
East Suffolk	1
Norwich	1
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	1
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1
North West Thames RHA	18
North Bedfordshire	1
South Bedfordshire	1
North Hertfordshire	1
East Hertfordshire	1
South West Hertfordshire	1
Barnet	2
Harrow	1
Hillingdon	2
Hounslow and Spelthorne	2
Ealing	1
Brent	1
Paddington and North Kensington	1
Riverside	3
North East Thames RHA	18
Basildon and Thurrock	1
Mid Essex	1
North East Essex	1
West Essex	1
Southend	1
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	2
Bloomsbury	3
Islington	1
City and Hackney	1
Newham	1
Tower Hamlets	1
Enfield	1
Haringey	1
Redbridge	1
Waltham Forest	1
South East Thames RHA	16
Brighton	1
Eastbourne	1
Hastings	1
South East Kent	1
Canterbury and Thanet	1
Dartford and Gravesham	1
Medway	1
Tunbridge Wells	1
Bexley	1
Greenwich	2
Bromley	1
West Lambeth	1
Camberwell	1
Lewisham and North Southwark	2
South West Thames RHA	12
North West Surrey	1
West Surrey and North East Hants	1
South West Surrey	1
Mid Surrey	1
East Surrey	1
Chichester	1
Mid Downs	1
Worthing	1
Kingston and Esher	1
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1
Wandsworth	1
Merton and Sutton	1
Wessex RHA	10
East Dorset	2
West Dorset	1
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	1
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1
Winchester	1
Salisbury	1
Swindon	1
Bath	1
Isle of Wight	1

Region and District Health Authorities	*Number of laboratories*
Oxford RHA	7
East Berkshire	1
West Berkshire	1
Aylesbury Vale	1
Wycombe	1
Kettering	1
Northampton	1
Oxfordshire	1
South Western RHA	10
Bristol and Weston	1
Frenchay	1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1
Exeter	1
Plymouth	1
Torbay	1
Cheltenham	1
Gloucester	1
Somerset	2
West Midlands RHA	21
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1
Herefordshire	1
Worcester and District	1
Shropshire	1
Mid Staffordshire	1
North Staffordshire	1
South East Staffordshire	1
Rugby	1
North Warwickshire	1
South Warwickshire	1
Central Birmingham	2
North Birmingham	1
South Birmingham	1
West Birmingham	1
Coventry	1
Dudley	1
Sandwell	1
Solihull	1
Walsall	1
Wolverhampton	1
Mersey RHA	15
Chester	1
Crewe	1
Halton	1
Macclesfield	1
Warrington	1
Liverpool	3
St. Helens and Knowsley	2
Southport and Formby	1
South Sefton	2
Wirral	2
North Western RHA	18
Lancaster	1
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	1
Preston	1
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	1
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	1
West Lancashire	1
Bolton	1
Bury	1
North Manchester	1
Central Manchester	1
South Manchester	2
Oldham	1
Rochdale	1
Salford	1
Stockport	1
Tameside and Glossop	1
Wigan	1
All Special health authorities	4
The Royal Marsden Hospital	1
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	3

NHS (Staff Accommodation)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the present arrangements and co-ordination for solving the lack of accommodation for nurses and other medical staff in the south of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: In conjunction with health authorities we are currently reviewing the availability of National Health Service residential accommodation and the measures which might be taken to assist NHS staff to enter the private housing market.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of applications for invalid care allowance from married or cohabiting women has been rejected.

Mr. Scott: At 16 October 1986, 131,300 claims to invalid care allowance had been received from married or cohabiting women. The independent adjudicating authorities have decided that the conditions of entitlement to an allowance are not satisfied in about 14 per cent. (18,000) of these claims.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications from married and co-habiting women for invalid care allowance had been received by 31 August.

Mr. Scott: At 31 August about 126,000 claims for invalid care allowance had been received from married or cohabiting women.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of applications for invalid care allowance is rejected.

Mr. Scott: About 18·6 per cent.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what percentage the limit on earnings for recipients of invalid care allowance without abating that allowance has risen since November 1982; and by what percentage *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* the average earnings index has increased over the same period.

Mr. Scott: The weekly earnings limit governing entitlement to invalid care allowance has not changed since it was doubled from £6 to £12 in November 1982. In the period November 1982 to August 1987, the latest date for which information is available, the retail price index rose by 24 per cent.; in the same period the average earnings of manual and non-manual workers in all industries and services rose by 42 per cent.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for invalid care allowance from married and cohabiting women have been abated due to receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* other benefits and allowances and *(c)* retirement pension.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the requested information is not available. Since June 1986, when the allowance was extended to married and cohabiting women, payments to some 568 women have been reduced on account of the payment of other social security benefits, including supplementary benefit and retirement pension.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for invalid care allowance from married or cohabiting women have been outstanding for *(a)* six months or less, *(b)* six to 12 months and *(c)* over 12 months; and how many of each category relate to women in Wales.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the requested information is not available, but at 16 October some 131,300 invalid care allowance claims had been received from married and cohabiting women of which about 17,900 were awaiting decision. The average time taken to process an invalid care allowance claim is currently about 11·5 weeks.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many outstanding claims for invalid care allowance there are.

Mr. Scott: At 16 October, some 26,300 invalid care allowance claims were awaiting a decision.

Pensions

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of elderly people in receipt of supplementary pension in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area, for the latest available date and for each year since 1979;

(2) how many people in (i) the Dundee, East constituency and (ii) the Dundee district authority area are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* family income supplement and *(c)* housing benefit, and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of elderly people in receipt of supplementary pension in the Dundee, West constituency for the latest available date and or each year since 1979;

(2) how many people in the Dundee, West constituency are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* family income supplement and *(c)* housing benefit; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The constituencies of Dundee, East and Dundee, West and Dundee district authority are served by Dundee, East and Dundee, West local offices but the boundaries are not conterminous.

The table sets out the information requested for these offices on 28 July 1987 and for each year since 1979.

	Dundee East Local Office		*Dundee West Local Office*	
Year	*Supplementary benefit recipients*	*Supplementary Pension recipients*	*Supplementary benefit recipients*	*Supplementary Pension recipients*
1979	8,638	3,579	7,690	3,969
1980	8,880	3,421	7,694	3,859
1981	9,761	3,409	8,365	3,791
1982	10,909	3,192	9,870	3,805
1983	11.309	2,766	10,425	3,600
1984	12,664	3,013	10,937	3,676
1985	13,245	2,697	11,365	3,538
1986	13,019	2,683	11,204	3,278
1987	12,626	2,825	11,330	3,325

The count of cases in action includes some cases where benefit has ceased to be paid but other action is proceeding.

No information is available concerning the number of people claiming family income supplement.

Housing Benefit Recipients in the City of Dundee

	Number
1979-80	[1]12,850
1980-81	[1]13,425
1981-82	[1]15,516
1982-83	[1]16,347
1983-84	22,890
1984-85	23,999
1985-86	23,353
1986-87	[2]23,170
1987-88	[2]23,164

[1] Housing Benefit was introduced from April 1983; before this date rebates were awarded.

[2] Provisional.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the number of pensioners in receipt of supplementary pensions in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland in May of each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows the number of pensioners in receipt of supplementary pension in Greenock local office, Port Glasgow local office, Strathclyde region and Scotland in May of each year since 1979.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Greenock office	3,237	3,168	3,238	3,300	3,690	3,781	3,674	3,484	3,726
Port Glasgow office	1,177	1,146	1,157	1,295	1,246	1,318	1,288	1,267	1,260
Strathclyde region	83,870	81,923	81,555	78,241	76,355	81,879	89,131	79,263	81,613
Scotland	147,693	144,362	142,868	144,346	139,786	147,834	148,129	145,215	148,734

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. These include some cases where benefit has ceased to be paid but other action is still proceeding.

Cancer Patients, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will ask for a report for Leeds Eastern health authority on the resources available for treating children cancer patients at St. James hospital, Leeds; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will meet the chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority and Leeds Eastern health authority to discuss the funding of the treatment of children cancer patients at St. James hospital, Leeds; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has any plans to make more resources available to Leeds Eastern health authority in order to assist the care of children cancer patients at St. James hospital, Leeds.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will establish an inquiry into the adequacy of resources for the treatment of children cancer patients in St. James hospital, Leeds.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for the allocation of resources to Yorkshire district health authorities, including Leeds Eastern, rests with Yorkshire regional health authority. Matters of this kind are for the respective authorities to resolve. The funding of paediatric oncology services must, however, be considered in the context of other services in Yorkshire. I understand that the Yorkshire regional health authority is currently reviewing funding arrangements for services which cover more than one district. This will include paediatric oncology.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average length of time which it takes him to reply to letters from right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Moore: On average 37 calendar days elapse between receipt of a letter from a right hon. or hon. Member and a reply being sent by a DHSS Minister.

Attendance Allowance Board (Guidance)

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the guidance issued by the Attendance Allowance Board will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Attendance Allowance Board's guidelines to its delegated medical practitioners will be published as a priced document after Parliament has completed consideration of the current Social Security Bill, which contains a clause to amend one of the qualifying medical criteria for entitlement to an allowance.

Mobility Allowance (Appeals)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will end as soon as possible the practice of his Department's medical appeals tribunals, covering mobility allowance appeals, of obliging claimants to walk up and down outside in public thoroughfares when assessing their walking ability.

Mr. Portillo: The administration of medical appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, His Honour Judge Byrt, QC.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the average waiting time from date of appeal to hearing under the social security appeal tribunal system in each year since 1979;

(2) if he will give the number of appeals under the social security appeal tribunal system in each year since 1979;

(3) if he will give the number of appeals upheld in part or total under the social security appeal tribunal system in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Prior to April 1984 appeals statistics which measured the time between lodgement and hearing were kept only for supplementary benefit appeal tribunals. There are no comparable figures available for the pre-1984 national insurance local tribunals. The table gives details of the number of appeals to supplementary benefit appeal tribunals lodged and heard in the years 1979 to 1983 and for the first quarter of 1984.

From April 1984 supplementary benefit appeal tribunals and national insurance local tribunals were unified into social security appeal tribunals. At the same time, responsibility for the administration of social security appeal tribunals was transferred to the independent office of the president of social security appeal tribunals. The table gives figures for appeals to social security appeal tribunals for all social security benefits for the period from April 1984 to the quarter ending 31 March 1987 (the latest quarter for which figures are available).

Supplementary Benefits—Great Britain—1979-84

Year	(1) Number of appeals lodged	(2) Number of appeals heard	(3) Number of successful appeals	(4) Percentage successful appeals (column 3 as percentage of column 2)	(5) Average length of time from lodgement to hearing in weeks
1979	94,178	50,639	10,840	21·4	4·4
1980	94,481	49,355	10,914	22·1	4·4
1981	108,570	49,864	8,862	17·8	6·8
1982	129,909	56,084	10,195	18·2	8·5
1983	142,7[illegible]	60,567	11,828	19·5	9·4
1984[1]	37,721	16,871	3,314	19·6	10·5

[1] First quarter only. New statistical system introduced 1 April 1984

Great Britain—Social Security appeal tribunals—all benefits—1984-87

Year	(1) Number of appeals lodged[3]	(2) Number of appeals heard	(3) Number of successful appeals	(4) Percentage successful appeals (column 3 as percentage of column 2)	(5) Average length of time from lodgement to hearing in weeks
1984[1]	192,576	74,542	15,745	21·1	13·5
1985	293,728	114,550	26,689	23·3	14·8
1986	355,731	125,838	31,675	25·2	16·0
1987[2]	191,250	37,685	9,132	24·2	18·2

[1] 9 month period April-December 1984.

[2] First 3 months January-March 1987.

[3] As well as new appeals lodged this figure includes appeals lodged but not decided and carried over from the previous year.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the sums spent on bed-and-breakfast accommodation and paid through supplementary benefit in the Thanet district and Canterbury city council areas in each of the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gynaecology

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by each district health authority the number of gynaecological operations waiting to be performed.

Mrs. Currie: A table showing the number of patients on the March 1987 in-patient waiting list for the gynaecology specialty has been placed in the Library. The information available centrally on in-patient waiting lists is categorised according to the speciality of the consultant not the intended method of treatment.

Income Support Regulations

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is now in a position to reply to the letter from Mr. Richard Horton of the West Midlands Welfare Rights Agency, sent to him on 27 July, regarding the draft Income Support (Transitional) Regulations 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that we have no trace of this correspondence. However, I understand that a copy of the draft Income Support (Transitional) Regulations 1987 was sent to Mr. Horton in July. If the hon. Member would forward a copy of Mr. Horton's letter, I shall ensure that he is sent a reply.

Heating Allowances

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider giving extra heating allowances to senior citizens and disabled people with restricted mobility over the coming winter period in recognition of Scotland's colder climate.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) today.

Extra weekly help with heating costs is currently available to supplementary benefit householders aged 65 or over and to disabled people through the system of supplementary benefit heating additions. The two main rates are £2·20 and £5·55 a week. Like previous Governments, we consider that it would not be right to deviate from the principle of national benefit levels.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 27 October 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements will be made for passports for Queens Messengers following the introduction of the European Community common format; and what distinctive feature such passports will display.

Mr. Renton: There are no plans at present to change either the arrangements for issue or the format of the distinctive couriers passport currently used by members of the Corps of Queen's Messengers in the course of their official duties.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the department equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office has two equal opportunities officers, one for staff in prison service establishments, and the other for staff in the rest of the Department. The former spends about 10 per cent. of his time on work relating to equal opportunities and the latter about 20 per cent. of hers. Both have support from other staff. Both are also departmental training officers. The Prison Department EOO has, in addition, personal management responsibilities; the other EOO has responsibility for industrial relations, communications with staff, and certain other management matters.

The departmental budget breakdown for equal opportunities work is not readily identifiable. The promotion of equal opportunities in the Home Office involves not only EOOs and their supporting staff, but personnel management divisions, training branches and line managers throughout the Department, as well as trade union representatives. In addition, because of its wider responsibilities, the Home Office has staff working to promote equality of opportunity in the community generally, and funds the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. The EOOs meet their counterparts from other Departments at an annual meeting arranged by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and on other occasions as necessary. No formal guidelines have been issued concerning the application of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act.

The Department has informed staff that it will try to meet requests from those who wish, because of their domestic responsibilities, to work part-time or to share a job. The names of those wishing to share are noted so that they can, when the opportunity arises, be put in touch with a prospective partner. Staff inspectors have been asked to review the scope for part-time work or job sharing. In addition, special leave may be granted to staff to enable them to cope with temporary domestic difficulties.

Prisons (Privatisation)

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to privatise the recruitment of prison ancillaries, night patrols, moving staff, prison kitchen staff and dog patrols.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so.

Isle of Man (Arms Shipments)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Government of the Isle of Man on the situation in which a bank account on the island was set up in order to facilitate the shipment of arms to Iran via South Africa; and what action is being taken by the Manx authorities to deal with the individual concerned and to prevent a recurrence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no statutory provisions either in the United Kingdom or the Isle of Man regulating the use of a bank account in relation to arms shipments. I understand that the Isle of Man authorities have no information to suggest that a bank account in the island has been improperly conducted; and there is no evidence to suggest that there has been a breach of export controls. The Isle of Man authorities are well aware of the need to take whatever steps may be necessary within their domestic jurisdiction to conform with the Government's policy in relation to these matters.

African National Congress

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken by the authorities to protect leading members of the African National Congress living in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that leading members of the African National Congress have been seen by the police and given advice about their personal security.

Television Licence Fees

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the level of the television licence fees to take effect from 1 April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The television licence fee has remained at £58·00 for a colour licence and £18·00 for a monochrome licence since 28 March 1985. On 14 January this year, at column 263, I announced that the fee would be increased only in line with the increase in retail prices index. I also said that the increase would be calculated from a notional baseline fee of £60·00 for a colour licence and £20·00 for a monochrome licence.

The principle of indexation and the choice of the baseline were both designed to encourage increased efficiency and economy by the BBC. Its costs had historically risen at a higher rate than the RPI and it was then planning to spend money on the provision of television and radio services in the present financial year at a rate higher than that represented by the baseline fee.

The RPI figure for September published on 9 October showed a year on year increase of 4·2 per cent. I have accordingly decided that from 1 April 1988 the colour licence fee should be £62·50 and the monochrome fee £21·00. The necessary regulations will be laid before the House in due course.

As I have already announced, the licence fee for the two years starting 1 April 1989 and 1 April 1990 will also be calculated in accordance with changes in the RPI, which themselves determine the rate of increase of pensions and other state benefits.

TRANSPORT

M40

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the present position with regard to the siting of a motorway service area on the proposed M40 extention in the Bicester area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Cherwell district council has objected to our proposal for a motorway service area at Ardley. Esso plc has appealed against the refusal of its application for a services facility at an adjacent site. The Department of the Environment proposes to hold a joint inquiry. The date is not yet settled.

Wardie Bay

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he discussed the proposed Wardie bay development and reclamation scheme when he recently met the Forth Ports Authority in Leith; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Forth Ports Authority outlined to my right hon. Friend the plans it has formulated, in a joint venture with GA Group Ltd of Glasgow called Edinburgh Maritime Ltd, for the regeneration of the waterfront between the ports of Granton and Leith. Last month Edinburgh Maritime submitted an application for planning permission for a £400 million mixed-use redevelopment scheme to the city of Edinburgh district council aimed at enhancing the environment and creating jobs and new housing. The planning application has now been called in by Lothian regional council. I understand that the proposals have been welcomed by the Scottish Development Agency as complementing the work that it and its partners have achieved in the Leith project.

A417-A419

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for improvements to the A417-A419 link between Swindon and Gloucester, beyond those already programmed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. The published national trunk road programme contains schemes covering almost the entire length between Swindon and Gloucester where improvements have not yet been effected.

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current responsibility for determining the status of Prestwick airport as Scotland's transatlantic gateway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 1985 airports policy White Paper explained that if Prestwick airport's financial results had not shown steady improvements by 1989, the Government would review their present policy for air traffic distribution among the Scottish lowland airports. This remains the case; we shall naturally have regard to BAA plc's assessment of Prestwick's performance and future prospects in deciding whether to conduct a review.

M1-A1 Link

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what date work will start on the construction of the M1-A1 link.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Subject to the satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures, in the late spring or early summer of next year.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an approved specification for a tactile warning device for pedestrians using pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The specification for a tactile warning device for pedestrians using pelican crossings was approved and issued on 6 August 1987.

National Bus Company

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the progress being made by the National Bus Company in the implementation of its disposal programme.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am impressed by the progress made by the National Bus Company in the implementation of its disposal programme, as shown by the company's annual report and accounts published today. Already some 50 subsidiaries have been sold, and there is an encouraging level of interest in the remainder. I congratulate Mr. Lund, chairman of NBC, and his colleagues.

To facilitate the remaining sales, I have modified NBC's disposal programme to enable it to offer for sale two or more bus operating subsidiaries together. This modification, made at NBC's request, will not affect NBC's statutory duty to promote fair and sustained competition in disposing of its subsidiaries, but will give NBC more flexibility in fulfilling this duty. All sales will remain subject to the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have placed a copy of the amendment in the Library of the House. I have also laid before the House a revocation of two directions given to NBC on 13

February and 7 April 1986, in relation to the preparation of its disposal programme. The directions had ceased to have effect once the programme was approved.

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation Policy

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has studied the publication "This Pleasant Land" which has been sent to him; and what are his policies on *(a)* establishing protected green belt areas, *(b)* designating housing restraint areas and *(c)* creating strategic development boundaries, in the light of the publication;

(2) if he will introduce regulations to establish *(a)* protected green belt areas, *(b)* housing restraint areas and *(c)* strategic development boundaries to be protected from development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: "This Pleasant Land" is an interesting discussion of current planning issues. However, it understates the strength and success of existing conservation policies. The Government have vigorously maintained the protection afforded to the green belts and other sensitive areas, and will continue to do so. I see no need for new designations of the kind proposed. The success of policies for housing development in existing urban areas is evidenced by the extent to which land for housebuilding is coming from previously developed sites and vacant land within urban areas—in the last two years about 46 per cent. of land developed for housing came from these sources.

Land use surveys can provide valuable information, but assessments of housing land supply must also take account of such factors as ownership, market demand and the availability of services, which can only be assessed at the local level. That is why, within the context of structure and local plan allocations, we have urged local authorities and housebuilders to undertake joint studies of housing land availability in each area.

Rating Reform

Mr. Raison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely impact of the proposed unified business rate after revaluation on non-domestic ratepayers in each of the districts of Buckinghamshire, expressed as a percentage change.

Mr. Howard: The table shows the effect on business rates in Buckinghamshire districts if a uniform non-domestic rate had been set in 1987-88 at the present national average poundage. Arrangements for the revaluation of non-domestic property are not yet sufficiently far advanced to predict what the impact will be in Buckinghamshire.

	Present poundage	*Uniform poundage*	*Per cent. change*
Aylesbury Vale	220·9p	224·1p	+1·5
South Bucks	222·0p	224·1p	+1·0
Chiltern	227·2p	224·1p	−1·4
Milton Keynes	236·9p	224·1p	−5·4
Wycombe	223·6p	224·1p	+0·2

Commons Court (Asbestos)

Mr. Butler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish estimates of the presence of asbestos fibres in the air in Commons Court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Air samples taken on 23 October from all three floors at Commons Court block show a reading of less than 0·01 fibres/ml. This is below the minimum safety level and is the same as the reading taken before the removal of sprayed asbestos from structural beams and girders in 15 offices during the summer recess. It is intended that the remaining 34 offices will be treated during the next summer recess.

Council House Sales

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council and new town commission houses or flats have been sold in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Roe: Sales of dwellings by English local authorities and new towns for 1982 and 1983 were published in table 9.6 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1976-1986" and figures for 1984 to 1986 were published in table 2.12 of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2 June 1987" copies of which are available in the Library.

Home Ownership

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on future plans to encourage wider home ownership.

Mrs. Roe: The Government's commitment to supporting the growth of owner occupation was set out in chapter 2 of the recent White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals" (Cm. 214). The Government will encourage the operation of a free market in buying, selling and constructing homes, and will continue to assist homebuyers through tax relief on mortgage interest. They will also encourage the development of initiatives such as shared ownership which reduce the initial cost of home ownership, and will maintain the right of council tenants to buy their homes.

Hares

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to establish an independent scientific survey into the hare population with a view to including the species under schedule 5 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The conservation status of the brown hare was carefully considered by the Government's statutory adviser on wildlife matters, the Nature Conservancy Council, as part of its recent statutory review of schedules 5 and 8 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, following its first five years of operation. Its advice following this review was that the brown hare does not merit inclusion in schedule 5 on conservation grounds. I understand the blue hare is not under threat.

Housing Action Areas

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made by his Department on declaring housing action areas in Handsworth, Birmingham, since the Parliamentary Under-Secretary replied to the Adjournment on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns 1105-8.

Mr. Waldegrave: Further discussions took place between officials of the Department and Birmingham city council on 11 September. A formal submission for the declaration of Charles as a housing action area is now awaited from the city council. A decision on whether or not the declaration is allowed to stand will be made as quickly as possible after the submission is received.

The other area referred to in the Adjournment debate was Turville. I understand that the city council will need to carry out further survey work before it will be ready to make a submission in this case.

Enveloping Schemes

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many enveloping schemes he has approved in Birmingham since 14 July.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 14 July 1987, four envelope schemes submitted by Birmingham city council have been approved. They involved a total of 525 dwellings, at a cost of £4,279,177.

Home Loan Scheme

Mr. French asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have received assistance from the Government's home loan scheme in *(a)* Gloucester and *(b)* England and Wales for the most recent year for which figures are available; how this compares with previous years; what proportion of first-time buyers this represents; and what action the Government takes to promote the scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the take-up of the home loan scheme is not available for individual areas.

The take-up of the scheme for the last five years is shown in the table:

Financial year	*Number of first-time buyers benefiting*
1982-83	6,277
1983-84	4,240
1984-85	3,580
1985-86	3,520
1986-87	1,660

The number of people receiving assistance in the financial year 1986-87 represents about 0·25 per cent. of first-time buyers who received advances from banks and building societies.

The Government make a full range of promotional material for the scheme available through banks, building societies and other mortgage lenders and savings institutions.

Rate Support Grant

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: I am today issuing a consultation paper to the local authority associations and local authorities setting out my detailed proposals for the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement. The associations and individual local authorities have been asked for their written comments and representations on these proposals by 17 November.

Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Growth Rates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of the growth rate in the European Economic Community, the United States of America, Japan and the United Kingdom respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The latest available data for the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan are for the second quarter of 1987. Over the year to that quarter, GDP grew by 3·8 per cent. in the United Kingdom, 2·7 per cent. in Japan and 2·4 per cent. in the United States. The latest complete data for the EC are for the first quarter of 1987. Over the year to that quarter, GDP in the EC grew by 2·6 per cent.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Brooke: The departmental equal opportunities officer reports to the principal establishment officer. In addition to work on equal opportunities, for which no fixed proportion of the time is allocated, there are other duties, including policy on personnel management. The officer attends the annual meeting of departmental equal opportunities officers, and meets them frequently on other occasions throughout the year. No specific part of the departmental budget is allocated to equal opportunities.

No guidelines have been issued, either to departmental training officers or to departmental equal opportunities officers, on the operation of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act.

All personnel managers in my Department are encouraged to identify opportunities for job sharing and part-time working. Individual requests are dealt with sympathetically, taking into account the working needs of the Department. The Department offers maternity leave. Requests for special leave caused by domestic emergencies are considered on an individual basis.

Tax Arrears

Mr. Steel asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that, where tax arrears result from errors made by the Inland Revenue, there be no obligation on the taxpayer to pay such arrears.

Mr. Lawson: The general rule is that tax arrears remain legally payable, whether or not the underpayment is attributable in some measure to Inland Revenue error. The Inland Revenue does, however, operate an extra-statutory concession under which arrears of tax may be wholly or partly waived if they have arisen because of a departmental error which involved the failure to make proper and timely use of information about income or personal circumstances supplied by the taxpayer so that he could reasonably believe that his affairs were in order.

The proportion of arrears remitted under this practice varies according to the size of the taxpayer's income. The terms of the concession (ESC A19) are published in the Inland Revenue's list of extra-statutory concessions.

Arts (Tax Incentives)

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect on the arts of tax incentives for individuals and companies introduced in the Finance Act 1986.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The tax incentives which the Government introduced last year to encourage personal and corporate donations to charities were widely and warmly welcomed. Inland Revenue records do not distinguish between different types of charities, but arts charities can benefit in the same way as other charities. It is too soon to judge the full effect of the 1986 measures, but the early signs are encouraging. I hope donors and charities will take full advantage of the opportunities which the Government have provided to increase the flow of funds into charities.

Computer Records (Access)

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how access to taxpayers' computer records will be governed when the new computer system proposed by the business review of the collection service is introduced by the Inland Revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The new computer system, BROCS, is planned to be implemented in stages from 1990. It will be designed to improve both the efficiency of the revenue's operations and the service provided to taxpayers. In particular, it will provide accurate and up-to-date information in three main areas where present systems are now generally seen to be unacceptably slow and fallible:

(i) where a tax inspector needs to have information held on collection records relevant to an assessment for which he is responsible.

(ii) where a collector needs to have information held on tax office records relevant to a tax debt which he is handling—to ensure that recovery procedures start with an accurate knowledge of the taxpayer's position.

(iii) where a collector needs to know of information on other collection records—to confirm the payment position of outstanding liabilities, co-ordinate handling of cases where a taxpayer may have several tax debts outstanding and ensure prompt banking of tax receipts.

These facilities are, in essence, the same as those that tax and collection offices are authorised to have under the present collection procedures. It is proposed to adopt standard access rules for BROCS and the other main computer systems linked with it: COP (for PAYE); CODA (for schedule D) and OCTA (for corporation tax).

Access to information under these systems will continue to be strictly controlled on a "need to know" basis. In some circumstances, it will be given only to certain nominated officers and generally on a view-only basis. There will continue to be special controls for certain sensitive records. Additional safeguards built into the new system will include a separate record and audit trail of all accesses to computer records.

EC Budget

Dr. Godman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest figure for the proportion of the European Commission budget for 1987 on *(a)* all fisheries support, *(b)* all agricultural support, *(c)* the social fund and *(d)* the regional fund; and how these sums compare with those of 1986.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is given in the table.

European Communities Budget

	1986 Payment appropriations mecu	*Percentage of total budget*	*1987 Payment appropriations mecu*	*Percentage of total budget*
All fisheries support	164·0	0·5	177·3	0·5
All agricultural support	22,902·2	65·1	23,804·0	65·8
European Social Fund	2,533·0	7·2	2,542·3	7·0
European Regional Development Fund	3,373·0	6·7	2,497·3	6·9

These figures are based on the payment appropriations entered into the 1986 and 1987 European Communities budgets.

WALES

Hip Replacement Operations

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of hip replacement operations under the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Between 1979 and 1986 the number of hip replacement operations performed by the National Health Service in Wales rose from 1,541 to 1,908—an increase of some 24 per cent.

Community Care

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he will take to ensure that adequate short-term funds are made available to local health authorities to meet the cost of setting up properly funded community care schemes for the elderly, mentally ill and physically disabled people.

Mr. Grist: A variety of mechanisms already exist to provide central funds to health authorities in support of community care schemes for elderly, mentally ill and physically disabled people. These include joint finance, under which the Department collaborates financially with health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations, and the mental health development scheme, under which health authorities receive 100 per cent. central funding for projects for mentally ill people. In addition, the elderly initiative grant scheme launched in January this year provides grant-aid to health authorities and other agencies to set up innovative projects to test new patterns of community care for elderly people.

Low-paid Workers

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of workers in Wales who earn less than £3 per hour and the percentage which they constitute of the total Welsh work force.

Mr. Peter Walker: An estimate of the number of workers is not available, but results of the 1986 new earnings survey indicate that 28·6 per cent. of full-time adult workers in Wales whose earnings were not affected by absence earn less than £3 per hour.

Education

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of children under the age of 16 years in Wales are educated in state schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In January 1987, 97·9 per cent of all school pupils aged under 16 years in Wales were educated in maintained schools.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Soviet Union (Mail)

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assurances the Post Office has *(a)* sought and *(b)* received about the delivery of mail in the Soviet Union; and what steps it takes to monitor their implementation.

Mr. Butcher: International postal operations are governed by the provisions of the Universal Postal Union convention, to which both the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom are signatories. The UPU convention makes provision for the prohibition of the importation of articles whose importation and circulation is prohibited in the country of destination. The precise internal regulations under which Soviet customs or postal officials operate in confiscating items are not publicly available. But the Soviet notification to the UPU of prohibited articles is so widely drawn as to allow the Soviet authorities, in theory, to refuse entry or to confiscate items we would consider innocuous. We find this situation far from satisfactory.

The Soviet authorities are well aware of our views, which we have made known to them on a number of occasions. As I said in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 21 October, at columns 811-12, we have raised the matter at the CSCE follow-up meeting currently taking place in Vienna.

I understand that most mail to the Soviet Union is registered, and all registered items are individually listed before dispatch. It is therefore always possible to check whether a particular letter has been forwarded. The Post Office sets inquiries in train with the Soviet postal authorities as necessary about the non-delivery of specific items.

Marble, Granite and Stone

Mr. William Powell asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report* the value and country of origin, of imports into the United Kingdom of finished *(a)* marble, *(b)* granite and *(c)* stone in each year since 1980.

Mr. Butcher: Building and monumental stone is classified in the standard international trade classification revision 2 (SITC R2) under item heading 661.32, but marble and granite are not separately identified. Information by country of origin is not readily available at SITC item level: information on a country of origin basis for the years 1980 and 1986 has been prepared within cost limits.

Imports of Building and Monumental Stone
Total United Kingdom Imports

	£'000
1980	9,668
1981	10,460
1982	11,384
1983	13,491
1984	16,238
1985	19,066
1986	27,245
Country of Origin breakdown:	
1980	
Total imports =	9,668
of which	
Italy	6,529
India	734
South Africa	730
France	417
Portugal	407
Pakistan	239
1986	
Total imports =	27,245
of which	
Italy	14,867
France	2,195
Portugal	2,025
Taiwan	1,755
India	1,632
Spain	1,236

Source: *Overseas Trade Statistics.*

Notes:

Building and monumental stone defined as Standard International Trade Classification (revision 2) item 661.32.

1986 figures provisional.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Butcher: My Department intends to make no charge in respect of subject access requests made by its employees in respect of information that it holds under the Act in its capacity as their employer. For all other requests, including external requests, a fee of £10 will be charged in order to cover the cost of providing the service. This is in accordance with Treasury guidelines on charging.

Music Industry

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will use his statutory powers to prevent increased control of music publishers by record, film and television groups, in the light of the effects of such control on the contractual and royalty terms of composers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Any such increases of control may constitute mergers which qualify under the terms of the Fair Trading Act 1973 for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State announced on 7 October that the proposed merger between enterprises carried on by or under the control of Chappell and Co. Inc. and enterprises carried on by or under the control of Warner Communications Inc. had been referred to the MMC. In assessing whether a merger may operate against the public interest, the MMC has a statutory duty to take into account all matters which it considers in the circumstances to be relevant.

Films

Mr. Gale asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to release the Director of Fair Trading's report on practices relating to the public exhibition of films.

Mr. Maude: I intend to do so shortly in order to consult the industry and other interested parties about the appropriate follow-up action to the report.

UNCTAD

Mr. Oppenheim asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the outcome of the seventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Geneva from 9 July to 3 August 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: This session of the conference adopted a Final Act which set out the consensus reached on the main substantive item under consideration — the revitalisation of development, growth and international trade.

I have arranged for copies of this document, the speech I made at the conference and the text of the closing statement by the United Kingdom following the adoption of the Final Act to be placed in the Library of the House.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Oppenheim asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 5 October.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, agreed a common position on a revised proposal by the European Commission to amend the EC directive on the rules for public sector supplies contracts. The Council also discussed proposals for a directive on the mutual recognition of member states professional qualifications and for amending the existing directive on sound power levels of lawnmowers, and heard a Commission statement on its proposal for a regulation on the control of concentrations between undertakings (the "Merger Control" regulation).

Listing Particulars (EC Directive)

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the adoption of a European Community directive on listing particulars.

Mr. Maude: A Council of Ministers adopted on 22 June a directive on the mutual recognition of listing particulars, the information document required to be published when securities are admitted to official stock exchange listing. This directive requires listing particulars which have been approved by a competent authority in one member state to be accepted throughout the Community. During negotiations on the proposal the United Kingdom secured important improvemens to the original proposal which materially reduced the scope for listing particulars of an unacceptable standard to benefit from mutual recognition. There was a real risk that these improvements might have been undermined had the United Kingdom delayed adoption of the proposal beyond 1 July, the date on which the Single European Act came into force. I therefore judged that it was in the United Kingdom's interest not to delay adoption until the House had completed its consideration of the measure. I regret that the normal scrutiny procedures were not followed on this occasion, but I hope the House will understand the special reasons why the Government agreed to the adoption of the directive in these circumstances.

PRIME MINISTER

Pembrokeshire

Q7. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett** asked the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to Pembrokeshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Blowpipe Missiles

Q14. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have yet responded to the Soviet protest in connection with deliveries of Blowpipe missiles to Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 13 July at column 335.

Darnchurch

Q21.**Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Darnchurch, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Burgh Island

Q41. **Mr. Steen** asked the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Burgh Island.

The Prime Minister I have at present no plans to do so.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister on what basis, and for what reason, Her Majesty's Government have given permission to British Nuclear Fuels to sell the equipment and know-how to make weapons-grade plutonium to other countries; whether any other of Britain's NATO allies were consulted; and if she will make a statement on the implications for non-proliferation agreements.

The Prime Minister: All exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology are made within the guidelines set out in the statement by the then Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Sir James Callaghan, on 31 March 1976 at columns 514-16. Those guidelines ensure that any such export will be wholly consistent with our international non-proliferation obligations under the non-proliferation treaty.

Space Research

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Prime Minister what response she has made to the representations from ACOST to the effect that further funds should be committed to space research and development or the United Kingdom should withdraw from the European venture.

The Prime Minister: I have in the last few days received advice from ACOST on the subject of space research and development. That advice was given in confidence. My hon. Friend should not assume that the advice coincides with his description of it. I shall be responding to ACOST in due course.

Security Services

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on co-operation of the British security services with the South African authorities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on security matters.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Livingstone asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what basis he will determine the specific objective ratings for school attainment scores, in particular with mathematics, once the regular testing of children at seven, 11 and 14 years comes into force.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has appointed expert working groups on mathematics and on science to advise on the national attainment targets for these subjects and arrangements for assessment and testing performance in relation to these targets. He has also appointed a task group on assessment and testing to make recommendations for a national assessment system, including ways in which results should be expressed and reported to meet the various purposes of assessment.

The mathematics and science working groups are to produce interim reports in November and final reports by July 1988. The task group on assessment and testing has been asked to report by Christmas 1987. There will be consultations about its recommendations before new arrangements are brought into effect.

Truancy

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will collect and publish statistics on the incidence of truancy amongst 12-year-old and 13-year-old children *(a)* in authorities with a middle school system and *(b)* in authorities which have an 11 to 16-year-old school system.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect any statistics on the incidence of truancy.

A-Level Examination

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will collect and publish statistics on A-level passes obtained by pupils, as a percentage of those entered for the examination in *(a)* authorities with a middle school system, *(b)* authorities with an 11 to 16-year-old school system, *(c)* sixth form college system authorities and *(d)* authorities with a tertiary college system.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the A-level attainments of English school leavers is published in "Statistics of Education: School Leavers CSE and GCE", a copy of which is in the Library.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department's policy on subject access fees is to recover the direct costs of meeting a request for personal data, on an estimated average basis. My Department has eight register entries at present.

The cost to a data subject of obtaining his personal data would in most cases be £8 but, very exceptionally, might total a maximum of £40.

Merseyside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Merseyside.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In the course of my visit to Liverpool on Monday 5 October I was able to see a nursery, a primary, and a comprehensive school, and to lunch at Liverpool polytechnic. I welcomed the opportunity to meet members of the authority and to discuss matters of common concern with a group of young people at Shorefields comprehensive school in Toxteth.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent by the Medical Research Council on research into the causes of the post viral fatigue syndrome in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council has not funded any research directly on post viral fatigue syndrome. However, the council does support research on immune responses to muscle, nerve cells and related structures which may shed light on this problem. The council is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

Examination Courses

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now give details of the arrangements in place to approve examination courses offered in the compulsory years of secondary education against national criteria.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced earlier this month interim non-statutory arrangements for the approval of all public examination courses for 14 to 16-year-olds against national criteria. Under these arrangements, agreed by the major examination bodies concerned, all examinations offered to the 14 to 16 age group will be subject to approval and monitoring by the Secondary Examinations Council in the same way as GCSE courses.

All single-subject courses will be approved against the existing GCSE national criteria. New criteria are being introduced for approving integrated courses, that is those which cover a range of subjects and occupy most of a pupil's time. Approved courses will be offered in schools from September 1988.

These arrangements are based on advice made to my right hon. Friend by the SEC in the light of consultation on the report of a working party chaired by Mr. R. S. Johnson, director of education for Leeds. We are grateful to the SEC for its advice and to the working party for its recommendations.

Our proposals for a national curriculum, which my right hon. Friend intends to present to the House this coming Session, will put these arrangements on a statutory basis. They may also necessitate changes to the integrated course criteria.

Copies of the interim integrated course criteria have been placed in the Library.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Green Paper on permanent arrangements for settling teachers' pay and conditions will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today laid before Parliament a Green Paper entitled "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: a Consultative Document". Copies are available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions will be given its remit.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today written to Lord Chilver, the chairman of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions, a letter which sets out the issues on which the advice of the committee is sought. The text of my letter is as follows:

Lord Chilver FRS, FEng, CBIM
Chairman
Interim Advisory Committee on
School Teachers' Pay and Conditions 27 October 1987

Dear Henry,

1. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for agreeing to be members of the Interim Advisory Committee. The purpose of this letter is to set out the issues on which the Government now seeks the Committee's advice.

2. As you know, the Committee has a statutory basis, Sub-sections (1) and (4) of Section 2 of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act provide that:

> "The Secretary of State shall appoint an Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions to examine and report to him on such matters relating to the remuneration and other conditions of employment of school teachers in England and Wales as he may refer to them."
>
> "The Secretary of State may give directions to the Committee with respect to matters referred to them as to considerations to which they are to have regard and financial or other constraints to which their recommendations are to be subject, and as to the time within which they are to report to him."

3. Sub-section (5) of Section 2 provides that the Committee shall give notice of matters referred to the Committee and of any relevant directions to the appropriate associations of local education authorities and any individual local education authority with whom consultation appears desirable, bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools and organisations representing school teachers, so as to afford them a reasonable opportunity of submitting evidence and representations.

4. In accordance with Section 2 of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 I invite the Interim Advisory Committee to examine and report on the following matters subject to the considerations in paragraph 5 and to the constraints in paragraph 6.

- (i) What changes should be made in the figures for salaries and allowances, and other details, set out in the Pay section of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987?
- (ii) Should there be any modifications to the provision for differentials within the pay structure? In particular do the differentials between heads' salaries and deputies' salaries and between heads' and deputies' salaries on the one hand, and other

teachers' salaries on the other, reflect appropriately the responsibilities of heads and deputies in primary and secondary schools (including special schools)?

(iii) In the light of the operation of the arrangements in the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987 should there be any modifications to the provision relating to teachers' duties?

(iv) Should there be any change in London area allowances, and should any other regional variations in salaries be introduced taking account of shortages of teachers in particular areas and of particular skills?

(v) Is the existing social priority allowance still appropriate?

5. In considering these matters I direct the Committee under sub-section (4) of Section 2 to have regard to the following considerations.

(i) The Government's view is that school teachers' pay and conditions of service should be such as to enable the maintained school system to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient teachers of the required quality both nationally and at local level within what can be afforded.

(ii) The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987 sets out a new pay structure and a new definition of teachers' duties and working time. It was prepared taking account of work undertaken during the long period of discussions between the local authority associations and the teachers' unions with the assistance of ACAS, the recommendations in the Main Report, and views expressed in consultations with local education authority associations, teacher unions and bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools. The Government does not intend to make major changes to the pay structure consisting of a main professional scale and five rates of incentive allowances or to the provisions relating to teachers' duties and working time for 1988-89.

6. I further direct under sub-section (4) of Section 2 that the Committee's recommendations are to be subject to the following constraints.

(i) The rates of salaries and allowances to be recommended by the Committee shall be in respect of the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989. The Committee may also consider and make recommendations about the London area allowances from 1 July 1987.

(ii) The recommendations of the Committee should be such that they do not cost more than an additional £300 million in the 1988-89 financial year or in later years.

7. My Department will in due course place evidence before the Committee in relation to these matters.

8. I further direct the Committee to report to me the results of their examination of these matters, with their recommendations and such other advice relating to these matters as they think fit, by 31 March 1988. Sub-section 7 of Section 2 of the Act requires me to arrange for your report to be published.

Yours sincerely
KENNETH BAKER

ENERGY

National Grid

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy what contingency arrangements he proposes to make for national or regional emergencies affecting the national grid in the proposals he will be putting before Parliament for the privatisation of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry will ensure that the industry maintains the ability to operate the national grid in a flexible manner, during national and regional emergencies and at other times.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Frank Larsen and Others (Prosecution)

Mr. Spearing asked the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his statement and answers given to the House on Friday, 23 October, he will list those criminal charges which on available evidence, could be made against the persons discharged from Lambeth magistrates court; and if he will request the Director of Public Prosecution to consider prosecutions accordingly.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has already considered all the available evidence and all possible criminal proceedings arising therefrom. It is not his practice, nor is it mine, to detail allegations, whether or not they are capable of substantiation, against persons who are not subject to criminal proceedings.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the total aid budget given to India in the past financial year by Her Majesty's Government, and *(b)* the estimated aid budget for India in the coming financial year; and what proportion of Her Majesty's Government aid budget comprises loans to the Indian Government to be paid back to Her Majesty's Government with interest.

Mr. Eggar: Firm figures for gross public expenditure on aid in the last financial year are not yet available by country. In the calendar year 1986, gross public expenditure on aid to India was £143·5 million.

It is not our practice to reveal planning allocations for future years: these are of a provisional nature.

All aid expenditure in India in 1986 was in the form of grants, which have been the standard form of aid to India since 1975.

Aid Budget

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what was the total United Kingdom overseas aid budget for the last financial year as a percentage of United Kingdom gross national product;

(2) if he will list the total percentage of United Kingdom gross national product given as overseas aid in comparison with similar percentages of the member nations of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Eggar: The percentages of gross national product given in 1986 as net official development assistance by European Community states which are members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development were:

	Percentage
Belgium	0·48
Denmark	0·89
France (excluding overseas departments and territories)	0·49
Germany	0·43
Ireland	0·28
Italy	0·40
Netherlands	1·00
United Kingdom	0·32

Details of other European Community member states are not available for 1986.

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total overseas aid budget given by Her Majesty's Government to *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Pakistan and *(c)* Sri Lanka in the last financial year; and what proportion of this aid comprised loans to be paid back to Her Majesty's Government with interest.

Mr. Eggar: Firm figures for gross public expenditure on aid in the last financial year are not yet available by country. In the calendar year 1986, gross public expenditure on aid to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was as follows, excluding transactions by the Commonwealth Development Corporation:

	£ million
Bangladesh	38·3
Pakistan	20·7
Sri Lanka	13·4

None of these disbursements was in respect of an interest-bearing loan. Since 1975 the standard form of aid to these countries has been grant. In addition, the Commonwealth Development Corporation disbursed £2 million to Sir Lanka in 1986 in loan form.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Jonathan Wash

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the death of Jonathan Wash in the Ivory Coast on 19 November 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The file on this case prepared by the examining magistrate in the Ivory Coast has been sent to the Bedfordshire police who are conducting an investigation into Mr. Wash's death at the request of the Bedfordshire coroner. A team from the Bedfordshire police expects to visit the Ivory Coast shortly.

Citizenship

Mr. Dunnachie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many citizens of *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan and *(c)* Bangladesh were granted full United Kingdom citizenship for each year since and including 1983;

(2) how many citizens of *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan and *(c)* Bangladesh applied unsuccessfully for United Kingdom citizenship for each year since and including 1983.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

Grants of citizenship by nationality are published annually in Home Office statistical bulletins, most recently in bulletin 29/87; the figures requested are given in the table. Corresponding information on refusals of applications for citizenship is not readily available.

Grants of British citizenship

Numbers

Previous citizenship or nationality	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
India	7,865	12,567	5,907	3,833
Pakistan	7,728	10,272	6,931	4,882
Bangladesh	2,234	3,787	2,968	2,748

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from voluntary organisations on Merseyside about planned changes in the operation of the community programme; if he plans to meet such organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have received correspondence from a number of hon. Members on this matter. I have already met national representatives of the voluntary sector to discuss the proposed improvements to community programme provision, but I have no current plans to meet voluntary organisations from Merseyside.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the current levels of unemployment in France, Italy, West Germany, the United States of America and the United Kingdom respectively; and what were the comparable figures of the calendar years 1973 and 1982, respectively, for each country.

Mr. Lee: Following is the information requested. The figures are not fully comparable becaue of national differences in definitions and the methods of compiling the statistics.

Thousands

	Current level (Seasonally adjusted—latest month)	*Annual average*	
		1973	*1982*
France	2,638 (July)	394	2,000
Italy	3,233 (May)	1,005	2,163
West Germany	2,255 (September)	274	1,855
United States of America	7,221 (August)	4,365	10,678
United Kingdom[1]	2,775 (September)	545	2,626

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[1] Excluding school leavers on consistent basis, allowing for changes in coverage.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing, in respect of the most recent date for which figures are available, the percentage of unemployed men in France, Belgium, West Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America respectively, who have been unemployed for a year or more; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is given in the following table. The figures are not directly comparable because of national differences in definitions and methods of compiling the statistics. In particular, the figures for the United States of America are based on surveys rather than registrations at unemployment offices.

Percentage of unemployed men who were unemployed for a year or more in 1986

	Per cent.
France	28
Belgium	52
West Germany	32
United Kingdom	46
United States of America	11

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Meat Imports

Mr. Wray asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures Her Majesty's Government will take so as to strictly abide by the European Community ban of hormone treated meat imports from the United States of America.

Mr. Gummer: The Imported Food Regulations 1984 give powers to prohibit, by notice in the *London Gazette*, the import of meat and meat products which do not satisfy the relevant requirements of EC legislation.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he plans to meet the Farm Animal Welfare Council working group on religious slaughter before announcing his conclusions on the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on religious slaughter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. In fact yesterday I met the chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council and members of the council's working group on religious slaughter.

Organic Farming

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the definition of organic farming used for the purposes of his Department.

Mr. Gummer: My Department does not currently use any one definition of organic farming. However, the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards has recently been established by Food From Britain to consider the question of standards to be observed in organic production and I shall seek advice from that body as required.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he now has concerning the number of farmers, in total and by county in England and Wales, who are using *(a)* organic methods and *(b)* low-input, low-output methods.

Mr. Gummer: Such information is not currently available. In due course, however, it should be possible to produce data on the number of farmers using organic methods and who have registered with the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the operation of the Sheep Variable Premium (Protection of Payments) (Amendment) Order 1983 (S.I. 1983/1009) and the (Recovery Powers) Regulations 1983 (S.I. 1983/1010) have had on sheep meat prices and the cost of the sheep variable premium scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: These regulations form a necessary part of the sheep variable premium scheme operated in Great Britain. Their effects on prices or SVPS costs cannot be meaningfully isolated.

Freezer Trawlers

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the freezer trawlers which received de-commissioning grants, the amount of grant in each case, and the amount of money obtained by the sale of each of these vessels; how much money was paid by the state, by way of a grant, to assist in the construction of each of these vessels; and if he is able to estimate the annual depreciation of each of these vessels.

Mr. Gummer: Information about decommissioning grants and construction grants paid in respect of 17 freezer trawlers is shown in the table. The decommissioning scheme did not require vessel owners to supply my Department with details of the selling prices. I am therefore not able to estimate the annual depreciation of decommissioned vessels.

Vessel Name	*Decommissioning Grant* £	*National Construction Grant* £
Arctic Raider	484,400	113,177
Arctic Freebooter	587,600	145,496
Cordella	614,000	459,033
Farnella	591,100	279,572
Dane	591,992	554,344
Roman	579,292	393,494
Defiance	580,400	158,287
Goth	579,292	383,472
Norse	579,292	355,270
St. Jasper	514,484	241,128
St. Jerome	515,280	217,925
St. Jason	537,200	226,288
St. Benedict	581,504	505,990
Boston Lincoln	397,620	89,615
Sir Fred Parkes	620,000	138,109
Pict	728,800	561,160
Northella	614,000	506,443

Sharks

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many basking sharks were taken from British territorial waters in each of the past five years; which countries took them; for what purposes; what is the estimated population of basking sharks in British waters; and if he will consider a total ban on their being fished.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 October 1987, c. *890*]: The only known directed fisheries for basking sharks in British fishery limits are carried out by Norwegian vessels fishing within quotas allocated under the EC-Norway fisheries agreement and by an individual Scottish fisherman who has taken a number of basking sharks each year since 1983 in the Clyde and the Irish sea.

The Norwegian quota is 400 tonnes of basking shark liver.

In the last three years Norwegian catches against this quota are understood to have been 48·7 tonnes, 39·4 tonnes and 13 tonnes liver weight respectively, taken in ICES area VIIg (Celtic sea), only part of which falls within British fishery limits. Information on catches in earlier years is not readily available.

As regards the Scottish catches, it is not the normal practice to publish statistics relating to an individual enterprise, but the catches have declined substantially in the last three years.

The main purpose for which basking sharks are caught is for their livers, which are used for the production of liver oil products. It is understood that the reduced catches in recent years reflect reduced demand.

There is no estimate available of the population of basking sharks in British fishery limits. In common with many other species which in British waters are at the limits of their north eastern Atlantic distribution, these are likely to be subject to natural fluctuations in local abundance.

The Nature Conservancy Council has recommended that basking sharks should be protected in United Kingdom territorial waters under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This recommendation is currently being considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health Boards

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the per capita expenditure and revenue allocations of each of the four area health boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The revenue allocation for each board in 1987-88 and the corresponding per capita figure, based on mid-1986 population estimates are:

	£	£ per capita
Northern	95,472,000	252
Southern	90,199,000	312
Eastern	320,439,000	499
Western	88,344,000	344

This information is meaningless for the purposes of comparison between boards. Estimated board populations do not coincide with actual catchment populations for many services; for example, regional medical services, acute hospital services, psychiatric and mental handicap hospital services.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (Code of Conduct)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) when the Royal Ulster Constabulary code of conduct as approved by the Police Authority (Northern Ireland), will be published;

(2) whether he will place a copy of the Royal Ulster Constabulary code of conduct, as approved by the Police Authority (Northern Ireland), in the Library.

Mr. Tom King: The Chief Constable has issued a document entitled "Professional Policy Ethics" to be incorporated in the RUC manual, which is an internal document for police use only. Any decision on publication is a matter for the Chief Constable.

Payment for Debt (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have had deductions made under the provisions of the Payment for Debt (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972 from moneys due to them from state bodies, in each year since the passage of the legislation, broken down according to religion and local authority area.

Mr. Stanley: Information on the number of people from whom deductions have been made under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 in respect of moneys due to them from state bodies is not readily available in the form requested and could not be compiled except at disproportionate cost.

United States of America (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost to the British Government of the recent 11-day trip by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the United States of America.

Mr. Tom King: I regret that the information requested is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member with the detailed information as soon as possible.

Contraception

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment (1) by contraceptive method and (2) by source of treatment clinic or general practitioner in Northern Ireland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. The information available is given in the table.

Table A

Year	Health[1] and Social Services Boards	General Practitioners[1]			Total
		Oral Contraceptives	Intrauterine Devices	Total	
1982	[3]60,064	35,379	1,429	36,808	96,872
1983	[3]64,542	39,635	1,558	41,193	105,735
1984	74,660	39,139	1,950	41,089	115,749
1985	75,483	40,424	2,010	42,434	117,917
1986	73,836	43,988	1,873	45,861	119,697

[1] Numbers of individuals for which contraceptives prescribed.

[2] Numbers of individuals attending for advice and treatment.

[3] Figures for Western health and social services board not available.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of abortions undertaken in each health authority area since 1967.

Mr. Needham: In Northern Ireland abortions are carried out only on therapeutic grounds where the life of the woman is threatened by the pregnancy or where continuance of the pregnancy is likely to cause grave danger to her physical or mental health.

Statistical information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gynaecological Operations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each health board the number of outstanding gynaecological operations.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the total number of patients, by health and social services board, awaiting admission to a gynaecological bed at 30 June 1987 was:

	Number
Eastern Board	1,058
Northern Board	263
Southern Board	284
Western Board	496

Hospitals

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is his policy on the maintenance of acute hospital services facility in Down unit of management;

(2) if he accepts the findings of PA Management Consultants in respect of hospital services in Down unit of management which was presented by Down district council to the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Needham: As the hon. Member knows, decisions on the pattern of hospital services are in the first instance a matter for health and social services boards. I understand, however, that in its area strategic plan for 1987 to 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library, the Eastern board has concluded that it should attempt to maintain acute services at the Down hospital over the current planning period.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he is prepared to instruct the Eastern health board to make an allocation from the capital budget towards the construction of a new hospital to replace the Down hospital, Downpatrick;

(2) what is his policy on the need for a new hospital building programme in Downpatrick.

Mr. Needham: It is not for me to instruct boards about the need for specific capital developments in their areas. Boards are responsible for the planning and management of services in their areas and must assess not only the justification for each specific proposal but the priority of such proposals in relation to other demands on resources. Since the replacement of the Down hospital would involve major capital expenditure it would require the approval of the Department of Health and Social Services. The Department, however, has not yet received any formal proposal from the Eastern board for such a capital scheme.

Castlewellan Factory

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what purpose the Moss Lane factory, Castlewellan has been transferred from the IDB to the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Needham: The lease on premises at Bessbrook, Co. Armagh, which the DHSS uses for emergency stores, expired on 30 September 1986. The Moss Lane factory was declared surplus to IDB requirements and first offered to Government Departments and public bodies under normal disposal rules. The offer was taken up by DHSS which had an immediate need to find alternative accommodation for the stores.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the exact location and size of the existing site in the south of Northern Ireland which it is proposed the Castlewellan factory will replace.

Mr. Needham: The present store is located within the industrial estate on the outskirts of Bessbrook Village, Co. Armagh. This store is approximately 25,000 sq ft and occupies four floors of a former mill.

Nuclear War

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many stores of medical supplies for use after a nuclear exchange are there in Northern Ireland; and what is their location.

Mr. Needham: There are two such stores in Northern Ireland, one at Bessbrook, Co. Armagh and one at Ballymoney, Co. Antrim.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what district councils will be serviced by the Castlewellan factory in a post-nuclear situation.

Mr. Needham: All 26 district councils.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there will be any communication between the Castlewellan factory store and the three nuclear stations which the Government have proposed to site in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: It is assumed that the nuclear stations referred to are the proposed emergency centres which would be used among other things in the event of a nuclear attack. There will be no special communication link between the Castlewellan factory store and any of the three proposed emergency centres other than by the public telephone network.

Floods

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in view of the recent severe flooding, what additional resources are to be given to help those affected by flood damage; and what financial aid will be given to farmers who have suffered stock losses.

Mr. Viggers: It is too early yet to say what measures if any might be taken, but it is a general rule that the Government do not compensate for losses caused by the weather. Nevertheless, my colleagues and I are looking at the nature of the circumstances surrounding the flooding emergency in Northern Ireland.

Police Secondments

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers from police forces in England, Wales and Scotland were seconded to duties in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply,* 22 October 1987, c.877]: No formal secondments have been made, but under normal co-operation arrangements some officers may have been temporarily attached to the RUC over this period.

DEFECTIVE PRINTING

SCOTLAND

Drug Abuse

56 **Mr. Wray** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for drug abuse increase in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland in 1986, 616 new addicts were notified by medical practitioners to the Home Office and 348 former addicts were re-notified. In the same year there were 3,437 seizures of controlled drugs by the police and HM Customs and Excise in Scotland and 5,318 drugs offences were recorded by the police.

There were increases in the total number of seizures and in the number of drugs offences recorded compared to 1985 but the rates of increase were lower than in the previous year. The total number of addicts notified in 1986 decreased by 12·5 per cent. compared to 1985 when there was a 51 per cent. increase over 1984.

These statistics are not an accurate measure of the extent of drug misuse but may serve as indicators of general trends. These and other indicators suggest that the problem may not now be increasing in scale at the same rate as experienced in 1980-85. The incidence of drug misuse remains unacceptably high, however, and the Government will continue to accord a high priority to tackling the problem.

Housing

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the housing stock in Scotland is owned by local authorities or governmental agencies; and what information he has about the equivalent proportions in other European countries.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentage of housing stock in Scotland owned by local authorities, new towns and the Scottish Special Housing Association at 31 December 1986 was 49·4 per cent. Comparative figures are not readily available for many European countries, partly due to differences between countries in the type of institutions and organisations which finance the provision of rented housing and the allocation of these between the public and private sector. Information available on the breakdown of tenure is shown in the table.

European countries' stock by tenure

percentages

			Rented stock			
		Owner occupied	*All*	*Public sector*	*Housing associations*	*Private sector*
Scotland	1986	42	58	49	2	6
United Kingdom	1986	63	37	27	3	8
Belgium	1981	61	39	[5]7	[5]—	[5]32
Denmark	1980	55	45	4	16	25
France[1]	1982	51	49	13	—	36
Germany, Federal Republic[2]	1982	40	60	3	14	43
Greece[3]	1982	72	28	[4]	[4]	[4]
Ireland, Republic of	1981	74	26	13	—	13
Italy[2]	1981	59	41	[4]	[4]	[4]
Luxembourg[3]	1981	60	40	[4]	[4]	[4]
Netherlands	1981	43	57	12	30	14
Portugal	1981	56	44	3	—	41
Spain	1980	77	23	2	1	20
Austria[1]	1981	50	50	[4]	[4]	[4]
Switzerland	1980	30	70	3	[4]	[4]
Finland	1980	68	32	[4]	[4]	[4]
Sweden	1980	58	42	[5]23	[5]—	[5]19
Norway	1980	74	26	[4]	[4]	[4]

[1] Occupied main residences—Owner occupied: includes condominiums and co-operatives of similar nature.

[2] Main residences.

[3] Households—Rented: includes tied and rent free accommodation.

[4] Not known—Housing associations: organisations broadly similar to those in Britain.

[5] Approximate estimate.

All figures including totals have been individually rounded.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make and publish a detailed analysis of waiting lists for public sector houses in each district and island area in order to ascertain whether there are enough suitable houses available to let to meet local needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A two-year research project, to assess the extent to which waiting lists can be used as an indication of housing need, was announced by the Government in December 1986.

Public Advice Services

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the total level of Government spending, including urban aid, as well as expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission and the unemployed voluntary action fund, on independent public advice services in Scotland for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: Many Government-supported programmes and projects, for example, funded through Manpower Services Commission schemes, contain elements of advice and information but the total amount of Government support for independent public advice services cannot be readily quantified.

Information on public advice services funded through the urban programme and the unemployed voluntary action fund is set out.

	Number of Projects	£
Urban Programme		
1985-86	50	1,431,486
1986-87	56	1,461,625
Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund		
1985-86	12	58,580
1986-87	16	116,240

School Leavers

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils at local authority schools in Scotland left without any academic qualifications in 1985-86; what was the comparable figure in similar schools in England and Wales; and if he will publish a breakdown of the overall Scottish figure by regional council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: 19,385 of the pupils leaving Scottish education authority schools in 1985-86 (24·4 per cent. of the total) did not hold a Scottish certificate of education (SCE) qualification. However, some of these school leavers would have held qualifications such as the certificate of secondary education (CSE), the SCOTVEC national certificate or other qualifications. Information on the numbers involved is not available.

The table gives a breakdown by region and islands area of the school leavers not holding an SCE qualification, together with the percentages these represent of all school leavers in the respective areas.

74,705 of the pupils leaving maintained schools in England and Wales in 1985-86 (10·4 per cent. of the total) did not hold a graded CSE or GCE qualification. Because these figures include CSE awards, they are not directly comparable with the figures for Scotland.

Comparisons will be easier once the GCSE and SCE standard grade examination have been introduced.

Scottish school leavers[1] 1985-86 with no SCE qualifications, by region and islands area

	Number	Percentage of leavers
Borders	263	16·6
Central	982	22·2
Dumfries and Galloway	503	20·6
Fife	1,180	21·4
Grampian	1,342	19·3
Highland	590	18·6
Lothian	2,578	25·3
Strathclyde	10,534	27·6
Tayside	1,202	20·9
Orkney	51	17·3
Shetland	33	9·2
Western Isles	127	24·9
SCOTLAND	19,385	24·4

[1] From education authority schools.

Education

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Western Isles for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is contained in the statistical bulletins on "Pupils and Teachers in Education Authority Primary and Secondary Schools" which are published annually. Copies of these are held in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Western Isles have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Estimates of the percentages of school leavers from the Western Isles entering full-time further education have been published for sessions 1979-80 and 1981-82 in Scottish Education Department statistical bulletins (Nos. 2/E1/1983 and 10/E1/1983), copies of which are held in the House of Commons Library. The corresponding estimate for 1983-84 school leavers, to be published in a forthcoming bulletin, is 31 per cent.

These estimates must be treated with caution since, for the Western Isles, they are based on small sample numbers.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Monklands, West constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Monklands, West can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide for participation by parents in the management of private schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in East Lothian for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in East Lothian can be obtained from Lothian regional council.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of pupils on school meals and the pupil-teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in the Cunninghame, North constituency since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Cunninghame, North can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from East Lothian have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Aberdeen constituency obtain places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Cunninghame, North have serious higher or further education plans in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

School Boards

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate and publish the cost of setting up school boards in the Western Isles.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I would expect the cost of implementation of our proposals to be a very small element in the education budget. Costs could vary depending on factors such as the number of boards established and the range of responsibilities they had.

Abortions

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of abortions performed on women residents in the Grampian health board area in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Number
1985	1,087
1986	[1]1,186

[1] Provisional.

Legal Aid

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his discussions with the Law Society of Scotland and other bodies about the legal aid system; and if he intends to propose any amendments to the legal aid regulations and legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from the Law Society and others, and observations from the Scottish Legal Aid Board, on the operation of the new legal aid legislation. He hopes to reach a view on the various suggestions by the end of November.

Torness Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will extend the zone covered by contingency emergency plans for Torness nuclear power station to a radius of 25 km; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 May at column *302.*

Mortgage Defaulters

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish information available to him concerning the number of mortgage defaulters in Scotland in each of the last five years involving *(a)* private sector houses and *(b)* public sector houses purchased under the right to buy legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Rents

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on changes in rent levels in Scotland since 1979 and on the Government's policy for rent levels and measures to protect tenants on low incomes in the future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Average local authority rents in Scotland have risen from £4·92 per house per week in 1979-80 to £14·65 per week in 1987-88. Over the same period average SSHA rents have risen from £5·43 to £17·28, and average Scottish new town rents have risen from £6·36 to £18·26. Average registered rents in private sector unfurnished accommodation have risen from £3·50 per house per week in 1979-80 to £16·29 in 1986-87 and registered housing association rents have risen from £7·58 per house per week to £19·17 over the same period.

Responsibility for setting rent levels for public sector housing lies with the individual local authority or agency concerned, not with the Secretary of State. The Government, however, have a legitimate interest in determining the amount of overall public expenditure which the nation can afford to spend on housing in Scotland. In recent years, the Government's priority has been to reduce expenditure on indiscriminate housing subsidy and to concentrate the resources available upon capital investment in the public sector housing stock, whilst targeting subsidies directly to those individual tenants who need help with their housing costs.

Public sector rents in Scotland are generally lower than those south of the border. It is the Government's policy to encourage authorities to set rents that enable them to meet more of their housing costs from revenue, but to restrict excessive year-on-year rent increases by continuing Exchequer subsidies. For those tenants who have difficulty in meeting their full housing costs direct assistance is, and will continue to be, available through the housing benefit system. In addition, most increases in rent following registration of a higher rent for private sector and housing association tenants are subject to limits on the amount by which the existing rent may be increased each year.

Housing Policy

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Government policy towards people who want to remain or become public sector tenants; and if he will undertake to ensure that Scottish Special Housing Association tenants will have the option of remaining public sector tenants if they so choose.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's proposals for the future development of housing policy will be set out in full in a White Paper which it is intended to publish shortly. My right hon. and learnd Friend has already made it clear that tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association would remain public sector tenants, with all of the statutory rights which this Government have conferred on such tenants, under the Government's proposals to create a new unified housing development agency for Scotland, Scottish Homes.

Rating Reform

Dr. Reid asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the nature and estimated amount of funding given to local authorities in Scotland for the purpose of collecting the proposed community charge.

Mr. Lang: Provision for local authority current expenditure provision in 1988-89 includes £9 million for the cost of introducing the community charge and £3 million for the cost of related changes to housing benefit arrangements. Provision for subsequent years will reflect the cost of collecting the community charge in the same way as for the cost of rate collection at present. Local authority expenditure is supported by rate support grant from central Government. In 1989-90 this will be replaced by revenue support grant. Both of these are grants in aid of the general revenues of authorities and are not hypothecated to individual items of expenditure.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average waiting time from the date of application for regional development grants to date of approval or rejection by constituency.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of applications from companies which have been rejected in each calendar year since 1984 are as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
RDG I	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
RDG II	[1] Nil	9	19	32

[1] No applications submitted

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of companies in the East Kilbride constituency which have been unsuccessful in their application for regional deveopment grants in each year since 1984.

Mr. Lang: I regret the information is not readily available on a constituency basis; however, the average processing time in Scotland for application for regional development grants is currently 16 weeks.

Hypothermia

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of deaths in Scotland from hypothermia for each month since January 1981 broken down by age group.

Mr. Michael Forsyth [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *744*]: The information is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia, by age group and month, Scotland 1981 to 1987

	Under 25	*25 to 34*	*34 to 44*	*45 to 54*	*55 to 64*	*65 to 74*	*75 to 84*	*85+*	*Total*
1981									
January	5	—	1	3	5	10	18	11	53
February	—	—	—	1	3	10	10	5	29
March	1	—	—	1	4	6	10	2	24
April	—	—	—	—	3	5	4	1	13
May	—	—	—	1	—	1	4	1	7
June	1	—	—	—	1	—	3	4	9
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
August	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
September	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	3
October	—	—	—	1	2	5	5	5	18
November	—	—	—	2	—	3	4	2	11
December	1	5	1	5	8	22	27	16	85
Total	8	5	2	14	26	65	87	47	254
1982									
January	1	1	1	2	6	21	26	12	70
February	—	—	—	—	3	4	14	5	26
March	—	1	—	2	1	3	5	7	19
April	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	1	5
May	—	1	—	1	2	4	—	2	10
June	1	—	—	—	1	2	3	2	9
July	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
August	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	3
September	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
October	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	4
November	—	—	—	1	1	3	6	—	11
December	—	—	2	—	2	10	15	8	37
Total	2	3	3	7	18	52	73	38	196
1983									
January	2	1	1	1	5	5	4	7	26
February	1	—	—	5	—	7	16	9	38
March	—	—	—	—	4	4	5	5	18
April	—	—	1	2	1	4	7	4	19
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	7
June	—	—	—	2	1	—	2	3	8
July	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	3
August	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	3
September	—	—	—	1	—	4	5	—	10

	Under 25	*25 to 34*	*34 to 44*	*45 to 54*	*55 to 64*	*65 to 74*	*75 to 84*	*85+*	*Total*
October	—	—	—	1	1	4	4	3	13
November	1	—	—	1	1	2	4	2	11
December	1	—	—	2	2	5	9	4	23
Total	5	2	2	15	16	35	60	44	179
1984									
January	1	1	—	1	6	13	19	12	53
February	—	—	—	1	4	4	6	9	24
March	—	—	1	—	—	9	5	1	16
April	1	—	—	—	3	2	3	4	13
May	—	—	—	1	3	—	1	—	5
June	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	5
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
August	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	3
September	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	—	4
October	1	—	—	2	1	4	1	1	10
November	—	1	—	—	3	6	7	4	21
December	—	—	—	1	1	4	7	8	21
Total	3	2	1	6	23	44	56	41	176
1985									
January	—	1	—	—	5	19	29	11	65
February	—	1	—	—	—	5	18	11	35
March	—	—	—	2	1	2	10	9	24
April	—	—	—	1	2	6	7	3	19
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	7
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	3
August	1	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	7
September	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	3	6
October	—	—	—	—	2	3	—	1	6
November	—	1	—	3	2	6	10	10	32
December	1	—	—	—	4	5	8	9	27
Total	2	3	1	6	16	46	93	65	232
1986									
January	—	2	3	2	4	12	25	6	54
February	—	—	—	2	1	5	14	6	28
March	—	—	1	1	3	6	10	7	28
April	—	—	—	—	2	2	7	5	16
May	—	—	—	1	1	1	2	2	7
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
July	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2
August	—	—	—	—	—	1	6	2	9
September	—	—	—	—	1	1	5	2	9
October	—	—	—	—	3	—	6	2	11
November	1	—	—	2	2	6	6	3	20
December	2	—	2	—	2	6	9	2	23
Total	3	2	6	8	19	41	90	40	209
1987[1]									
January	—	1	3	—	4	11	15	11	45
February	—	—	1	1	—	2	7	4	15
March	—	—	1	1	3	4	7	3	19
April	1	—	1	2	3	2	2	2	13
May	—	1	—	1	—	2	2	—	6
June	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	4
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
August	2	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	5
September	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	3	7
October									
November									
December									
Total	3	2	6	5	11	22	40	26	115

[1] provisional figures.

DEFENCE

Absent Without Leave

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of service personnel in each branch of the services were absent without leave in each of the last four years; and what was the number in each branch.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 2 April 1987, at column 566. The figures for those deserting or being declared absent without leave given in that answer can be expressed as percentages of the average strength of the services in the years in question as follows:

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1983	0·21	0·42	0·02
1984	0·16	0·41	0·02
1985	0·17	0·34	0·01
1986	0·15	0·32	0·01

Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total numbers of the Zimbabwe and Mozambique armed forces who have received training in the United Kingdom since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: Some members of the Zimbabwean armed forces received training at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1980 to financial year 1986-87. A small number of Mozambiquan military personnel also received training at defence establishments in the United Kingdom in the financial years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

It is not our policy to reveal the details of training provided to foreign armed forces since such agreements are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments concerned.

Helicopter Rescue Service

Mr. Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements climbers and hillwalkers will be expected to make in the event of privatisation of the helicopter rescue service.

Mr. Freeman: On its initiative, Bristow Helicopters Ltd. has put forward proposals advocating the transfer to commercial contractors of the search and rescue helicopter service currently provided by the RN and RAF. We are studying its ideas but have not yet reached any conclusions. It would therefore be premature to comment on arrangements for any particular interest group in the event of privatisation.

While the Ministry of Defence's concern is primarily the recovery of military personnel, I can assure the hon. Member that the decisions taken will reflect the Government's commitment to maintaining an efficient search and rescue service, for both military personnel and civilians.

Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital (Young Patient)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances an 11-year-old girl came to be held in a psychiatric ward at Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Woolwich; what steps have been taken to obtain more appropriate care and treatment for her; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Waiting Lists

1. **Mr. Vaz** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to reduce waiting lists in Leicestershire.

Mr. Newton: Leicestershire district health authority is receiving £151,500 from the waiting list fund. This will enable its hospitals to treat 210 extra in-patients and 500 extra out-patients. This is in addition to the measures being taken within existing resources to improve waiting lists and times.

Income Support

17. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to set the levels of income support; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends fully to compensate claimants on income support for having to pay an element of rates.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House today.

Disabled People

18. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what current proposals he has for further help for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In developing all our policies we continue to bear in mind the special circumstances of disabled people. We expect to be greatly helped by the results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' survey of disabled people.

Health (Lifestyle)

20. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures the Government are taking to encourage the adoption of healthier lifestyles.

Mrs. Currie: Together with the Health Education Authority we are running a number of campaigns designed to provide the information that will help people choose healthier ways of living. One of these—the "Look After Your Heart" campaign—is a national strategy aimed at encouraging the adoption of healthier lifestyles in England and reducing the amount of unnecessary death and illness from heart disease. We are firmly committed to taking this campaign forward into the 1990s.

Cancer Screening

21. **Mr. Mullin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the cervical cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: We are committed to reducing mortality from cervical cancer. Sir Roy Griffiths, deputy chairman of the National Health Service management board, is leading a team to oversee the implementation of the Government's policies on cancer screening. Health authorities are on target to have computerised call and recall schemes for cervical cytology in operation by next spring. Laboratory and other back-up services are being expanded. The Department is currently consulting on revised guidance on all aspects of cervical cytology screening and related services, which it intends to issue later this year.

24. **Mr. Bright** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in the introduction of a cervical cytology call and recall system by the South Bedfordshire Health Authority.

Mrs. Currie: The cervical cytology call and recall scheme for south Bedfordshire is operated by the Bedfordshire family practitioner committee, and came into operation in January 1985. The scheme covers the whole of the county, with costs being shared by the two client authorities, North and South Bedfordshire health authorities. The scheme, which is computerised, covers all women between the ages of 35 and 60 who are registered with a GP.

Following our request in February this year, the family practitioner committee and the district health authorities will be making plans to reduce the minimum age to 20.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date he received an application from Quest for a Test for Cancer for funding cervical smear tests using an integrating microdensitometer; and when he expects to reach a decision on the application.

Mrs. Currie: An application for DHSS funding for a research development project entitled "The screening of cervical neoplasia by quantitative assay of a hydrolysed DNA component present in the nuclei of cells exfoliated from the cervix uteri", was received from Dr. A. M. Sincock on 31 July 1987. This method would employ an integrated microdensitometer. Dr. Sincock is employed as a senior research fellow in the academic department of obstetrics and gynaecology in the Middlesex hospital; his work is currently supported by Quest for a Test for Cancer and the Newman Foundation. The application has been sent to academic referees. A decision on funding is expected by the end of November.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans further to assist family practitioner committees in meeting the Government's targets for cervical cytology.

Mr. Newton: I have now authorised an allocation of funds to four family practitioner committees whose existing equipment is in need of upgrading in order to meet the timetable to which the Government are committed. Those FPCs are:

	£
Devon	46,000
Kirkless	40,250
Croydon	8,000
Bury	1,500

Child Abuse

22. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the procedures for dealing with child abuse and neglect.

Mr. Newton: In my reply to my hon. Friend on 30 June, at column *69*, I referred to the new guidance and circular on multi-agency working which was issued in draft last year. I also referred to the special initiative to help training of professional staff. Two stages of this have started. Further projects are being considered. In my statement to the House on 9 July, at columns 526-27, announcing the inquiry at Cleveland, I referred to the preparation of practice guidelines for social workers and for nurses and of guidance for doctors on the clinical diagnosis of sexual abuse. I would expect all this work, including the guidance on inter-agency working, to be published when we have considered the report from Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss on Cleveland.

Social Fund

23. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to modify the draft guidelines issued on the social fund in the light of the representations he has received.

Mr. Scott: Yes. The final version of the social fund manual will incorporate some of the points raised by those who commented on the draft.

47. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received since the issue of draft guidelines for the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 108 representations were received on the draft social fund manual.

Schools (Charges)

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to seek to change social security legislation in order for charges for music lessons, field trips, school visits and books to be met, where the parents of pupils are in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: It is not the purpose of the supplementary benefits scheme to help with educational expenses; these fall within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Pensions

19. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing new pension choices made available as a result of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: We have made considerable progress. After an extensive period of consultation, we laid regulations in July which established the detailed framework for the new pensions choices.

We are now well on course towards the introduction next April of the changes affecting occupational schemes, in particular the start of money purchase contracting-out. In July 1988 we will complete the process of reform by giving people the right to take a personal pension in place of state earnings-related pension scheme.

29. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to seek powers to link the pension received for age with a fixed percentage of the average manual wage.

Mr. Scott: No. We are pledged to maintain the value of retirement pension against inflation, and the legislation gives power to increase it further if it is appropriate to do so. We do not believe a restriction such as is suggested would be appropriate.

39. **Mrs. Mowlam** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to phase in an equalised pension age for women and men.

Mr. Scott: We acknowledge the arguments for equalising state pension age for men and women, but the social and economic implications of doing so are considerable. We need to examine these in full before deciding whether to make any particular change.

42. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the Government propose to make it easier for employers to set up new pension schemes.

Mr. Scott: From 6 April 1988, employers will be able to set up occupational pension schemes which can be contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme on a money purchase basis, instead of having to make the open-ended promise of a salary-related pension. The minimum level of contribution required will be equal to the contracted-out national insurance rebate, so a scheme could be set up at virtually no cost to the employer, and new schemes will also qualify for an extra financial incentive until 1993. In addition, we have already simplified the contracting-out conditions for employers with salary-related schemes.

Housing Benefit

26. **Ms. Abbott** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations on the documents on the new housing benefit scheme he has received since they were issued in draft.

Mr. Portillo: Representations have been received so far from each of the local authority associations consulted on the draft Housing Benefit Regulations under statutory arrangements. In addition, about 40 letters, containing general representations, have been received from individual local authorities and other organisations, to whom the regulations were sent for information.

NHS (Administration)

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to improve the administration of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 23 July 1987 at columns *454-55*.

Disability

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the results of the survey on disability presently being carried out.

Mr. Scott: The results of the survey of disabled people currently being carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are expected to be published in instalments starting in 1988.

Resource Allocation Working Party

30. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the workings of the resources allocation working party formula for distribution of resources to health authorities.

Mr. Newton: The workings of the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula for distribution of resources to health authorities are explained in two documents, "Sharing resources for health in England, Reports of the Resource Allocation Working Party 1976"; and "Report of the Advisory Group on Resource Allocation 1980".

In December 1985 the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield, (Mr. Fowler) asked the NHS management board to carry out a review to identify the scope for refining the RAWP formula and improving its measurement of need. The initial report on the review, published in December 1986, recommended a further programme of analysis and research which is now in progress.

Copies of all three reports are in the Library.

Elderly People

31. **Mr. Riddick** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how Britain's total expenditure on benefits and support for elderly people, as a proportion of gross domestic product, compares with that of other countries in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Portillo: Britain's total expenditure on the elderly as a proportion of gross domestic product was the third highest in the European Community in 1983, the latest year for which full information is available. Partial figures for 1984 show that Britain's expenditure had increased as a proportion of GDP, whilst that of other countries making a return had declined slightly. Full details are in the table.

Expenditure on programmes for old age as a proportion of GDP at market prices for EC member states (excluding Greece) in 1983

Country	*Percentage*
Denmark	10·4
France	9·8
United Kingdom	9·6
Italy	9·5
Netherlands	9·2
Belgium	8·6
West Germany	8·6
Luxembourg	7·8
Ireland	6·1
average	9·3

Source: Eurostat Social Protection Statistical Bulletins, March 1985.
Note: Figures include state and occupational pensions and cash benefits for the elderly, expenditure on residential and nursing homes, local authority services for the elderly and other expenditure on the elderly. They do not include the cost of health care or increases in pensions for dependants.

Well Women Centres

32. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to encourage and support the establishment of a well woman centre in every health district.

Mrs. Currie: The establishment of well women centres to provide services such as cervical screening is an option open to all health authorities and one which a number have taken up. We welcome the additional flexibility that this model of service delivery offers but recognise that it is for individual health authorities to decide on the most appropriate method of providing services locally.

Trent Regional Health Authority

33. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will meet the chairman of the Trent regional health authority to discuss staff shortages.

Mrs. Currie: We have regular meetings with all regional chairmen to discuss a wide range of issues including manpower.

AIDS

34. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional funding is being provided in the current financial year in relation to HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) on 23 October.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the AIDS public education campaign.

Mr. Moore: We embarked last year on a sustained campaign of health education to give the general public the basic facts about AIDS and HIV infection and to encourage changed attitudes to sexual and other behaviour, particularly among groups most at risk.

On 2 September I launched the second stage of the campaign, which concentrates on the risks of infection from the injection of drugs. As we have already announced, further stages of the campaign will be carried forward by the new health education authority in close co-operation with the other United Kingdom health education agencies and the Government Departments concerned.

Leeds (In-patients)

35. **Mr. Kirkhope** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the reduction in the in-patient waiting list in the Leeds eastern district.

Mr. Newton: The latest available figures for March 1987 show that 6,064 people were on the in-patient waiting list in the Leeds eastern district health authority. Whilst the total list size is now some 7·1 per cent. higher than in March 1986, there has been a welcomed continuing fall in the numbers waiting over one year. On 31 March 1987, 907 people had been on the list for more than a year, 32·6 per cent. fewer than in March 1986.

Leeds eastern DHA has received £425,300 from the waiting list fund, for projects to enable its hospitals to treat 2,050 additional waiting list cases in 1987-88. This is in addition to the measures being taken to reduce waiting lists within existing resources.

Pensioners (Income)

36. **Mr. Mans** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much pensioners' average weekly incomes have increased since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Between 1979 and 1985, the latest date for which information is available, pensioners' average weekly net incomes increased by some 18 per cent. in real terms.

Embryo Experiments

37. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government intend to bring forward legislation to clarify the law on embryo experiments.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 30 June at columns *80-81*.

Long-term Sick and Disabled

40. **Sir George Young** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much spending on the long-term sick and disabled has changed since 1979.

Mr. Scott: In 1979-80 expenditure on benefits and services for long-term sick and disabled people provided direct by the Department is estimated to have totalled £2,160 million. Latest estimates are that such expenditure in 1986-87 was about £6,130 million, an increase in real terms of 70 per cent.

Information on provision of services by health authorities and by local authorities specifically to this group is not available.

Severe Weather Payments

41. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to modify the severe weather payments scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 26 October.

Liverpool (NHS Services)

43. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet a deputation of hon. Members from Liverpool to discuss funding of the National Health Service in the city.

Mrs. Currie: As responsibility for the allocation of resources to Liverpool health authority lies with Mersey regional health authority, the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman first.

Social Security Reforms

44. **Mr. Brazier** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the introduction of the social security reforms will help to alleviate the unemployment and poverty traps.

Mr. Scott: One of the main aims of the reforms is to improve work incentives. The introduction next April of family credit, which is expected to help over twice as many low-income working families as family income supplement, and the closer alignment of help for people in and out of work, are expected to alleviate the unemployment trap. In addition, assessing income-related benefits on net, rather than gross, income eliminates the possibility that in-work income-related benefits reduce net spending power when earnings rise. This eliminates one of the worst features of the poverty trap.

Nurses (Working Hours)

45. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to increase the proportion of a nurse's working day spent with patients.

Mr. Newton: It is the responsibility of individual health authorities to ensure that the most effective and efficient use is made of the nursing and midwifery work force. The Department assists by distributing management services reports on, for example, the work of hospital-based midwives and (shortly) night nursing services. It must be the aim of each employing authority to maximise the amount of time devoted to patient care.

South-East Thames (Non-urgent Surgery)

46. **Mr. Evenett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for non-urgent surgery in the south-east Thames region.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and admission as an in-patient to a surgical department of a NHS hospital in the South-East Thames regional health authority area during 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, was eight weeks.

Insulation Payments

48. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to introduce a new scheme for assistance with insulation payments to replace the existing scheme from April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: When the current system of single payments of supplementary benefit for draught-proofing materials ends in April 1988 new arrangements will continue to provide support for the work of the community insulation projects. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Energy announced on 8 April 1987, at columns *223–225*, that from April 1988 help with the cost of draught-proofing materials will be provided through the Manpower Services Commission. The category of those eligible will be widened to include all households in receipt of income support, housing benefit or family credit. In the longer term, it is intended to include the cost of draught-proofing materials within a revised home improvement grant system.

Mersey Region (Waiting Lists)

49. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the waiting lists in the Mersey region.

Mr. Newton: On 31 March 1987 there were 29,147 people on the in-patient waiting list in Mersey regional health authority. This represents a fall of 1,632 (5·3 per cent.) since March 1986. The number of people waiting over a year for treatment has fallen by 18 per cent. to 6,257.

Mersey RHA has been allocated £1·35 million from the waiting list fund for 1987-88 for projects to enable the region to treat some 7,700 extra patients from the in-patient lists. This is in addition to the measures being taken to reduce waiting lists and times within existing resources.

Nurses (Pay)

50. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of levels of nurses' pay.

Mr. Newton: The pay of nurses, midwives and health visitors is determined on the recommendations of the independent Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors. I understand that the review body will shortly be taking evidence from the health departments, trade unions and professional associations with a view to reporting to the Prime Minister in the spring of next year.

The Government have implemented all four reports of the independent review body since it was established in 1984. As a result, nurses' pay has risen by some 16 per cent. in real terms during this period and by nearly 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

Royal United Hospital, Bath

51. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to visit the new royal united hospital in Bath.

Mrs. Currie: The last complete development at this hospital included 168 acute beds and a boilerhouse, costing £4·4 million, and was opened on 31 March 1987. It is part of the largest ever sustained National Health Service building programme. Throughout England 480 schemes, each costing over £1 million, with a total value of over £3 billion, are at various stages of planning, design and construction.

Ministers have no plans to visit this hospital at present.

Review Procedures

52. **Mr. Jack** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for reviewing the effectiveness of the review procedures at both regional and district health authority level.

Mr. Newton: The Department keeps the system for conducting accountability reviews with regional health authorities under constant review, drawing on experience of past reviews to assess its effectiveness and ensuring that any necessary improvements are implemented. Reviews at district level are the responsibility of regional health authorities.

St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington

53. **Mr. Wheeler** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the St. Mary's hospital development in Paddington.

Mrs. Currie: The new 10-storey building, to be known as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother wing, has been built at a cost of over £35 million. The wing has a total of 337 beds, 224 of which are allocated to surgical specialties, and when fully open it will provide a broad range of facilities. These include the accident and emergency department, which opened on 4 September and has one of the first computerised patient administration systems in London, the Paddington Green children's unit, eight operating theatres, an intensive care unit, and two day surgery units. Among other departments which form a part of the complex are the radiology department, facilities for the St. Mary's hospital medical school and central catering facilities.

This development is part of the largest health building programme in the history of the NHS. There are currently more than 480 building schemes each costing over £1 million at various stages of planning, design and construction. The total value of the programme is estimated to be over £3 billion and it will provide over 24,000 new hospital beds.

Nurse Recruitment (Thames Region)

54. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current position on nurse recruitment in the Thames region.

Mr. Newton: The ability to recruit varies considerably between health authorities. There are particular recruitment difficulties in mental illness, mental handicap and the specialist acute areas—theatres and intensive care. These recruitment difficulties are more marked in London and the south-east.

The NHS management board has commended a number of measures to improve the recruitment and retention of nursing and midwifery staff. It is also currently considering what further action may be required at national or local level in the light of the latest information about the recruitment and retention situation in London.

Bradwell New Geriatric Hospital, North Staffordshire

55. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the Bradwell new geriatric hospital in North Staffordshire.

Mrs. Currie: The Bradwell new geriatric hospital is due for completion at the end of October at a total cost of £5,260,821. The hospital's 96 beds and associated facilities are expected to open at the beginning of 1988.

Supplementary Benefit

57. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the discontinuation of the single payment for mothers on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Portillo: During the last 12 months we have received approximately 500 letters about the new maternity benefit arrangements. Some of these letters have referred to the discontinuation of supplementary benefit single payments for maternity expenses and their replacement by flat rate payments of £80 from the social fund.

Ms. Abbott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the average waiting time for a decision on supplementary benefit claims for (1) his Department's Hackney office, (2) his Department's Stoke newington office, (3) London north region and (4) London south region;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of non-caller claims for supplementary benefit received in the last four week period for which records are available, the percentage of non-caller claims awaiting a decision at the end of that four-week period; and if he will supply this information in respect of (1) his Department, Hackney office, (2) his Department, Stoke Newington office, (3) London north region as a whole and (4) London south region as a whole;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of supplementary payment claims received by his Department in the last four week period, the total number of single payment claims which are awaiting a decision and the average waiting time between receipt of claims and a decision; and if he will supply this information in respect of (1) his Department, Hackney office, (2) his Department, Stoke Newington office, (3) London north region, and (4) London south region.

Mr. Portillo: The table sets out the information requested, where it is available, for the four-week period up to 22 September 1987.

Where the information is not available in the precise form requested the most relevant figures available have been quoted.

For four week period ending 22 September 1987	*Hackney office*	*Stoke Newington*	*London north region*	*London south region*
1. *Claims to Supplementary Benefit* Average Clearance Times	7 days	21 days	7 days	8 days
2. *Non-caller Claims* A. Number Received	885	673	63,229	60,415
B. Outstanding	329	629	25,113	24,781
C. B as a percentage of all non-caller claims outstanding	28 per cent.	49 per cent.	28 per cent.	30 per cent.
3. *Single Payments Claims*	No information is available on number received.			
A. Decisions Made	396	265	26,621	23,468
B. Cases Outstanding (may involve more than one decision)	323	116	5,231	5,889
C. Average Clearance time	No information is available			

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

58 **Mr. David Porter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress within the Whitley council on 1987 pay negotiations for medical laboratory scientific officers; and if he will make a statement about the Government's intention to recognise the professionalism of medical laboratory scientific officers with a better pay structure.

Mr. Newton: Pay is a matter for the Whitley council. I understand that on 5 October the management side made a pay offer to the staff side representing MLSOs about which it is now consulting its members. They also undertook to meet again as soon as possible to discuss proposals for restructuring MLSO grades.

Storm Damage

59 **Mr Nelson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking to ensure the continued provision of health services in areas which have suffered damage and disruption from the storms on the night of the 15-16 October.

Mrs. Currie: Officials were in contact with health authorities in the south and east throughout Friday 16 October and monitored the situation throughout. It soon became clear that everything possible was being done to maintain health services and patient care despite damage to buildings and public utilities and disruption of communications and transport in many places.

The splendid response of hospital and ambulance staff in finding alternative means of getting to work and in many cases giving up their off-duty time ensured adequate staffing levels. Ambulance services were hard pressed but their problems lessened as roads were cleared and communications were restored. Fortunately there were no major incidents involving multiple serious casualties.

Emergency arrangements were made for a few patients requiring artifical ventilation or home dialysis. Where power supplies failed hospitals turned to their standby generators or to portable versions supplied by the Army.

It was necessary to curtail or postpone some out-patient clinics because of damage or transport problems. Some non-emergency operations were postponed to ease severe pressure on the South London blood transfusion centre. Blood donors responded to appeals, allowing the full blood supply to be resumed within a few days.

I was particularly glad that the Department had surveyed health authorities' contingency plans earlier this year and found them to be generally satisfactory. This form of monitoring will continue and we will consider any lessons learnt in the recent episode.

Disabled Persons Act 1986

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to speed up the implementation of the Disabled Persons Act 1986 during the current Session of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he now has for implementing sections 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the Disabled Persons Act 1986; and whether he will estimate the cost of doing so under each section.

Mr. Scott: Discussions with the local authority associations on the costs of the various outstanding sections of the Act are proceeding, and decisions on the timing of implementation will be taken in the light of the outcome of those discussions. I met the local authority associations on 16 September, and there have subsequently been two meetings between the Department and the associations at official level. Recent discussions have concentrated on sections 5 and 6 of the Act, and I hope to make an announcement shortly about the implementation of those sections.

HIV Positive Patients (Dental Treatment)

Mr. Hinchliffe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific provision is proposed for the dental treatment within the National Health Service of HIV positive patients to avoid the possibility of cross-infection.

Mr. Newton: The chief dental officer issued guidance to all dentists in the hospital, community and general dental services in April of last year. This stressed the importance of following high standards of cross-infection control when treating patients. By following simple procedures dentists will be able to minimise the risks from exposure to the virus during the course of routine dental treatment.

Additionally, the guidance recommends specific precautions to be followed when the patient receiving treatment is a known carrier of HIV. At present, there are no plans to issue further guidance to dentists on this subject, though the need to do so is kept under regular review.

These measures may require some additional expenditure by general dental practitioners. Consequently, on the recommendation of the Dental Rates Study Group, the fees paid to practitioners in 1987-88 reflect amongst other factors exceptional expenditure on cross-infection procedures.

Ward Closures (West Berkshire)

Mr. Redwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning ward closures and other cuts in services in the West Berkshire district health authority area.

Mrs. Currie: We have received representations from the chairman of the West Berkshire district health authority, Reading council and from a number of hon. Members.

Health authorities are expected to live within their budgets. This means balancing the cost of increasing activity against other pressures. It is for health authorities to decide on suitable measures which will enable them to sustain activity within their budgets without detriment to essential services.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Redwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give figures for the last three years showing *(a)* the increase in spending on the National Health Service in England and Wales and *(b)* hospital bed reductions in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

NHS Expenditure, England (Gross)

	£ million	*Growth in cash percentage*
1983-84	12,921	—
1984-85	13,871	7·4
1985-86	14,676	5·8
1986-87	15,762	7·4

Average number of beds available daily in NHS hospitals in England

	Beds	*Percentage change*
1983	343,091	—
1984	334,513	−2·5
1985	325,487	−2·7
1986	315,817	−3·0

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Redwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to any correlation between higher National Health Service spending and areas of rapid population growth;

(2) if he will make it his policy to allocate extra national Health Service moneys to areas of high housing and population growth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Resources are allocated to regional health authorities using the method recommended by the Resource Allocation Working Party. The underlying objective of this approach is to secure progressively through resource allocation equal opportunity of access to health care for people in equal need. The population served by each region and projected population growth are important factors in this process and bear directly on the distribution of resources between regions.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff are currently employed by his Department in preparing the way for the full implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 in April 1988; how many of these were recruited especially for this task; and what is the cost of the preparatory work.

Mr. Scott: Information is not held in the precise form requested.

At 1 October 1987 there were 71,100 full-time equivalent staff in local offices both maintaining the current social security scheme and preparing for implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 from April 1988. Some 2,400 of these staff were recruited especially for the latter task. In addition, 110 full-time equivalent staff—increasing to 600 by 1 April 1988—are working on family credit which will be administered from North Fylde central office. Thus, at April 1988 there will be about 3,000 additional staff in post to introduce the new benefits. These staff, who will have cost an estimated £23 million, are required for a temporary period only.

Lorazepam

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what efforts he is making to assist patients suffering from the withdrawal effects of taking lorazepam; how this assistance is being given; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The services of general practitioners, hospital psychiatric departments, and specialist drug treatment and advice agencies — many of which have been provided through special funding from this Department — are available to those people taking lorazepam who suffer withdrawal effects. The cost cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to ban the prescribing of lorazepam to new patients; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has set up or plans to set up a study of the problems associated with the prescribing and represcribing of lorazepam; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has now received a copy of the report of the Committee on safety of Medicines concerning the prescribing and represcribing of lorazepam; and when it is likely to be published.

Mr. Newton: On the advice currently available to us, benziodiazepines have a place in medical practice if prescribed with appropriate care. The data sheet for Ativan (the trade name under which lorazepam is sold) was amended earlier this year, following discussion with DHSS medicines division to advise that it should be used only in the short term and to give doctors additional advice about avoiding dependence.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines is at present considering whether further steps should be taken in relation both to lorazepam and to other benziodiazepines. It would be premature for me to comment on the question of possible publication before the committee has completed this work.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions and by what means his Department has drawn the attention of the medical profession to the dangers of represcribing lorazepam.

Mr. Newton: Advice is given in the British National Formulary, which is distributed to all NHS doctors every six months, that treatment with benzodiazepines, of which lorazepam is one, should be limited to the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible time and that withdrawal of the drug after long-term administration should be gradual. "Guidelines of Good Clinical Practice in the Treatment of Drug Misuse", which have been issued to all doctors, contain advice on the addictive potential of benzodiazepines and on withdrawal procedures. The data sheet for lorazepam, sent by Wyeth Laboratories to all doctors, which provides guidance and warnings to doctors on the prescribing of lorazepam, has recently been amended in agreement with the Department to re-emphasise the potential problems of dependence on lorazepam. The data sheet now recommends lorazepam tablets for short-term use only and gives guidelines for treatment to minimise the risk of benzodiazepine-related dependence.

The Department funds the distribution to all general medical practitioners of a number of independently produced prescribing publications. Several articles about benzodiazepines have been published in the last 5 years.

DEFECTIVE PRINTING

These include "some problems with Benzodiazepines" and "Lessening the Use of Benzodiazepines" in the Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin. "Adverse Effects of Prolonged Benzodiazepine Use" in the "Adverse Drug Reactions Bulletin" and "Benzodiazepines and transient insomnia" in *Prescribers' Journal*. More general articles on, for example, repeat prescribing and the hazards of abrupt withdrawal of drugs have also contained references to benzodiazepines. In March 1980 the *British Medical Journal* published an article provided by the Committee on Review of Medicines entitled "A systematic review of benzodiazepines" which referred to the problems of dependence.

Social Fund Manual

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis and to how many individuals and organisations advance copies of the social fund manual have been supplied; and whether copies are available to hon. Members.

Mr. Portillo: An advance copy of the social fund manual has been sent to a total of 90 organisations which commented on the draft manual. Where both the national office and local branches of an organisation commented an advance copy has been sent to the national office only. Copies have also been placed in the Library.

Abortions

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions were done in the latest year for which figures are available in *(a)* private clinics or agencies and *(b)* the National Health Service at 18 weeks or over, and if he will distinguish between residents and non-residents.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Notification of abortions at 18+ gestation weeks by category of premises, residents and non-residents of England and Wales, 1986

Category	*Number*
Residents	
NHS	1,176
Non NHS	3,412
Non-residents	
NHS	3
Non NHS	3,685

Child Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what change he estimates there will be in the number of people entitled to claim means-tested benefits in the course of a full year as a result of his decision in regard to the uprating of child benefit; and what will be the number of their dependants.

Mr. Portillo: On the basis of the benefit rates announced today and the tables showing the likely distributional effect of the new schemes, around 15,000 more families with 30,000 dependent children are expected to be entitled to income related benefits.

Hospital Medical Career Structure

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to report progress on the recent negotiations on the hospital medical career structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Following the consultative document "Hospital Medical Staffing: Achieving a Balance" published in July last year the steering group which I chair, has today published its subsequent report "Hospital Medical Staffing: Achieving a Balance — Plan for Action".

The various measures in the report are based on three principal needs:

—to increase the number of consultants, to provide both the leadership and the career opportunities an expanding service requires;

—sensible planning of the numbers of doctors in training grades, taking account of career prospects;

— maintenance of the necessary levels of support for consultants, particularly in the acute specialties.

The purpose of the reforms is to improve the quality of care doctors will be giving to their patients, by increasing the extent to which fully trained doctors are involved in direct patient care and in the supervision of their junior staff and by making a career in the hospital service more secure and therefore more attractive.

The reforms have already begun, with the announcement in February of 45 new consultant posts this year, and a further 55 on offer next year. Other parts of the package will be introduced over the next few months, so that work will have started on all parts of it by next April. Completing the programme of reform, in particular to achieve the right balance between doctors in training and career posts, is however expected to take several years.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 28 October 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether religious instruction will be included in the national core curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Religious education is already a compulsory subject for pupils in maintained schools under the provisions of the Education Act 1944. The Government's recent consultation document on the national curriculum reflects our strong conviction that religious education must continue to be taught in schools and makes clear that time must continue to be found for it for all pupils. We shall seek to ensure that the present statutory requirements relating to religious education are enforced as effectively as those proposed for the foundation subjects of the national curriculum.

General Teaching Council

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the case for a general teaching council; what consideration he has given to this proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no representations recently about the establishment of a general teaching council. Our position has been for some time, and remains, that we are prepared to consider the case for such a body if a specific proposal made is likely to command widespread support from all the interests involved.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest progress in research into schizophrenia.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department, that the Council's schizophrenia and allied conditions committee has recently reviewed the current state of research in this area. A report of the committee's findings, including recommendations for future research, will be published shortly.

In addition the Department of Health and Social Security is funding epidemiological research on morbidity and mortality in schizophrenia at the unit of clinical epidemiology, Oxford and is also supporting studies on community-based services for people with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the Medical Research Council spent of its 1986-87 budget on research on *(a)* mental health and *(b)* schizophrenia; and what percentage these figures represent of the Medical Research Council's total budget.

Mr. Jackson: It is for the Medical Research Council to determine its priorities from within the annual grant-in-aid which it receives from the Department's science budget. I understand that in the financial year 1986-87 the Medical Research Council spent £9·4 million, 8 per cent. of its overall budget, on research on mental health, including research on addiction. Out of its expenditure on mental health, the Council spent £506,000, 0·4 per cent. of its budget, on schizophrenia. The Council is also funding other work in which mental health and schizophrenia are minor components.

Social Workers

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what efforts are being made to maintain provision of courses of training for social workers specialising in work with the deaf; how many colleges are providing such courses; and if he will list them and provide comparable figures from five years ago.

Mr. Jackson: Initial training courses for social workers do not include any specialist element related to working with the deaf, but the development of a two-year post-qualifying Open University course by distance learning is under consideration.

Some local education authorities provide training courses in colleges of further education on communication with the deaf, as part of their adult education programme; also, charitable bodies offer courses for people working with the deaf and hearing-impaired. The number of such courses is not known, nor are the figures for five years ago.

Conductive Education

Mr. Bowis asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken by the Government to provide or encourage the provision of conductive education for children with motor disorders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has agreed to provide grant assistance of £326,000 to enable Birmingham university to carry out a research evaluation of the conductive education project being established in Birmingham by the Foundation for Conductive Education. In the Government's view, it would be preferable to await the outcome of this assessment before coming to any decisions about wider provision of conductive education for children with motor disorders.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number and names of all city areas in England which do not have any schools with sixth forms within their city boundary.

Mr. Dunn: Information on schools in city areas is not readily available centrally.

Derby (Post-primary Education)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the proposals of Derbyshire county council for the reorganisation of post-primary education in the Derby city area.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend received around 800 representations objecting to the proposals. In addition, a number of statutory and non-statutory objections were lodged with the LEA.

CERN

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to fund CERN; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The United Kingdom's subscription to CERN is paid by the Science and Engineering Research Council from its grant-in-aid. Following the report of the Kendrew review into United Kingdom participation in high energy particle physics, the United Kingdom proposed a review of CERN with a view to identifying savings that would reduce the subscription of member states. The CERN Council agreed to set up such a review under the chairmanship of Professor Abragam and the final report is expected within the next month.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current annual cost to public funds of educating a child at a maintained secondary school.

Mr. Dunn: The latest information available is for the financial year 1985-86. The net recurrent institutional expenditure per secondary school pupil in England in that year was £1,175. This figure includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges and revenue contributions to capital outlay.

School Teachers

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has considered the report of the working group on the collection of ethnically-based statistics on school teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The report of this working group, which was set up by my predecessor in answer to a recommendation of the Swann committee, recommends that I should require local education authorities to provide aggregate and anonymous data on the ethnic composition of their school teacher forces. I accept this recommendation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales agrees that the proposals should apply to Wales as well. We now intend to consult all interested parties on the arrangements for data collection. A draft circular has been issued for consultation today and copies have been placed in the Library together with copies of the working group's report.

Education Standards

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has for improving educational standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have published consultation documents setting out their detailed proposals for educational reform. Copies of these and of the main responses to have been placed in the Library. We hope to introduce an Education Bill embodying our proposals in the next few weeks.

PRIME MINISTER

Crayford

Mr. Evennett asked the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to visit Crayford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

National Insurance Files (Access)

Miss Mowlam asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 23 October, *Official Report* column *905*, why she will not refer to the Security Commission's allegations concerning improper access by security service officers to national insurance files.

The Prime Minister: These allegations relate to matters of a kind which do not come within the Security Commission's terms of reference.

WALES

Welsh Assembly

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to publish urgently a consultative paper regarding a Welsh Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Craig-y-nos Castle

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will instruct his Department to give grade one listing to the theatre at Craig-y-nos castle.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend on Monday 26 October.

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales why sales details for Craig-y-nos castle are not currently available to prospective purchasers from the nominated estate agent's office.

Mr. Grist: Now that we have decided that the theatre should be listed grade I and the remainder of the building listed as grade II the property will be placed on the market. Sales details will then be available to prospective purchasers.

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will change the terms of sale for Craig-y-nos castle from freehold to leasehold in order that his Department may retain its interest in the long-term future of the building.

Mr. Grist: No. A previous attempt to sell the leasehold of this property did not produce a satisfactory offer. The freehold of Craig-y-nos is soon to be offered for sale, with the theatre subject to a grade I listing and the remainder of the building at grade II. This should realise the maximum financial benefit for the NHS while offering the protection listed status affords.

Farms (Radioactivity)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms in Wales have been affected by restrictions on the sale or movement of livestock due to excessive levels of radiation since the nuclear plant explosion at Chernobyl.

Mr. Peter Walker: Around 5,100 holdings in north Wales were affected when restrictions were first introduced on 20 June 1986. Currently some 416 of these holdings are still subject to restrictions. Schemes to permit the movement and marketing of sheep from restricted holdings were introduced in August 1986 and are continuing.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Emergency Aid (Airline Contracts)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the air companies his Overseas Development Administration has contracted to deliver emergency aid in each of the years 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Eggar: Information in the form requested is not readily available. Civil and military airlines used in our disaster relief operations include the following:

MISR Overseas Airways
ZAS Airlines
Trans Arabian Air Transport
AER Turas
ARAX Airlines
African International Airways
Belgian Air Force
Flash Airlines
Air Atlantique
Air Botswana
KLM
UTA
GASAIR
Gemini Airlines
Heavylift Cargo Airlines
Southern Air Transport
Transamerica
Qantas
Flying Tigers
German Cargo Services
Alitalia
Iberia
TAROM
TAAG
Panamerican
Airbridge Carriers
Anglo Cargo
Tradewinds
Cargolux
Martinair
Lufthansa
JAL
Aeroflot
Sabena
Air France
PIA
Polish Air Force
Varig
St. Lucia
MEA
TMA
Ford Vlahos
Iran Air
LAP
TAP
SAA
Korean Air
Air Algerie
La Point
Yemen Airways
British Airways
British Caledonian
Sudan Airways
Garuda
Royal Jordanian Airlines
The Royal Air Force
The Queen's Flight

Southern Air Transport

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will issue instructions that the Overseas Development Administration should enter into no further contracts with Southern Air Transport.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Emergency Aid (Airline Contracts)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what non-commercial considerations are used in selecting an air company for the delivery of emergency aid.

Mr. Eggar: Each disaster response is considered on its merits. The primary concern in the delivery of disaster relief, irrespective of the mode of transport used, is the speed, effectiveness and cost of the operation.

Heat Grid (London)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated cost of building a heat grid of insulated hot water pipes for London.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government have no estimates of the cost of building a heat grid of insulated hot water pipes for London as a whole.

However, following publication of the Marshall report on "Combined Heat and Electrical Power Generation in the United Kingdom", the Government commissioned W.S. Atkins and Partners Ltd. to carry out a study on the feasibility of combined heat and power district heating in nine cities.

The report of this study, published as Energy Paper No. 53 in 1984, estimates that the cost of laying heat mains in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Southwark alone could be of the order of £174,574,000 at 1982 prices.

Electricity

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements he seeks in the performance of the national elecricity generation and supply system.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The industry has a statutory responsibility to provide efficient and economical supplies of electricity. It is our intention that privatisation should lead to improvements in this service which will benefit the consumer.

Severn Tidal Group

Mr. David Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he now expects to receive the final report of the Severn tidal power group; how much public funding has been committed to this investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Severn tidal power group expects to produce its report towards the end of 1988. The study is expected to cost £4.26 million and the cost is being shared equally between the Severn tidal power group, the Central Electricity Generating Board and my Department.

South African Coal Industry

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Energy what contacts there have been between Ministers or officials in his Department and representatives of the London office of the South African coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Storm Damage

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the actions he has taken in his capacity relating to the areas damaged by the hurricane on 15-16 October;

(2) if he will list the areas damaged by the 15-16 October hurricane which he has visited in his capacity as co-ordinator of relief operations; and what procedures he has adopted to secure advice on the nature and extent of the damage.

Mr. Hurd: The immediate test of responding to the damage caused by the storms on 15-16 October fell to the emergency services, the local authorities and public utilities. In order to ensure that they were fully supported in their attempts to deal quickly and effectively with the consequences of the storms, I obtained regular situation reports, from early on 16 October, from the areas most badly affected. In the light of the initial reports on the morning of 16 October, I called an immediate meeting of the Ministers most directly concerned, which reviewed in detail the information available and the action which each Minister was taking in the field of his own responsibilities.

Passports

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy that the laminate chosen to protect the personal details page of the new European Community common format British passport be the most secure available;

(2) if he will make it his policy to give the highest priority to the level of security in choosing the laminate used to protect the personal details page of the new European Community common format British passport;

(3) if he has had discussions with the Governments of Australia and Canada regarding the most secure laminate used in their passports and as to what level of security was thereby obtained.

Mr. Renton: The laminate chosen will need to meet exacting security requirements. The Government are aware that the type of laminate used by the Governments of Australia and Canada offers a satisfactory standard of security.

Medical Health Review Tribunals

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department currently takes when, in relation to a patient to whom section 73 of the Mental Health Act 1983 applies, a mental health review tribunal includes in its written decision a recommendation that a patient be granted leave of absence or be transferred to another hospital or be transferred into guardianship.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any such recommendation received in the Home Office is acknowledged, and any comments are offered which can usefully be made at that stage. Correspondence with the tribunal is copied to the patient's responsible medical officer, since it is for this officer to consider the recommendation in the first instance. If the responsible medical officer submits a proposal based on a tribunal's recommendation, full account is taken of the tribunal's views. At any subsequent hearing of the case, the statement which the Home Office provides will explain the outcome of any recommendation which the tribunal had made.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to seek the amendment of section 73 of the Mental Health Act 1983 to give mental health review tribunals statutory power to make recommendations that a patient to whom section 73 applies be granted leave of absence or transfer to another hospital or transfer into guardianship.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those convicted of crimes in England and Wales in each of the last five years have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available centrally. The readily available information, which is given in the following table, relates to persons compulsorily admitted to hospital under part V of the Mental Health Act 1959, part III of the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1984. They provide for the admission to hospital by the court of a person convicted of an offence or under certain circumstances of a person who the court is satisfied did the act but did not convict him. Further details are given in "Statistics of Mentally Disordered Offenders England and Wales 1984"—Home Office statistical bulletin 31/85; it is planned to bring this bulletin up to date early next year.

Persons classified as suffering from mental illness compulsorily admitted to National Health Service hospitals under a hospital order, after transfer from a Prison Department establishment or recalled following an earlier discharge; England and Wales, 1982-86

Number

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Subject to special restrictions on discharge	128	113	143	136	152
Without special restrictions on discharge	529	661	758	644	624
All	657	774	901	780	776

Prisons (Staffing Levels)

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made in the staffing levels at Frankland, Durham and How Newton prisons from the levels agreed between the manpower team, local management and Prison Officers Association representatives.

Mr. John Patten: The fresh start review teams did not set and agree complements with local management and staff. Their task was to make recommendations about management structure, working arrangements and complements for consultation locally, regionally and at headquarters. Final complements have not yet been promulgated.

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the adequacy of staffing levels proposed for prisons under the fresh start scheme.

Mr. Hurd: Trade union representatives have been consulted about staffing levels under fresh start at each establishment. Discussion at local, regional and national level has in most cases brought about a resolution of any differences. Staffing matters have been raised in two recent meetings which I have had with representatives of the Prison Officers' Association.

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the recruitment of prison officers in one area for posts in another; and how many vacancies have (i) occurred and (ii) been advertised in *(a)* Durham and *(b)* London in the past year.

Mr. John Patten: Recruitment for the England and Wales prison service is on a national basis as prison officers are a mobile grade. Advertising, whether in the press or jobcentres, is therefore for mobile posts and not for specific vacancies in particular establishments.

While account is taken where possible of an individual's preferences and domestic circumstances, officers may be required to fill posts in any establishment in England and Wales. In the 12 months October 1986-September 1987, 24 new entrant prison officers were posted to establishments in County Durham and 216 to the London area.

Prison Staff

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prison staff have accepted the interim measures under the fresh start scheme; and what proportion of prison staff will be on the fresh start pay structure from 1 November.

Mr. Hurd: Over half—53 per cent.—of prison staff in the unified grades were on fresh start working on 25 October, including 17 per cent. working under transitional local agreements. We remain firmly committed to a cut off date of 1 November for introducing fresh start at all establishments. The extent to which this is achieved depends on the outcome of local discussions. The position is not yet clear.

Firearms

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what compensation will be available for the owners of automatic firearms which he proposes to ban;

(2) if he has any plans to restrict the magazine capacity of registered automatic weapons;

(3) if he will make it his policy to have individual shotguns registered;

(4) if he will make a statement on the implication for gun control or the absence of present certification for ammunition loading kits.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend announced in the House on 26 October in the debate on firearms, we are considering suggestions in addition to the proposals already announced for strengthening the controls on firearms. These include the matters raised by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) which will be carefully examined. We hope to announce comprehensive proposals by the end of November with a view to introducing a new firearms Bill before Christmas.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his policies for more effective control of firearms, he will offer refunds for the unexpired portion of firearms licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The fee reflects the cost of issuing a certificate and a refund for an unused period of its validity would not be justified.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is proposed that the police national computer be linked with his Department's computer centre at Bootle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to link the police national computer with the Department's computer centre at Bootle.

Child Prostitution

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an urgent inquiry into child prostitution.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so.

Missing Children

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instigate an immediate inquiry into the number of children reported to the police as runaways from home or local authority care.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for investigating reports of missing persons, including children who run away from home or local authority care, is a matter for chief officers of police. The Association of Chief Police Officers has set up a working party to review police procedured for dealing with inquiries relating to missing persons and in the light of its report we will consider the need for action by the Home Office.

Dog Licensing

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when and in what form he proposes to amend the legislation on dog licensing.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

Clause 32 of the Local Government Bill would have the effect of abolishing the duty on dog licences in Great Britain, and part IV of schedule 6 to the Bill would repeal the various references to dog licences which would be redundant on abolition of the duty. The Bill is currently being considered by Standing Committee A.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC-Israel (Relations)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the nature of the dispute between the European Economic Community and Israel which led to the visit to Israel on 10 October by Mr. Cheysson; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that M. Cheysson took advantage of his routine visit to Israel to discuss the Community's concern to secure early implementation by the Israeli authorities of the measures for access to EC markets for produce from the occupied territories, agreed by the Community last year. He also raised some outstanding difficulties about the operation of the Tamah tax which is imposed on imported goods that compete with domestic Israeli products.

Iraq (Chemical Weapons)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Iraq about their use of chemical weapons in the Gulf conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Iraqis can be in no doubt of our condemnation of the use of these weapons. We have raised the question on a number of occasions recently, for instance when my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met the Iraqi Foreign Minister in New York, and during the new Iraqi ambassador's introductory calls at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the Security Council of the United Nations the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in the Gulf conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We raise at every suitable opportunity the deplorable use of chemical weapons by Iraq. We strongly supported the statement by the president of the Security Council on 14 May, demanding a halt to the use of their weapons in accordance with the 1925 Geneva protocol. We played a leading role in obtaining SCR 598 which deplores, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the conflict.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate jobshare, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Eggar: There are two equal opportunity officers in the diplomatic wing and one in the aid wing. The proportion of their time allocated to equal opportunity work is 15 per cent., 10 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively. They combine their equal opportunity duties with personnel management, policy and training responsibilities as assistant heads of departments.

Cross-border Trade (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the recent decision by the EEC Commission that the Dublin Budget restrictions on shoppers visiting Northern Ireland are in conflict with EEC legislation; what effect the Budget restrictions have had on the economy of border towns in Northern Ireland; and if he will request an urgent removal of these budgetary restrictions to cross-border trade in Ireland before Christmas in the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: We made clear to the Commission in April that the measures taken by the Irish Government were in our view inconsistent with EC law. The Commission has now instituted legal proceedings against the Irish Government under the EC treaty. We hope that these proceedings will lead to the measures being rescinded. Although this is primarily a matter of EC law, we have also taken up the matter directly with the Irish Government, on a number of occasions. The issue of what impact the measures have had on the economy of Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Human Rights

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government intend to sign the European convention for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment when the convention is opened for signature on 26 November.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Beggs asked the Attorney-General if he has any plans to review the use made of the legal aid system in Northern Ireland; and what is his assessment of the current level of abuse to the system.

The Attorney-General: The legal aid system and the criteria determining the availability of legal aid in Northern Ireland are broadly similar to those pertaining in England and Wales. The relevance to Northern Ireland of the proposals contained in the White Paper "Legal Aid in England and Wales: A New Framework" (Cm. 118 published on 26 March 1987) is currently being assessed.

Legal aid legislation in Northern Ireland incorporates certain safeguards against abuses. There is no evidence of major abuse of the system.

Commonhold

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Attorney-General what information he has in regard to the meaning of the word commonhold used as the title of the Law Commission's report, Cm. 179, and when it was first used in relation to property occupied as flats.

The Attorney-General: The word commonhold has at present no dictionary meaning. It was adopted by the working group responsible for the report Cm. 179 at the start of its deliberation as being apt to describe a form of freehold tenure involving common rights and obligations. At the time of its adoption the group was unmindful of its earlier use by my hon. Friend in a series of private Member's Bills on co-ownership of flats going back to 19[illegible].

Freehold Flats

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Attorney-General if it is the Government's intention to take steps to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission in regard to freehold flats.

The Attorney-General: The working group report Cm. 179 to which my hon. Friend refers was published by the Law Commission as recently as July last. A decision on implementation will be taken when the recommendations have been fully considered.

Judges and Magistrates

Mr. Fraser asked the Attorney-General what steps are taken before appointment to ensure that magistrates and judges are free from racial prejudice.

The Attorney-General: Before appointing or recommending the appointment of a candidate to judicial office the Lord Chancellor carries out wide-ranging consultations with the judiciary and senior members of the legal profession in order to assess the personal and professional suitability of all candidates.

In the case of lay magistrates the Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the County Palatine of Lancaster receive annual recommendations from their local advisory committees about new appointments to magisterial benches within their respective geographical areas. The persons appointed are required to be personally suitable for judicial work and one of the purposes of the interviews which candidates undergo is to satisfy the committees that they possess the necessary judicial qualities.

Anyone who is found to be racially prejudiced would be excluded from further consideration for either a professional or a lay appointment.

Mr. Fraser asked the Attorney-General how many judges have been reprimanded by the Lord Chancellor in the last 12 months.

The Attorney-General: Two.

Illegitimacy

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Attorney-General when the provisions of the Family Law Act 1987 which relate to illegitimacy will be implemented.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor intends to bring the Family Law Reform Act 1987, which reforms the law relating to the consequences of birth outside marriage, into force when the necessary resources are available. Bringing part II of the Act (Rights and Duties of Parents etc.) into force will require considerable expenditure in terms of staff and legal aid, for which resources will not be available until after 1988. Other plans and priorities will determine when resources can be made available thereafter, but the Lord Chancellor will keep the matter under close review.

The Lord Chancellor hopes to bring the rest of the Act, which does not involve the expenditure of significant resources, into force by early 1988.

Marconi

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement as to the progress of the inquiry into Marconi.

The Attorney-General: Inquiries by the Ministry of Defence into allegations of fraud in connection with Ministry of Defence contracts with Marconi have been in progress since March 1987. The investigating officers have recently sought and received advice from the Crown Prosecution Service fraud investigation group, and the inquiries are expected to continue for some months under the direction of the fraud investigation group.

Judicial Studies Board

Ms. Richardson asked the Attorney-General whether he will *(a)* list the members of the Judicial Studies Board, *(b)* state the criteria for selection of members, *(c)* list the relevant qualifications of present members, *(d)* indicate the number of Trades Union Congress-nominated places, and *(e)* indicate how many Trades Union Congress-nominated places are held by women.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:

- *(a)* Present members of the Judicial Studies Board are shown in the list.
- *(b)* There are no formal criteria but, because of the nature of its work, membership of the board and its committees mainly comprises judges and judicial officers with relevant experience. Membership also includes academics, civil servants from the Home Office and Lord Chancellor's Department and, in the case of the magisterial committee, representatives from bodies involved in the provision of magistrates training.
- *(c)* Relevant qualifications are set out in the list.
- *(d)* None.
- *(e)* None.

Membership of the Judicial Studies Board

	Qualifications	*Committee responsibilities*
Chairman		
The Right Hon. Lord Justice Mustill	Lord Justice of Appeal	
Members		

	Qualifications	*Committee responsibilities*
The Hon. Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss, DBE	High Court Judge (Family Division)	Co-Chairman of Civil and Family Committee
The Hon. Mr. Justice Hutchison	High Court Judge (Queen's Bench Division)	Co-Chairman of Civil and Family Committee
The Hon. Mr. Justice Ognall	High Court Judge (Queen's Bench Division)	Chairman, Criminal Committee
His Honour Judge Sir David West-Russell	Circuit Judge and President of the Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales)	Chairman, Tribunals Committee
His Honour Judge White	Circuit Judge	Member of Civil and Family Committee
His Honour Judge Dyer	Circuit Judge	Member of Criminal Committee
His Honour Judge Stuart-White	Circuit Judge	Chairman, Magisterial Committee
Mr. Igor Judge QC	Barrister and a Recorder	Member of Civil and Family Committee
Mr. G. A. Ensor	Solicitor and a Recorder	Member of Criminal Committee
Mrs. R. E. R. Thomson, JP	Magistrate and Chairman of Training Committee of the Magistrates' Association	Member of Magisterial Committee
Mr. W. J. Bohan	Civil Servant, Home Office (Criminal Policy Department)	Member of Criminal Committee
Mr. B. Cooke, JP	Civil Servant, Lord Chancellor's Department (Head of Judicial Appointments Group) and Secretary of Commissions	Member of Magisterial Committee
Dr. D. Thomas (Studies Consultant)	Senior Lecturer in Law, Fellow of Trinity Hall, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge	

Additional Members of Committees

	Qualifications
Criminal Committee	
His Honour Judge Lawrence	Circuit Judge
Master D. R. Thompson, CB, QC.	Registrar of Criminal Appeals
Mr. R. Stoate	Civil Servant, Lord Chancellor's Department (Judicial Appointments Group)
Civil and Family Committee	
Mr. Registrar M. G. Hawthorne	County Court and District Registrar
Mr. Registrar G. N. A. Angel	Registrar, Family Division
Professor S. M. Cretney	Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Bristol
Mr. J. R. A. Hanratty	Civil Servant, Lord Chancellor's Department (Judicial Appointments Group)
Magisterial Committee	
Mr. P. G. N. Badge	Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate and a Recorder
Mrs. A. Tasker, JP	Magistrate and Chairman of the Central Council of Magistrates' Courts Committees
Mr. D. H. Kidner, OBE	Justices' Clerk
Mr. R. E. Nottridge	Justices' Clerk and member of the Standing Conference of Training Officers
Mr. G. Norman, JP	Civil Servant (Lord Chancellor's Training Officer for Magistrates)
Mr. G. K. Sandiford	Civil Servant, Home Office (Criminal Policy Department)

NB Members of the tribunals committee have not yet been appointed.

ENVIRONMENT

Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Royal Herbert hospital buildings at Woolwich were acquired by the South-East Thames regional health authority from the Property Services Agency; at what cost; and for what purpose.

Mr. Chope: The Royal Herbert hospital buildings at Woolwich were transferred, without payment, to the South-East Thames regional health authority in March 1981. The authority planned to use part of the site as a residential centre for the mentally handicapped and severely disturbed and to dispose of surplus land not required for this purpose. I understand that another location was subsequently chosen for the residential centre and that the site has remained unused. The authority plans to dispose of it and is investigating the planning position prior to a sale on the open market.

Water Meters

Ms. Primarolo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the charge for the installation of the compulsory water meter is to be passed on by the proposed privatised water authorities to the customer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill which has now received its Second Reading stipulates that the undertaker will bear all the costs arising out of the installation of a meter and any associated equipment if it is installed at the request of the water undertaker.

Peregrine Falcons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he envisages any change in his policy of granting licences for the taking of wild peregrine falcons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes. The Government intend to follow the advice given by the Nature Conservancy Council that, save in exceptional circumstances, licences will not be given for taking wild peregrine falcons after 1988.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences for taking wild peregrine falcons have been issued in 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date.

Mr. Moynihan: The number of licences issued by the Department and the Scottish Office for taking wild peregrine falcons was:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	2	2	1
Scotland	3	2	8

These 18 licences resulted in 12 birds being taken.

Falconry (Quarry Licences)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many quarry licences for falconry were issued in 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date; and what quarry species were involved.

Mr. Moynihan: The number of quarry licences issued for falconry was:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	68	72	59

The quarry species involved have been blackbird, skylark, meadow pipit, lapwing, song thrush, black-headed gull, moorhen, fieldfare, redwing. I understand that the details in Scotland are:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Scotland	3	3	5

involving song thrush, blackbird, skylark, and meadow pipit.

County Hall, London

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the value of county hall, London; and if he will make a statement as to its future use.

Mr. Chope: It is not possible to give a precise estimate to the value of the county hall complex in advance of the results of the marketing exercise which the LRB is conducting. The future use of the buildings will be for the new owners to determine, subject to the appropriate planning and listed building consents. My right hon. Friend, granted permission on 20 October for the change of use of the county hall complex to offices. He also indicated that hotel use of the main block could be appropriate in the event of a satisfactory resolution of listed building considerations. Copies of the decision letter and of the inspector's report on the planning appeals have been deposited in the Library.

Empty Properties

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what current estimates he has for the numbers of publicly-owned empty properties.

Mrs. Roe: The latest estimates derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns for 1987 are as follows:

Vacant dwellings at 1 April 1987—England

	Thousands
Owned by:	
Local housing authorities[1]	112
Other public sector bodies[2]	15
Total publicly-owned	127

[1] Includes overspill estates.

[2] Includes housing owned by new towns, county councils (for example, police houses), Government departments and nationalised industries and other public bodies. Many of these dwellings are vacant because of operational requirements, notably those owned by the Ministry of Defence, and others have been acquired for demolition, for example, by the Department of Transport. The Government are encouraging the sale of housing which is not required and many of those that are vacant are in the process of disposal.

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been empty for six months or more during the last five years.

Mrs. Roe: This information, which local authorities were asked to provide for the first time in their 1987 housing investment programme returns, is not yet available.

Telford Development Corporation

Mr. Grocott asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the members of the Telford development corporation, together with the period of office that each one has served and the date when their term of office expires.

Mrs. Roe: The names of the board members of the Telford development corporation, together with the periods of office that each one has served and the dates of expiry of their appointments, are as follows:

Appointment	*Service at 1 October 1987*	*Present Term Expires*
Chairman		
Lord Northfield	12 years 5 months	31 October 1987
Deputy Chairman		
F. J. Jones	10 months	30 November 1990
Members		
P. Court	3 years 5 months	31 July 1988
Councillor M. J. Davies	10 years 11 months	16 January 1989
Dr. I. F. Gibson	12 years 9 months	Non-finite appointment
R. Hall	7 years 9 months	31 May 1988
Sir Fred Hardman	7 years 8 months	30 April 1988

Appointment	*Service at 1 October 1987*	*Present Term Expires*
Councillor L. Holbrook	12 years 9 months	16 January 1989
Mrs. E. J. Holt	12 years 5 months	Non-finite appointment
Councillor R. A. H. Lloyd	10 years 11 months	16 January 1989
R. A. H. Thomas	2 years 8 months	30 April 1989
P. M. Vine	12 years 5 months	16 January 1989

I announced on 22 October that Mr. Jones was to succeed Lord Northfield as chairman on 1 November, when Mrs. Holt would become the new deputy chairman. Mr. R. A. Gammie joins the board on that day.

Pollution

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to restrict the use of chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: On 16 September the United Kingdom, together with the European Community, most member states and some 16 other countries, signed the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. This provides for consumption of chlorofluorocarbons to be halved by the end of the century and for the halons to be held at the 1986 levels. This is a major environmental agreement in the negotiation of which the United Kingdom played a full part.

Public Inquiries (Costs)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce legislation for the payment to objectors at public inquiries of their reasonable costs on the issue of a certificate that the issues in question raise matters of sufficient public interest, such costs to be mandatory when an objector produces an acceptable alternative to the acquiring authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: Successful statutory objectors at inquiries into compulsory purchase and analogous orders are normally awarded their costs, as explained in DOE circular 2/87 issued on 17 February. Otherwise, the Government remain unconvinced of the case for public funding of objectors, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 63-65 of its response to the fifth report from the Environment Committee, Session 1985-86.

Endangered Species

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the extent of illegal trading in endangered wild animals in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* the European Community; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to curtail this activity.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department cannot estimate the extent of illegal trading in endangered wild animals. The European Commission has undertaken a review of the implementation of CITES throughout the Community. A report is expected in the new year; any further measures thought necessary to curtail illegal trading will be considered in the light of that report.

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions the Yorkshire water authority has applied for a change in consent limits in regard to the effluent from one of its works; and on how many occasions such consent has been refused.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department's records of sewage discharge consents do not readily distinguish between limits for new discharges and changes in the limits for existing discharges; the information is available in the register maintained by the water authority.

The Department has granted about 500 consents to the Yorkshire water authority since the present arrangements came into effect in January 1985. No applications have been refused outright, but not all applications are granted in their initial form.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of Yorkshire water authority sewage treatment works in South Yorkshire produces discharges which exceed the required consent limits in more than 5 per cent. of the samples taken; and what action is being taken to reduce pollution from sewage works.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is not available in this form. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is conducting inquiries with all water authorities to determine the reasons for the non-compliance of sewage treatment works.

River Pollution

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the proportion of fish deaths caused by sewage pollution in South Yorkshire rivers; and on how many occasions prosecutions were undertaken.

Mr. Moynihan: In the past 12 months, five out of 18 fish kills in South Yorkshire rivers were attributable to sewage pollution. Several hundred coarse fish died in the five incidents. Of the five incidents, three led to formal inquiries by the water authority into the operating practices at the sewage works that caused the pollution. Remedial actions have been implemented in all five instances. No prosecutions have been undertaken.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Rivers Don, Rother and Dearne to be clean enough to support fish; and what plans the Yorkshire water authority has to restock these rivers.

Mr. Moynihan: The Yorkshire water authority is working towards improvements in the quality of three rivers so that by the year 2001 they should all be capable of supporting good coarse fisheries. Some stretches should be supporting fisheries well before then. The water authority has no current plans for restocking these rivers.

Structure Plans

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will *(a)* list the dates on which the current structure plans for each non-metropolitan county in England were approved by his Department, *(b)* tabulate the period of time for which each county structure plan is relevant, *(c)* indicate the number of new houses proposed to be built during the lifetime of the plan and *(d)* indicate the levels of housing for each county already reached at the latest available date.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on housing provision in structure plans, as at 31 March 1987, will be contained in a paper to be published shortly by my Department. I shall arrange for a copy to be sent to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available.

District Valuer

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to encourage local authorities to privatise the offices of district valuer or city valuer.

Mr. Chope: I hope that in all their activities local authorities will consider the possibility of achieving better value for money by using private firms as an alternative to direct employment by staff. But we have no plans at present to make authorities expose their valuation services to competition.

Land Use

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to the establishment of a national land use survey with a view to setting up a land use register; what survey methods he is evaluating; and what priority he proposes to give to designation of land suitable for new housing in inner cities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him yesterday.

Planning Applications

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many article 10 notices his Department has issued in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987; and if he will list them.

Mr. Waldegrave: Article 10 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 empowers me to issue directions restricting the grant of planning permission by a local planning authority in any particular case. The power is most often used to give time to consider whether to direct under section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 that a particular application be referred to me for decision. A total of 135 Article 10 directions were issued in 1986, and a further 59 up to the end of June 1987. Detailed information on the cases concerned is not held centrally.

Agricultural Derating

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the scope of agricultural derating; and whether it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government that derating should apply to buildings used to store EEC intervention stocks.

Mr. Chope: Agricultural derating is limited to land and buildings used solely in connection with agricultural operations. We have no plans to change that position. Buildings used to store intervention board produce, including farm buildings, do not qualify for relief and are liable to be assessed for rates under normal valuation procedures.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for amending the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 1984, in the light of the response to his Department's consultation paper issued last July.

Mr. Waldegrave: Comments on the consultation paper were received from 33 representative organisations and a considerable number of individual firms with an interest in the Government's proposals. These comments have been thoroughly considered and I am arranging for a copy of the submissions to be placed in the Library of the House where the originators have given their consent.

Many of the Government's proposals concerned administrative provisions to improve and simplify the practical operation of the present advertisement control regime and were generally welcomed. I propose to introduce these provisions into the Control of Advertisements Regulations in due course.

Most interest centred on proposals for granting deemed consent for five additional categories of outdoor advertisements and for stricter limits on the deemed consent for the display of boards advertising the sale or letting of residential property.

I intend to lay before Parliament as soon as possible regulations, under section 63 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, to amend the Control of Advertisements Regulations on the following lines:

(1) to grant deemed consent for—
  (a) the illumination of temporary poster hoardings around construction sites, while building operations take place;
  (b) the display of four-sheet poster panels on purpose-designed highway structures;
  (c) the continued display of an advertisement already being displayed on a site on 1 April 1974—replacing the present provisions in regulation 11 of the Control of Advertisements Regulations;
  (d) the display of temporary directional signs, by housebuilding firms, to sites they are developing;
  (e) the display of outdoor signs for properly authorised "Neighbourhood Watch" schemes; and

(2) to limit the display with deemed consent of estate agents' boards for residential property sales or lettings—class III*(a)* in regulation 14 of the Control of Advertisements Regulations—so that—
  (a) the maximum permitted area of any board is restricted to 0·5 sq. m.—approximately 2 ft. 3 ins. by 2 ft. 3 ins., and 0·6 sq. m. for conjoined boards;
  (b) only one board may be displayed with deemed consent on each property for sale or letting; and
  (c) any board displayed with deemed consent is not allowed to remain on display after the date of legal commitment to the sale or letting to which the board relates.

I propose that the amending provisions for the display of estate agents' boards with deemed consent should come into effect one year from today, in order to give those concerned time to make arrangements for the change.

I am satisfied that, taken together, these amending provisions will result in a worthwhile simplification and reduction in the scope of outdoor advertisement control, while at the same time satisfactory safeguards to amenity and public safety will be maintained.

Additionally, the Department and the Welsh Office will be issuing shortly a consultation paper about the possible display of specified types of illuminated advertisement with deemed consent. Comments will be welcome.

Compulsory Purchase of Land Regulations 1982

Mr. Arbuthnot asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to amend the Compulsory Purchase of Land Regulations 1982.

Mrs. Roe: The Department wrote on 24 September to the local authority associations and others inviting comments on the drafts of regulations to replace those of 1982. The revisions are needed to implement section 43 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 — compulsory acquisition of land on behalf of parish or community councils—and to correct various errors and omissions. I have placed a copy of the consultation letter in the library.

No-Fines Dwellings (Walsall)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department was first notified of the conditions of the Wimpey No-Fines dwellings in the Blakenall area of Walsall; and whether those conditions exist in such properties in other boroughs.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *830*]: Walsall metropolitan borough council informed the Department in August 1984 of an income support scheme that it had initiated for tenants of Wimpey No-Fines houses with high heating costs. But it was not until 22 July 1987 that a deputation of residents from the Blakenall estate, led by the hon. Member for Walsall North, (Mr. Winnick) complained about the condition of their Wimpey No-Fines houses

These conditions are not unique to the Wimpey No-Fines houses in Walsall, although they do not appear to be particularly severe on the Blakenall estate. By today's standards, many Wimpey No-Fines houses are inadequatley insulated and inefficiently heated, and poor maintenance of the external render, windows and doors can allow water penetration into the walls, thus increasing the problems of internal damp and condensation. Many other houses of traditional construction suffer from similar defects, but whereas building professionals are generally familiar with both these problems and their remedies in traditional houses, this is not so for houses of non-traditional construction.

The Building Research Establishment — BRE — has under way a number of research programmes aimed at providing owners of non-traditional houses, and their professional advisers, with accurate information on their forms of construction, and authoritative advice on good practice in their inspection, assessment, repair, maintenance and improvement. Over the next year the BRE plans to extend its work to houses made of poured—"in situ" — concrete, including Wimpey No-Fines. Officials from my Department have already suggested including the Blakenall estate in this programme, if an empty house can be made available for survey by Walsall MBC.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the source of the reference to Japanese inhabitants in the discussion of overseas local government taxes in the Green Paper "Paying For Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714).

Mr. Howard: The source, which is given in a footnote to figure K1 in the Green Paper, is "Local Public Finance in Japan", Jichi Sogo Centre, Tokyo, 1982.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how users of non-commercial night shelters will be assessed for poll tax purposes.

Mr. Howard: Community charges registration officers will be able to designate properties with a rapid turnover of residents for the collective community charge. The landlord of a designated property will be liable for the charge and will recover a contribution from each adult who stays in the property.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the extra postage cost to local authorities of sending out monthly poll tax demands compared with domestic rate demands.

Mr. Howard: Community charge demands will, like rate bills, be sent out at the beginning of the year or when a person becomes liable to pay.

Mr. Patnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be taking powers to carry the present system of rate capping through the proposed new system of local government finance, in order to discourage councils from levying excessive community charges.

Mr. Howard: The main incentive for local authorities to restrain their spending under the new system will be the greater accountability to the local electorate which the community charge will establish. My right hon. Friend believes that it would be proper, however, to retain some form of safeguard against the possibility of a few reckless authorities having no regard to the consequences and seeking to levy an excessive charge to pay for high spending. The legislation that the Government are bringing forward this Session will therefore contain provisions for an authority's charge to be reduced, subject to affirmative resolution of the House, if my right hon. Friend determines that it is excessively high or represents an excessive increase over the previous year. The scheme will operate within the same financial year, so that charges which first fall for payment in April will, if they are found to be excessive, be reduced during the summer. Charge payers will either receive a refund or will have their payments for the rest of the year appropriately scaled down to achieve the same effect.

TRANSPORT

Civil Engineers

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider his plans to alter the role of the civil engineer in carrying out construction contracts, in view of the opposition of the professional bodies concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. In his reply of 23 July 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), my right hon. Friend made it clear that he had carefully considered the views of all concerned before reaching his decision to introduce the new arrangements on a trial basis. There will be further consultation on the details of these arrangements before they are introduced next year.

M66

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now received the report of the inspector for the public inquiry into the route of the M66 of Denton to Middleton; and when he will announce his decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The report raises complex issues which we will have to determine. I shall make a further announcement as soon as possible.

Seat Belts

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation as soon as possible to require private contractors to fit rear seat restraints when transporting children.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Seat belts or child restraints are required in the rear of all new cars and taxis first registered after 1 April 1987. I have no plans to extend these requirements to older vehicles. It is up to those negotiating contracts to consider whether restraints should be provided as a condition of the contract.

We strongly encourage the fitting and use of appropriate rear restraints in cars and for exposed seats in coaches.

Cabotage

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received recent representation from trades unions about the introduction of cabotage in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On two occasions in the last six months my right hon. Friend has received written representations on road haulage cabotage from members of the Transport and General Workers Union. I met a deputation from the union on 22 October.

My right hon. Friend reiterated the Government's policy on road haulage cabotage in his speech to the Freight Transport Association on 14 September. We are aiming for a European Community in which United Kingdom hauliers can trade as freely as they now trade within the United Kingdom. To achieve this we must ensure that the conditions of competition under which hauliers operate are brought much closer together. Internal restrictions on road freight and compulsory tariff regimes are incompatible with a truly liberalised system. This policy was endorsed in a debate in the Standing Committee on EC documents on 18 March.

M5

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of the present widening scheme for the M5 south of Birmingham.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated cost of the present widening works on the M5 between junction 5 (Rashwood) and junction 6 (Warndon) is £19·1 million. Works costing £700,000 are also in progress between junction 4 (Lydiate Ash) and junction 4A (Catshill) in preparation for widening that length starting next year.

M40

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the additional cost of providing three-lane capacity on that section of the M40 for which he is currently proposing two lanes; and what this represents as a percentage of the total cost of the proposal for this section.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated cost of the published proposals for the dual two-lane Waterstock to Wendlebury section of the M40 is £57·5 million. This includes provision for earthworks and structures to accommodate a dual three-lane motorway when traffic justifies it. It would cost an additional £4 million—7 per cent. of the cost — to provide the third lanes at the outset.

A49

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to commence on the A49 trunk road improvement at the junction with A533, Barrington Cross roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Next year. We have asked our agents, Cheshire county council, to complete the design of a traffic signal control system. The options which we have been considering since I wrote to my hon. Friend in July proved to be less satisfactory than signals which can be installed at a significantly lower cost than was then thought.

Roads

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport which principal local roads in Leyton will require strengthening within the next 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local roads in Leyton are the responsibility of the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was allocated to local authorities to tackle disrepair on local roads in each year for the last eight years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Public expenditure provision for local highway maintenance since 1979-80 has been as follows:

Year	*£m*
1979-80	591
1980-81	708
1981-82	710
1982-83	799
1983-84	844
1984-85	902
1985-86	972
1986-87	1,115
1987-88	1,264

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department provided additional funding for the A1(M) tunnel construction at Hatfield in excess of the cost for a normal road in cutting, and as a contribution to the annual running costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The tunnel scheme, selected following public consultation, was more expensive than the open cut option also put to the public and there are greater maintenance costs. Both options offered a good economic return but the tunnel scheme had environmental advantages and provided potential for redeveloping a wide area over and on both sides of the new road.

At the request of the local authorities, the original tunnelled section was lengthened and the design strengthened to accommodate the redevelopment. The authorities contributed towards the extra costs involved. The Department has also recovered some of the scheme costs through disposal of land, or legal interests in land, on and adjacent to the tunnel lid.

Sleeper Services

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the powers available to British Rail which enable it to withdraw sleeper services from the east coast route without ministerial authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My right hon. Friend's consent is required where there are objections to any proposals from BR for the withdrawal of all passenger services from a particular line or station. But whether or not to provide sleeper services is properly a commercial matter for British Rail.

Parking

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review with the appropriate authorities whether to keep main routes into and out of London free of parked vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Parking control and enforcement is one of the options being considered in the second stage of the London assessment studies announced in July. The assessment studies cover four areas of London with particularly severe transport problems and are intended to identify practical options for tackling them within a reasonable time scale.

Buses

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review with the appropriate authorities the value of the bus lane system in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect London boroughs to accord priority to public transport vehicles when this is justified on overall economic grounds. Bus lanes in London have been the subject of recent studies. We are consulting the appropriate authorities on new advice on the design and assessment of bus lanes.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take to ensure that London Buses Limited installs a taut wire strip system on the doors of its one-person operated buses to ensure passengers do not get their limbs trapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is looking into ways of improving the safety of bus doors. I shall write to the hon. Member when we have further information.

Transport Policies and Programmes

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place copies of the transport policies and programmes for 1986-87 and 1987-88 of every local authority in the Library.

Mr. Channon: Transport policies and programmes are prepared and issued by local highway authorities. Their distribution is a matter for the individual authorities.

Motorway Accidents (Lorries)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the involvement of heavy lorries in motorway accidents; what consideration he has given to the matter and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We receive many representations about motorway safety, particularly about the standard of driving on motorways. Serious accidents on the M4 and M6 in September resulted in a number of suggestions from road users, some of which we will consider alongside detailed police reports. Motorways remain our safest roads. The involvement rate of heavy goods vehicles in motorway accidents has decreased since 1981.

Air Traffic Controllers (Suspensions)

Ms. Quin asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many air traffic controllers have been suspended following mid-air incidents between jets in the London area air space.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The suspension of air traffic controllers following air misses in the London flight information region is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority.

Aircraft Safety

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has held recent discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority and commercial airlines regarding the carriage of self-righting life rafts; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Civil aviation safety regulation is wholly the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the necessary technical competence in these matters. I will draw the attention of the chairman of the authority to the hon. Member's inquiry.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions on which officials of his Department inspected the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry vessel and/or issued certificates covering its use as a passenger ferry during the last five years; and if any recommendations were made, or requirements imposed, concerning equipment or procedures associated with the bow doors.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Herald of Free Enterprise was surveyed and certificated by officials from my Department as follows:

Date	*Place*	*Passenger and safety certificate*
February 1982	Amsterdam	Renewed
February 1983	Bremerhaven	Renewed
January 1984	Dover	Extended
March 1984	Newcastle	Renewed
February 1985	Newcastle	Renewed
February 1986	Newcastle	Renewed
February 1987	Dover	Extended

Several visits to the ship were made in connection with each renewal of the passenger and safety certificate to survey the ship and her equipment. Each renewal survey included examination and testing of the bow doors and their operation. Normal maintenance work, such as renewal of the sealing, was required, after which the doors were again tested. As to procedures, the approved stability booklet contained a specific statement that the bow doors should be closed before the vessel proceded to sea.

EMPLOYMENT

Co-operatives

38. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to meet trade union representatives to discuss action to encourage the development of co-operative enterprises.

Mr. Cope: We have had no requests from trade union representatives to meet to discuss co-operatives. Although I would be very ready to consider any requests for such meetings, I would recommend that discussions are first held with the national Co-operative Development Agency.

Industrial Training Boards

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list *(a)* the members of the industrial training boards, *(b)* the criteria for selection of members, *(c)* the relevant qualifications of present members, *(d)* the number of Trades Union Congress-nominated places and *(e)* how many Trades Union Congress-nominated places are held by women.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives details of members of the seven industrial training boards. Employer and employee representatives are appointed by the Secretary of State for Employment after consultation with appropriate employer and employee organisations. Educationalists are appointed by the Secretary of State for Employment after consultation with Ministers concerned with education in England, Scotland and Wales. No specific qualifications are required for appointment, so details of members' qualifications are not held centrally. Of the 51 places for employee members, only the seven on the hotel and catering board are filled after consultation with the Trade Union Congress; the other employee members are appointed after consultation with organisations representing employees in the relevant industry. Three employee members are women.

Industry Training Board Membership

Industry Training Board	*Employer Members*	*Employee Members*	*Educationalists*
Clothing and Allied Products			
Chairman:	Mr. M. Berwin	Mr. G. Bowen	Mr. A. Mauchan
Mr. T. Edge	Mr. R. J. Bright	Mr. F. Dickinson	Mr. W. P. Bohm
	Mr. G. Edward	Mr. T. Evans	Mrs. E. Ellison
	Mr. P. Garland	Mr. A. J. Hawkins	Mr. R. C. Pearson
	Mr. J. R. Harwood	Mr. H. North	Mr. P. Williams
	Mr. J. D. Jackson	Mrs. A. Spencer	
	Mr. R. A. Wheeler	Mr. C. N. Tindley	
Construction			
Chairman:	Mr. R. A. Duncan	Mr. G. Brumwell	Mr. J. A. Carter
Mr. D. Gaulter	Mr. N. A. Dyer	Mr. E. Clayton	Mr. B. D. Cheshire
	Mr. G. M. Fordy	Mr. D. Crawford	Mr. D. Coatesworth
Deputy Chairman:	Mr. W. S. Hilton	Mr. T. Dunn	Mr. R. D. McMurray
Mr. T. Clements	Mr. L. G. Kay	Mr. G. P. Henderson	Mr. G. B. Smith
	Mr. H. Kronheim	Mr. C. Kelly	Mr. R. F. Wills
	Mr. S. H. Moon	Mr. C. Lovell	Mr. N. J. Wright
	Mr. R. R. Prettie	Mrs. T. Prosser	
	Mr. W. J. Stewart	Mr. A. Scott	
	Mr. J. Stevenson	Mr. K. Sneddon	
	Mr. D. G. Stradling	Mr. A. Williams	
	1 vacancy	Mr. W. Young	
Engineering			
Chairman:	Mr. G. J. Armstrong	Mr. P. Burns	Professor W. A. Gambling
Mr. H. A. Whittall	Mr. L. Ashworth	Mr. A. B. Davies	Mr. A. Cass
	Mr. P. M. Ball	Mr. G. Eastwood	Mr. R. J. Hartles
	Mr. R. T. N. Bowen	Mr. A. Ferry	Mr. W. E. Buckley
	Mr. A. E. Dodd	Mr. F. Howell	Mr. J. Murray
	Mr. H. Metcalfe	Mr. W. Jordan	
	Mr. G. A. Peers	Mr. F. Miller	
	Mr. P. J. Roots	Mr. J. Tuckfield	
	Mr. D. Smith	Mrs. P. Turner	
Hotel and Catering			
Chairman:	Mr. I. Bell	Mr. C. Cook	Mr. R. C. Cunningham
Mr. J. Travers Clarke	Mr. R. Dickson	Mr. S. Erden	Miss B. Hughes
	Mr. K. M. Forbes	Mr. V. Hince	Mr. J. O'Connor
	Mr. E. Franks	Mr. E. P. Newall	Mrs. M. C. Pevec
	Mr. D. Hearn	Mr. W. Nortcliffe	Mr. D. Trewortha
	Mr. N. Inkster	Mr. J. L. Richardson	
	Mr. M. J. Kettell	Mr. T. Sullivan	
	Mr. I. Petrie	1 vacancy	

Industry Training Board	*Employer Members*	*Employee Members*	*Educationalists*
Offshore Petroleum Chairman: Mr. P. H. Page	Mr. J. T. C. Hay Mr. G. W. McCullogh Mr. J. R. Pearson Mr. A. Armstrong	Mr. A. Campbell-Reid Mr. W. Duncan Mr. J. M. Keenan 1 vacancy	Captain W. R. Hirst Professor B. McNaughton Dr. A. Watson
Plastics Processing Chairman: Mr. J. Eccles	Mr. J. Barton Mr. E. R. Duffin Mr. W. H. Jones Mr. D. Williams	Mr. J. Bowers Mr. K. Harper Mr. T. Lyle Mr. R. Ward	Dr. J. Brennan Dr. H. T. Taylor 1 vacancy
Road Transport Chairman: Mr. J. R. Armstrong	Mr. D. Gent Mr. I. Creek Mr. J. C. Davidson Mr. J. G. Mellor Mr. G. F. Pygall Mr. K. Rogers Mr. L. J. Bassett	Mr. J. Ashwell Mr. G. Hawley Mr. A. Kitson Mr. P. McCoy Mr. J. Moore Mr. M. Murphy Mr. L. Smith	Mr. L. Smith Mr. N. D. Lewis Mr. P. Mitchell Mr. R. Redwood Mr. J. Pearson

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he proposes to take to combat discrimination against disabled people in employment in the light of the findings of the London north industrial tribunal in the case of Sarah Bloomfield, case no. 01307/87/LN/A; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that a voluntary approach through encouragement and persuasion offers the best chance of success in this area. The Government will continue to promote good practice on the employment of people with disabilities through the disablement advisory service. Existing employment legislation offers resource in cases of unfair dismissal including those involving people with disabilities.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment by how much he estimates the monthly fall in the unemployment figures since June 1986 was affected each month by *(a)* the increase in YTS and other special employment measures, *(b)* restart or stricter application of the availability for work rules and *(c)* increased employment from rising industrial output.

Mr. Fowler: The effect of employment measures on the unemployment count has hardly grown since June 1986. It is not possible to provide reliable monthly estimates of the effect on the count of YTS, but the trend in the seasonably adjusted series, which excludes school leavers will have been only marginally reduced. The effects of restart or stricter application of the availability for work rules cannot be quantified. It is very difficult to separate their effects from those resulting from rising industrial production.

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated net change in the United Kingdom labour force for each year between 1988 and 2003.

Mr. Lee: My Department's latest projections of the size of the civilian labour force in Great Britain, including figures for each year 1988 to 1991, were published in the May 1987 issue of "Employment Gazette" (table 2 on pages 256-257), a copy of which is in the library. Projections for years beyond 1991 are not available.

Restart

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons have been interviewed each month under the restart programme since it started; of these, what percentage each month have entered employment; and what percentage have left the register but not obtained a job.

Mr. Fowler: The number of people interviewed under the restart programme is shown in the table. We have no means of knowing what percentage of those interviewed have entered employment or left the register but did not obtain a job. The aim of the restart interview is to help an unemployed person into employment by selecting the best way open to them from a wide range of employment, training and job search opportunities available. Around nine out of 10 of those interviewed are made offers which might lead ultimately to employment and 70 per cent. agree to pursue an offer made to them at their restart interview.

Numbers of Restart Counselling Interviews

	Number
June 1986	51,355
July	110,387
August	86,329
September	98,973
October	159,192
November	155,262
December	106,834
January 1987	198,165
February	184,531
March	126,587
April	86,466
May	142,382
June	180,584
July	240,540
August	191,852
September	182,162

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Western Isles who have had a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the scheme, and the percentage of these who have subsequently found full-time work.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the information is not available in the format requested. However, figures for the number of people who have received restart interviews in the employment service areas covering the Highlands and Islands, and Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll are shown.

It is not possible to say how many of those people interviewed under the restart scheme ultimately find full-time jobs since we do not follow up every participant.

Highlands and Islands area

Number of restart interviews — June 1986-March 1987 = 5,698

Number of restart interviews — 9 April 1987-25 September 1987 = 4,335

Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll area

Number of restart interviews — June 1986-March 1986 = 8,557

Number of restart interviews — 9 April 1987-25 September 1987 = 17,716

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants in Dunfermline, East have been refused benefit following a restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Clydesdale constituency who have been refused benefit following the restart interview in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

Industrial Tribunal Awards

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he proposes to introduce provisions for the payment of interest on industrial tribunal awards.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Timesharing (Exhibition)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to timesharing to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Lee: I have accepted an invitation to open an exhibition on timesharing in the Upper Waiting Hall on 16 November.

Docklands

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff the Manpower Services Commission has dealing with the problems of London's docklands, including training.

Mr. Cope: Responsibility for the work of the Manpower Services Commission in the London docklands area is shared between a number of offices which cover a greater area than the docklands boroughs. A precise figure for the number of MSC staff involved with the docklands is therefore not available.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much money the London Docklands development corporation has spent to date on training for employment.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

The London Docklands development corporation has spent approximately £2,527,000 on training initiatives of benefit to docklands residents.

Closures

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all closures which have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Clydesdale constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested cannot be provided since details of redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission on in confidence basis.

Sex Discrimination

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Government are intending to amend section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act.

Mr. Cope: The Government will be bringing forward legislation as soon as parliamentary time permits to amend section 51. It is intended to ensure that discriminatory acts which are required by legislation pre-dating the Sex Discrimination Act will not be lawful except where such actions are compatible with the European Community equal treatment directive.

The Government are also proposing at the same time to remove from other legislation discriminatory provisions in the employment field which are no longer thought to be justifiable under the directive. This will be achieved either by extension to the other sex or by repeal.

A consultation document on the detail of these changes will be issued shortly. It will, in addition, include proposals in relation to legislation which restricts the hours and other conditions of work of young people, some of which also treats male and female young people differently.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to amend the age limits for statutory redundancy payments contained in section 82 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Mr. Cope: As soon as legislative time is available it is proposed to increase the age limit up to which women can receive a statutory redundancy payment from 60 to 65 years to bring their position in line with the provision for men. In future statutory redundancy payments will be paid to both men and women up to the age of 65 or to the normal retirement age for the job where that is below 65 and non-discriminatory. The change will bring the provisions on statutory redundancy payments in line with those on unfair dismissal.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Fowler: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made. The cash limit on class VII, vote 1 employment programmes will be increased by £19,465,000 from £1,394,811,000 to £1,414,276,000 mainly due to increased expenditure of £20 million on the community programme, where take-up is running at a higher level than expected, partly offset by minor switches elsewhere.

This increase is more than offset by a reduction of £38,275,000 in the cash limit on class VII, vote 5 Manpower Services Commission from £1,988,128,000 to £1,949,853,000. £28 million of this reduction is due to lower than expected initial take-up of the new job training scheme; and superannuation costs will be around £8·5 million lower following the transfer of certain MSC staff to the Department of Employment. The remaining £2 million reduction is due to a lower than anticipated number of entrants to the youth training scheme.

The cash limit on class VII, vote 4 Health and Safety Commission is increased by £500,000 from £93,735,000 to £94,235,000. Increased expenditure of £1,013,000 to enable the nuclear installations inspectorate to recruit up to their agreed complement of inspectors and to meet other extra running costs not foreseen when Main Estimates were set, is partly offset by extra receipts of £513,000 on this vote. The remaining £500,000 increase in the cash limit is offset by a £450,000 reduction in the cash limit on DHSS administration and miscellaneous services Vote class XV, vote 5 and a £50,000 reduction in the cash limit on the Department of Energy's administration and miscellaneous services vote class VI, vote 3.

There is a token £1,000 increase in the DE administration cash limit class VII, vote 2. Therefore overall there is a net reduction in DE Group cash limits of £18,309,000. The Department of Employment's running costs limit will be increased by £74,277,000 from £400,098,000 to £474,375,000. This is the net effect of machinery of government changes, and reduced spending on unemployment benefit administration which the Department of Employment operates as agent for the Department of Health and Social Security arising from lower unemployment, part of which is used as an offset to an increase in the HSC's running costs limit.

The Health and Safety Commission's running costs limit is increased by £1,013,000 from £86,516,000 to £87,529,000. This increase is fully offset by the reduction within the changes to the Department of Employment's running costs limit referred to above and a reduction in the Department of Energy's running costs limit.

The Manpower Services Commission's running costs limit is reduced by £88,207,000 from £434,750,000 to £346,543,000. This is the result of the transfer to the Department of Employment class VII, vote 2 of certain MSC staff engaged on enterprise and employment functions.

Consequently the running costs total for the Department of Employment group as a whole is reduced by £12,917,000 from £937,076,000 to £924,159,000.

Rates

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the average domestic rates bill in Dunfermline, East for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on Monday 26 October.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Director General of Telecommunications

13. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Director General of Telecommunications; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I expect to meet the Director General shortly and to discuss a number of subjects of current interest.

Inner Cities

16. **Mr. Steen** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his programme for the coming year regarding the rejuvenation of the inner cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to say the work of our 16 inner city task forces is going ahead well with more than 200 projects supported since the initiative began in February 1986. The private sector is playing a growing part in our efforts.

28. **Ms. Walley** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the inner cities initiatives.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to say the work of our inner city task forces is going ahead well with more than 200 projects supported since the initiative began in February 1986. The private sector is playing a growing part in our efforts.

Industrial Output

19. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the output of British industry as a whole; and how this compares with the level of April 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The output of British manufacturing industry is expanding rapidly and the prospects for further growth are excellent. Since the trough of the recession at the beginning of 1981, the output of the manufacturing industries has increased by over 20 per cent. to reach a level of 111·5 in August 1987, based on 1980 equal to 100. This was 0·5 per cent. higher than the level of output in April 1979.

Car Sales

21. **Mr. Morley** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of cars sold on the British market was imported from overseas in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: In 1986 imports accounted for 56 per cent. of the United Kingdom car market. In the first nine months of 1987, the import share has fallen to some 52 per cent.

Insurance

22. **Ms. Short** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he proposes to take action to prevent

insurance companies refusing cover or charging exorbitant rates in inner city areas; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I recognise that the availability of insurance cover can pose difficulties in the inner city. That is why I reached an agreement with the Association of British Insurers and the British Insurance Brokers' Association to help overcome this problem by setting up insurance contact points in inner city areas. I am glad to say that several local authorities have now joined us in these arrangements. We shall be keeping a close eye on their results.

Consultative Committees

23. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to propose changes in the controls exercised by consultative committees over United Kingdom trade with the Soviet Union and other countries.

Mr. Atkins: A new Export of Goods (Control) Order will be made shortly.

Manufacturing Industry

24. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the level of manufacturing output at the most recent practicable date compared with 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Manufacturing output in the three months to August 1987 was 1 per cent. above the average level for 1979. Since the trough of the recession at the beginning of 1981, manufacturing output has increased by some 20 per cent. and in the three months to August is was nearly 6 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Manufacturing industry is now growing faster than the rest of the economy and the prospects for further growth are most encouraging.

25. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are his forecasts for investment in manufacturing industry in the current year and for 1988.

Mr. Atkins: The latest investment intentions survey carried out by my Department indicates that in 1987 investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, will be about 4 per cent. higher than in 1986 with a larger increase expected between 1987 and 1988. Investment in 1986 is estimated at £7·1 billion at 1986 prices.

31. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the ratio of new investment to depreciation in British manufacturing industry for the last available year.

Mr. Atkins: In 1986 gross domestic fixed capital formation by United Kingdom manufacturing industry, including leased assets, at current prices was about 102 per cent. of its capital consumption of fixed assets on a national accounts basis and at current prices. There are difficulties in measuring capital consumption as it is a broad brush estimate of the economic lives of fixed assets rather than the lives assumed in business accounts.

33. **Mr. Pike** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in output in percentage terms on a constant value basis in the manufacturing industries from 1979 to date.

Mr. Atkins: Manufacturing output in the three months to August 1987 was 1 per cent. above the average level for 1979.

Regional Aid

26. **Mr. Hind** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total of regional development and selective assistance grants awarded to north-west firms in 1986-87.

Mr. Atkins: The value of applications for new regional development grant approved to north-west firms in 1986-87 was £37·9 million and the value of offers of regional selective assistance grants accepted by north-west firms in 1986-87 was £41·6 million. In addition, £82·9 million was paid in 1986-87 to north-west firms in respect of applications received under the old regional development grant scheme.

Franchise Selling

27. **Mr. Fraser** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer the practice of franchise selling to the Consumer Protection Advisory Committee under the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mr. Maude: No, Sir.

Outer Cities

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for tackling the problems of the outer cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Many of the lessons we are learning from the inner cities initiative are also relevant to urban areas in general. We are reviewing the methods by which various government programmes are targeted on our cities.

Research and Development

30. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the regional distribution of his Department's budget for research and development.

Mr. Atkins: A table indicating the breakdown of the regional distribution of the DTI's budget for research and development is available in the *Official Report*.

Following is the information:

DTI support for research and development in regions:
1 April 1985 to 10 September 1987

Region	*Offers*	*Per cent.*	*Assistance £ million*	*Per cent.*
East Midlands	90	(7·5)	3·2	(3·0)
North-East	51	(4·3)	2·9	(3·0)
North-West	108	(9·0)	11·2	(11·0)
Scotland	55	(4·6)	2·5	(2·5)
South-East	489	(41·0)	49·7	(49·6)
South-West	107	(9·0)	9·5	(9·3)
Wales	52	(4·3)	2·5	(2·3)
West Midlands	154	(13·0)	13·2	(13·0)
Yorkshire and Humberside	85	(7·0)	5·4	(5·4)
Total	1,191		£100·1	

35. **Mr. Andrew Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funds Her Majesty's

Government are committing to the research programmes recommended by the IT86 committee as a successor to the Alvey programme of research in information technology.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am considering the recommendations contained in the IT86 report as part of our review of the priorities in the field of research and development for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Industrial Aid

32. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much industrial support has been given by Her Majesty's Government to the northern region since 1983.

Mr. Atkins: The amount of industrial support made available to the northern region by way of regional grant and assistance from my Department since 1983 is £659 million. Industry in the region has also received support directly and indirectly from many other Government programmes.

Regional Initiatives

34. **Mr. Cran** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he is prepared to have discussions with the representatives of other regions wishing to emulate the Northern Development Company initiative; and whether his Department will support similar initiatives in the same way.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I should welcome my Department being kept informed of progress in other regions towards the creation of fully representative bodies analagous to the NDC. We would have to consider any requests for support on their merits and in the light of the funds available at the time.

Privatisation

36. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a comprehensive system of departmental monitoring of privatised concerns.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, Sir.

Inner City Task Forces

37. **Ms. Armstrong** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what provision he is making to bring local democratic accountability to the inner city task forces.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am not clear what exactly the hon. Member means by "local democratic accountability". I regard myself as accountable to Parliament for the work of the task forces.

Domestic Furniture (Flammability)

Mr. Gregory asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last held discussions with trade and consumer representatives on flammability of domestic furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I met representatives of the industry yesterday. I am currently evaluating the very extensive responses, including the views of consumer interests, to our consultation on the proposal to make new Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations on the basis of a classification and code of practice approach to match resistance, rather than on the basis of direct testing. I shall make a further statement when I have completed my review of this consultation and other matters needing to be taken into account in the new regulations.

Post Office

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the performance of the Post Office meeting its delivery targets for first class mail in each quarter since the current method of statistical evaluation was introduced in 1979; if he will introduce legislation to remove the Post Office monopoly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Since the Post Office introduced its current quality of service monitoring information system in 1980 it has sent the Department copies of the leaflets which it publishes quarterly and makes available at Crown post offices. The leaflets give details of the latest quarterly and annual quality of service performance. As to the Post Office's letter monopoly, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend, the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 24 July.

Pension Funds

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to regulate the ability of pension funds to invest in the shares of their parent company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have no present plans to do so.

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to require pension funds to disclose when they deal in the shares of their parent company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Under the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 1986, for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is responsible, pension schemes are already required to disclose in their annual accounts particulars of any self-investment in excess of 5 per cent. of the total value of the net assets of the scheme. The regulations came into force on 1 November last year. In addition, pension schemes are subject to the normal Companies Act provisions which require the disclosure of an interest equal to or more than 5 per cent. of the relevant share capital of the company concerned.

Furs (Imports)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to ban the import of furs from those countries where the use of steel-jawed leg hold traps is still permitted.

Mr. Atkins: The import of furs, skins and other products from endangered species of wild animals is already tightly controlled under conservation legislation. Nevertheless, the Government remain most concerned about the continued widespread use of the steel-jawed leg hold trap—which is prohibited in the United Kingdom—to take certain other animals in the wild. Much fur is farmed or caught in more humane ways and a ban on imports of all fur from those countries still permitting the use of the trap is likely to be seen as disproportionate and contrary to our Community and international obligations. However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is considering what can be done, although there are serious practical difficulties, which I should not want to minimise.

Register of Shareholders

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on her Majesty's Government's proposals in respect of register of shareholders.

Mr. Maude: The consultative document "Delivery of Annual Accounts and Returns to the Registrar of Companies", issued in August 1986, raised a number of issues on registers of shareholders. I hope to make a statement in the next few weeks on company law deregulation more generally which will cover our intentions in this area.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Wray asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which countries in the world are the major importers of British manufactured goods; and how this compares with the situation in 1974 and 1981, respectively.

Mr. Maude: In 1986 our top 10 markets for manufactures took 62 per cent. of our exports worth £34 billion. Figures for these and our chief markets in 1974 and 1981 are in the following table:

United Kingdom exports of manufactured goods[1]

Rank and country	£ million
1974	
1. United States of America	1,474
2. Federal Republic of Germany	798
3. Netherlands	760
4. France	757
5. Irish Republic	558
6. Australia	550
7. Belgium/Luxembourg	551
8. Sweden	541
9. South Africa	477
10. Canada	420
1981	
1. United States of America	3,527
2. Federal Republic of Germany	3,163
3. France	2,460
4. Netherlands	1,868
5. Irish Republic	1,721
6. Belgium/Luxembourg	1,557
7. Italy	1,370
8. Nigeria	1,293
9. Switzerland	1,177
10. South Africa	1,111
1986	
1. United States of America	8,173
2. Federal Republic of Germany	6,369
3. France	4,216
4. Netherlands	3,132
5. Belgium/Luxembourg	3,043
6. Italy	2,480
7. Irish Republic	2,371
8. Sweden	1,461
9. Switzerland	1,425
10. Saudi Arabia	1,221

[1] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.
Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Mr. Wray asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are for each year since 1979, the United Kingdom's major imports of manufactured goods, and what are the 10 most important countries, from which such goods are imported in terms of volume, quantity and cost.

Mr. Maude: Information is available only in value terms and is given in the following tables:

Major imports of manufactured goods 1979–1986

value: £ million

SITC (R2) division	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
78. Road vehicles	3,943·2	3,351·6	3,408·1	4,489·6	5,753·8	5,957·6	6,800·6	7,939·7
75. Office machines and automatic data processing equipment	1,330·4	1,393·4	1,631·7	2,121·9	3,017·5	4,102·7	4,510·0	4,545·1
77. Electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances nes and electrical parts thereof	1,410·5	1,518·5	1,759·6	2,179·1	2,805·8	3,846·7	4,276·9	4,446·4
89. Miscellaneous manufactured articles nes	1,551·0	1,691·3	2,043·8	2,224·9	2,655·5	3,238·7	3,420·9	3,998·9
65. Textile yarn, fabrics, make-up articles nes and related products	1,691·1	1,543·7	1,761·6	1,927·6	2,320·2	2,705·4	3,032·0	3,162·6
74. General industrial machinery and equipment nes and machine parts	1,351·6	1,414·7	1,394·9	1,634·4	1,845·2	2,249·9	2,603·9	2,755·4
64. Paper, paperboard and articles of paper pulp, of paper or of paperboard	1,240·3	1,286·7	1,536·9	1,675·1	1,905·8	2,280·4	2,532·0	2,703·0
66. Non-metallic mineral manufactures nes	1,889·4	1,938·0	1,443·4	1,520·3	2,085·4	2,269·3	2,242·6	2,661·7
76. Telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment	796·5	823·6	1,291·4	1,586·2	1,915·9	1,848·3	2,130·6	2,402·3
84. Articles of apparel and clothing accessories	1,194·1	1,230·7	1,438·4	1,500·0	1,601·3	2,011·7	2,090·1	2,386·7

Major countries from which manufactured goods imported 1979–1986

value: £ millions

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Federal Republic of Germany	5,286·9	5,134·6	5,314·7	6,723·3	8,869·4	9,978·8	11,589·3	13,082·2
USA	3,543·8	4,676·1	4,634·3	5,071·5	5,982·2	7,718·5	8,363·6	7,050·8
France	2,997·3	2,988·4	3,055·0	3,372·5	4,010·7	4,556·5	5,099·8	5,727·1
Japan	1,441·2	1,665·6	2,154·0	2,571·6	3,250·2	3,650·0	4,036·4	4,858·8

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Netherlands	1,842·6	1,873·5	2,058·3	2,366·4	2,881·5	3,415·6	3,830·5	4,260·9
Italy	1,965·3	1,839·7	1,867·8	2,287·6	2,735·4	3,253·4	3,673·5	4,068·7
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,880·7	1,891·1	1,937·0	2,310·0	2,470·3	2,765·1	3,068·9	3,401·3
Switzerland	1,779·5	1,820·0	1,372·6	1,548·8	2,097·4	2,412·3	2,285·5	2,881·6
Sweden	1,269·8	1,161·8	1,170·1	1,260·9	1,495·4	1,802·3	1,994·5	2,313·1
Irish Republic	872·1	987·7	1,031·1	1,201·1	1,376·7	1,569·8	1,680·2	1,786·0

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics: Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2, Sections 5 to 8.
Note: 1986 figures provisional.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what grant-in-aid was given to the citizens advice bureau service for *(a)* recurrent costs and *(b)* development work in (i) Scotland and (ii) England and Wales in each of the past three financial years; and what are the proposed figures for the coming year.

Mr. Maude: The table shows the total amount of grant-in-aid given by the Department to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and to the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux respectively for each of the last three years, with the amounts actually spent on recurrent costs and on grants to individual bureau by each association. An estimate is also given for the current financial year. Corresponding figures for the coming year are not yet available.

Grant-in-aid expenditure by NACAB and SACAB (£1,000s)

	1984-85		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88 (Estimate)*	
	NACAB	*SACAB*	*NACAB*	*SACAB*	*NACAB*	*SACAB*	*NACAB*	*SACAB*
Recurrent costs	4,775	422	5,452	460	5,915	483	6,151	559
Bureau grants	1,618	278	1,728	339	1,800	356	1,857	367
Total	6,393	700	7,180	799	7,715	839	8,008	926

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which parliamentary constituencies in the United Kingdom citizens advice bureau services are not available.

Mr. Maude: I understand that there are approximately 100 out of the 650 parliamentary constituencies in the United Kingdom where citizens advice bureau services are not available. The full list of these constituencies is not yet available, but I will write to the hon. Member with this information as soon as possible.

Lonrho (Accounts)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assurances Lonrho plc has given him concerning its accounts for future years.

Mr. Maude: Lonrho has told the Department that the company's future accounts will set out the basis and dates of valuations of its fixed asset investments and the names and qualifications of the valuers.

British Home Stores (Bids)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the current bids for British Home Stores plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The proposed acquisition by Benlox Holdings plc for Storehouse plc is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. and noble Friend will make his decision whether to refer the proposed acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the Director General's advice.

Professional Liability

Mr. Key asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received in the past year on the subject of professional liability; and if he will set up an independent inquiry with a view to legislating in this area.

Mr. Maude: Representations have been received from hon. Members and from bodies representing a number of professions including accountants, lawyers, surveyors, architects, patent agents, consulting engineers, town planners and consultants. The subject has also been debated in another place.

In the light of these representations, we have decided to commission a series of fact-finding studies into selected professions to establish the nature, scope, extent and implications of the liability problems they face. The studies will look at three groups of professions — auditors; architects — consulting engineers — construction surveyors; and other surveyors; and will be undertaken by independent study teams with standard terms of reference, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Membership of the study teams will be announced in due course.

Investor Protection

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will institute an inquiry into the implication for investor protection of the effect on the ending of on-floor trading on the recent pattern of dealings and price movements on the London stock exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 October 1987]: The Department monitors the stock exchange, in particular its evolution and development as an efficient, competitive and suitably regulated central market which affords proper protection to investors. In addition the Financial Services Act which will come fully into force early next year, sets out arrangements for the statutory recognition of all investment exchanges which meet requirements set out in the Act. The stock exchange is expected to be one of the bodies applying for recognition.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on research into schizophrenia in each of the last five years; and what proportion each figure was of expenditure on the Health Service research programme.

Mr. Needham: In 1987-88 funds amounting to £8,973 have been allocated for research related to schizophrenia. This represents 2·82 per cent. of the clinical research budget. No awards for schizophrenia research were made in the previous four years.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Kimberley Carlile

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to order a public inquiry into the death of Kimberley Carlile, following the withdrawal of three social workers from the proceedings of the present private hearing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No. I understand that the inquiry has not been unduly hindered by the non-availability of some witnesses and that the chairman has indicated that his report will be delivered in the near future.

Ancillary Services

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the financial effects of competitive tendering for the provision of ancillary services in the health services.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities reported £100 million in annual savings generated by the competitive tendering initiative as at 30 June 1987: £76 million from domestic (cleaning) services, £16 million from catering services and £8 million from laundry services. We expect this figure to increase as further parts of these services go to tender.

Hip Replacements

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average cost of a hip replacement operation in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given in the *Official Report* on 3 June 1986 at column *533* which was based on an exercise conducted on the 1984-85 figures. The estimated cost in large acute hospitals was shown as £3,300 in 1986-87 figures. A study is in progress to update the information but it is not expected to show a substantial change.

Commercial Tendering

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has offered any guidance to regional and district health authorities on the desirability of licensing or leasing in respect of commercial tendering for National Health Service work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Yes. A health authority inviting tenders for a laundry service must offer contractors the opportunity of providing the service from the existing National Health Service laundry, assuming there is one. A letter from the then management board chairman to regional health authority chairmen in January 1986 covers this, and advises that such a laundry should be leased to the successful tenderer. However, in response to a specific query we have also offered one regional health authority advice on licensing.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will *(a)* list the members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines; *(b)* state the criteria for selection of members; *(c)* list the relevant qualifications of present members; *(d)* indicate the number of Trades Union Congress nominated places; and *(e)* indicate how many Trades Union Congress nominated places are women.

Mr. Newton: The members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines are:

Professor A. W. Asscher, BSc, MD, FRCP, *(Chairman)*, Professor of Renal Medicine, University of Wales, College of Medicine
Dr. G. Booth, B Pharm, PhD, FPS, MCPP, Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, University of Bradford and ex-President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Professor A. M. Breckenridge, MD, MSC, FRCP, Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Liverpool
Professor J. G. Collee, MD, FRCP, FRCPath, Professor of Bacteriology, University of Edinburgh
Professor P. H. Elworthy, B Pharm, PhD, DSc, MSc, CChem, MRSC, FPS, MCPP, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacy University of Manchester, Visiting Professor in Pharmaceutics at King's College, London and School of Pharmacy, London
Professor A. T. Florence, PhD, DSc, CChem, FRSC, MPS, MCPP, Professor of Pharmaceutics, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
Professor M. W. Greaves, MD, PhD, FRCP, Professor of Clinical Dermatology, University of London
Professor H. S. Jacobs, BA, MD, FRCP, Professor of Reproductive Endocrinology, Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London
Dr. W. A. Jerrett, MB, BCh, FRCGP, General Practitioner, Glamorgan
Professor M. J. S. Langman, BSc, MD,MBBS, FRCP, Professor of Internal Medicine, University of Birmingham
Professor D. H. Lawson, MD, MB, ChB, FRCP(Ed), Consultant Physician in Clinical Pharmacology, Glasgow
Mr. F. E. Loeffler, FRCS, FRCOG, Gynaecologist, London
Professor J. O'D McGee, MD, PhD, FRCPath, MA, Professor of Morbid Anatomy, Oxford
Professor A. E. M. McLean, BM, PhD, FRCPath, Professor of Toxicology, University College Hospital, London
Dr. Elizabeth Mayne, MB, BCh, BAO, MRCP, FRCPath, Department of Haematology, University of Belfast
Professor S. R. Meadow, MA, FRCP, DCh, Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health, Leeds University
Professor S. A. Montgomery, MD, BSc, MB, BS, FRCPsych, DPM Eng, Professor of Psychiatry, St. Mary's Medical School, London
Professor G. Nuki, MB, BS, FRCP(Ed), FRCP(Lond), MRCS, Professor of Rheumatology, University of Edinburgh

Dr. B. L. Pentecost, MD, FRCP, Consultant Physician, Birmingham

Professor M. D. Rawlins, MD, FRCP, BSc, Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Professor M. P. Vessey, MB, MD, FFCM, Professor of Social and Community Medicine, University of Oxford

Members are appointed for their expertise in medicine and pharmacy. There are no Trades Union Congress-nominated places.

Family Planning

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of community clinic sessions, (family planning) in *(a)* Camberwell district health authority and *(b)* Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority in 1985 and 1986;

(2) what was the number of registered patients, (family planning) in *(a)* Camberwell district health authority and *(b)* Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the table.

Information has been provided on the number of patients seen which will not equal the number of registered patients as not every registered patient will be seen in a particular year. Information on the number of registered patients is not held centrally.

Family planning services

1985

	Camberwell DHA	*Lewisham and North Southwark DHA*
Number of family planning clinic sessions	2,689	4,326
Patients seen[1]	13,472	27,395

[1] Includes those patients seen by the family planning domiciliary service.

Contraceptive Services

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of claims submitted by general practitioners for contraceptive services in 1985 and 1986 covering Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Family Practitioners Committee.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not collected centrally in this precise form. An estimate of the number of claims submitted in 1985 and 1986 is 40,650 and 42,910, respectively.

Abortions

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the abortion rate for women resident in *(a)* Camberwell district health authority and *(b)* Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The figures are shown in the table.

Abortions rates for residents of Camberwell DHA and Lewisham and North Southwark DHA 1985 and 1986

Area of usual residence	*Abortion rate*[1] *1985*	*1986*
Camberwell DHA	32·1	36·6
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	23·8	29·7

[1] Rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of abortions performed on women resident in *(a)* Camberwell district health authority and *(b)* Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The figures are shown in the table.

Abortions to residents of Camberwell DHA and Lewisham and North Southwark DHA 1985 and 1986

Area of usual residence	*Numbers of abortions* *1985*	*1986*
Camberwell DHA	1,693	1,855
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	1,681	2,214

Patients (Screening)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to circulate a code of practice for doctors on the screening of patients who are at risk of hearing loss after certain infectious illnesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department would not normally issue guidance on matters of this sort, as the management of individual patients is the responsibility of the clinicians concerned.

Disabled Babies

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the present provision of services to the families of new-born disabled babies; if he proposes any changes in the present arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Arrangements for the provision of services by district health authorities to the families of such babies considered to be at risk of disablement or handicap were set out in the reports of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee and we do not propose any changes to these arrangements.

Multi-Handicapped Visually-Impaired People

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the standard of service provided for multi-handicapped visually-impaired people in mental handicap hospitals; what steps he is taking to improve this service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Royal National Institute for the Blind has sent to the Department for consideration a copy of its report "Out of Isolation" which concerns the development of services for multi-handicapped visually-impaired adults, including those currently resident in mental handicap hospitals. It is for health and local authorities in co-operation to consider how best to the needs of all handicapped people in their areas but the Department has given wide circulation to "Helping Mentally Handicapped People with Special Problems", the report of a DHSS study team published in 1984. This reviewed current approaches to meeting the needs of mentally handicapped people with special problems, including those with visual handicaps, and made suggestions for improvements in services for them. The national development team for people with a mental handicap is available to advise authorities on such services. In addition, the Department has agreed to grant-aid the South Regional Association for the Blind towards the cost of employing a development officer to help plan community-based services for multi-handicapped visually-impaired people.

Public Expenditure White Paper

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish an updated version of table 3.15.12 of volume 2 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56-(ii)) for 1986-87, making use of the most recently available data.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is produced only once a year, and will be published in the social security chapter of the 1988 public expenditure White Paper.

Schools of Radiology and Radiography

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1987 a table showing for each school of radiology and radiography *(a)* how many students entered for the course to be examined that year, *(b)* how many dropped out, *(c)* how many took the examination and *(d)* how many passed.

Mr. Newton: This information, which is collected by the College of Radiographers, is not immediately available.

I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Sterilisation Operations

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reversal of sterilisation operations were carried out by the National Health Service in 1986.

Mr. Newton: In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, 2,400 people were treated in National Health Service hospitals for tuboplasty or vasoplasty after previous sterilisation.

Tattoos

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of patients waiting for plastic surgery are waiting to have tattoos removed.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. Information available centrally on in-patient waiting lists is categorised according to the specialty of treatment only, and not according to the intended method of treatment/operation.

Child Care and Family Services

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to legislate on the basis of his White Paper on child care and family services.

Mr. Newton: We shall want quickly to review the proposals in the White Paper in the light of recommendations in Mrs. Justice Butler-Sloss's report of the Cleveland inquiry when this is received. Subject to that, we intend to introduce a Bill as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures or estimates for the amount of Government expenditure on the hiring of private or agency nurses to provide cover for National Health Service shortfalls.

Mr. Newton: The annual accounts of health authorities in England record all their expenditure on the employment of non-National Health Service (agency etc.) nursing staff in total only. The summarised accounts for 1986-87, as yet unaudited, show this expenditure as £70,787,525.

East Berkshire Home Authority

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to overcome the financial difficulties experienced at East Berkshire health authority in meeting the cost of unbudgeted pay awards; if he will consider central funding of these awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: East Berkshire health authority has received a cash allocation this year of £69·5 million, 6·5 per cent. more than in 1986-87. The allocation includes a special addition to help health authorities maintain and develop services following this year's review body awards. The health authority must take the necessary steps to balance the cost of service developments against other cost pressures.

London Weighting

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the effect on the recruitment of nurses, he will extend the London weighting allowance for existing staff to East Berkshire.

Mr. Newton: The boundaries within which London weighting are payable are a matter for negotiation between the management and staff sides of the London weighting consortium of the General Whitley Council.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations that receive funding for AIDS-related work.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) on 23 October and to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 26 October. With effect from 26 October we have also given £4·1 million to the Health Education Authority to carry on the AIDS public education campaign.

Agency Doctors

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the cost to the National Health Service per annum of employing agency doctors;

(2) if he has any plans to restrict charges made by agencies supplying doctors to the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The estimated cost to health authorities in England of medical and dental staff engaged through agencies is £14·9 million. This represents 1·18 per cent. of the pay bill for medical and dental staff, compared with 0·84 per cent. in 1979-80. We have no plans at present to restrict the charges made by agencies, but a number of health authorities are currently taking or considering steps to contain costs and reduce reliance on agencies, and we shall be monitoring their progress.

Birth Statistics

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, following the implementation of the Family Law Reform Act, it is still possible to give an accurate breakdown of birth statistics comparing legitimate with illegitimate births.

Mr. Newton: Yes. The information collected by registrars of births still allows accurate statistics of births to be compiled according to legitimacy.

London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total number of bed losses in NHS hospitals in London for each of the past five years; and, of these, how many were acute beds.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 20 July 1987, c. *71*]: The information requested is given in the table. Reductions in bed numbers do not necessarily mean loss in services. Better use of beds, changing clinical practices and the ability to treat more cases as day cases without patients having to stay in hospital overnight mean that many more cases are being treated in the facilities available. Over the four-year period the number of in-patient cases treated per available bed rose from 17·9 in 1982 to 21 in 1986 and in-patient cases treated per available bed in the acute sector rose from 30·5 to 36. The numbers of cases treated in all specialties—in-patient and day cases—increased by 8·7 per cent. to 1,290,244 cases, and in all acute specialties increased by 4·3 per cent. to 1,037,936 cases.

NHS Hospitals in London

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*	*Reduction in available beds between years*
1982	60,697	
1983	59,591	−1,106
1984	57,092	−2,499
1985	55,146	−1,946
1986[1]	52,708	−2,438

[1] Provisional figures

NHS Hospitals in London

	Average daily number of available beds in the acute sector	*Reduction in available beds between years*
1982	28,995	
1983	28,497	−498
1984	26,749	−1,748
1985	25,807	−942
1986[1]	24,432	−1,375

[1] Provisional figures.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount spent in each district authority area in Wales on housing benefit in each year since the inception of the scheme at outturn and 1987 prices.

Mr. Portillo [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 July 1987, c. *170*]: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Table 1

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1982-83

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 prices* £
Aberconwy	304,355	379,154
Alyn and Deeside	397,836	495,609
Arfon	508,495	633,463
Blaenau Gwent	1,115,837	1,390,066
Brecknock	156,413	194,853
Cardiff	2,870,216	3,575,603
Carmarthen	247,887	308,808
Ceredigion	294,097	366,375
Colwyn	281,524	350,712
Cynon Valley	468,995	584,256
Delyn	569,513	709,477
Dinefwr	158,492	196,278
Dwyfor	112,438	140,071
Glyndwr	218,225	271,856
Islwyn	497,797	620,136
Llanelli	585,208	729,029
Lliw Valley	389,816	485,618
Meirionnydd	185,629	231,249
Merthyr Tydfil	670,760	835,607
Monmouth	346,793	432,021
Montgomery	249,284	310,548
Neath	491,889	612,776
Newport	1,560,648	1,944,194
Ogwr	1,004,630	1,251,529
Port Talbot	488,372	608,395
Preseli	481,430	599,747
Radnor	86,649	107,933
Rhondda	518,947	646,484
Rhuddlan	256,841	319,963
Rhymney Valley	1,136,366	1,415,640
South Pembrokeshire	312,979	389,897
Swansea	1,898,264	2,364,783
Taff-Ely	743,065	925,681
Torfaen	811,964	1,011,513
Vale of Glamorgan	813,529	1,013,463
Wrexham Maelor	1,00,068	1,245,846
Ynys Mon	600,531	748,118

Note: The figures for 1982-83 reflect the fact that housing benefit was partially introduced from November 1982, and fully from April 1983.

Table 2

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1983-84

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 prices* £
Aberconwy	2,770,139	3,303,536
Alyn and Deeside	3,170,052	3,780,453
Arfon	3,524,583	4,203,250
Blaenau Gwent	6,977,879	8,321,486
Brecknock	1,598,140	1,905,866
Cardiff	21,952,027	26,178,940
Carmarthen	1,974,770	2,355,016
Ceredigion	2,505,862	2,988,371
Colwyn	3,228,152	3,849,740
Cynon Valley	3,525,111	4,203,879
Delyn	4,107,642	4,898,578
Dinefwr	1,307,237	1,558,948
Dwyfor	1,098,679	1,310,232
Glyndwr	1,790,566	2,135,344

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 prices* £
Islwyn	3,576,724	4,265,430
Llanelli	4,503,729	5,370,932
Lliw Valley	3,576,574	4,265,252
Meirionnydd	1,657,250	1,976,357
Merthyr Tydfil	4,590,467	5,489,630
Monmouth	3,121,273	3,722,281
Montgomery	1,921,882	2,291,945
Neath	3,719,921	4,436,200
Newport	11,276,341	13,447,626
Ogwr	7,795,218	9,296,205
Port Talbot	3,467,404	4,135,061
Preseli	3,455,399	4,120,744
Radnor	980,362	1,169,133
Rhondda	3,773,504	4,500,101
Rhuddlan	3,258,364	3,885,769
Rhymney Valley	7,787,510	9,287,013
South Pembrokeshire	2,355,598	2,809,138
Swansea	13,029,886	15,538,820
Taff-Ely	4,894,978	5,837,517
Torfaen	5,657,883	6,747,321
Vale of Glamorgan	5,866,380	6,995,965
Wrexham Maelor	6,005,369	7,161,717
Ynys Mon	3,958,925	4,721,225

Table 3

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1984-85

Authority	*Outturn £*	*1987 prices £*
Aberconway	3,233,471	3,697,147
Alyn and Deeside	3,488,459	3,988,700
Arfon	4,099,903	4,687,825
Blaenau Gwent	7,953,853	9,094,427
Brecknock	1,918,139	2,193,198
Cardiff	25,558,080	29,223,081
Carmarthen	2,338,854	2,674,243
Ceredigion	3,049,313	3,486,581
Colwyn	3,769,468	4,310,006
Cynon Valley	4,782,881	5,468,741
Delyn	4,403,197	5,034,611
Dinefwr	1,854,263	2,120,162
Dwyfor	1,211,438	1,385,157
Glyndwr	1,978,590	2,262,318
Islwyn	4,430,481	5,065,807
Llanelli	5,020,298	5,740,203
Lliw Valley	3,758,387	4,297,336
Meirionnydd	1,804,686	2,063,476
Merthyr Tydfil	5,714,809	6,534,306
Monmouth	3,311,660	3,786,548
Montgomery	2,179,563	2,492,110
Neath	4,215,275	4,819,741
Newport	12,480,450	14,270,133
Ogwr	10,023,888	11,461,303
Port Talbot	3,787,801	4,330,968
Preseli	3,791,901	4,335,655
Radnor	1,108,414	1,267,359
Rhondda	2,541,603	2,906,066
Rhuddlan	3,905,977	4,466,090
Rhymney Valley	9,536,720	10,904,275
South Pembrokeshire	2,727,903	3,119,081
Swansea	14,821,046	16,946,368
Taff-Ely	6,289,986	7,191,963
Torfaen	6,845,832	7,827,517
Vale of Glamorgan	6,422,840	7,343,868
Wrexham Maelor	6,666,526	7,622,499
Ynys Môn	4,569,018	5,224,210

Table 4

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1985-86

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 prices* £
Aberconwy	3,602,835	3,877,911
Alyn and Deeside	3,812,003	4,103,049
Arfon	4,632,189	4,985,857
Blaenau Gwent	8,476,072	9,123,220
Brecknock	1,992,590	2,144,724
Cardiff[1]	30,159,466	32,462,141
Carmarthen	2,725,054	2,933,112
Ceredigion	3,562,375	3,834,362
Colwyn	4,335,977	4,667,029
Cyon Valley	4,658,485	5,014,160
Delyn	4,602,692	4,954,108
Dinefwr	1,713,261	1,844,068
Dwyfor	1,336,843	1,438,911
Glyndwr	2,186,170	2,353,084
Islwyn	4,767,206	5,131,182
Llanelli	5,373,050	5,783,282
Lliw Valley	3,887,159	4,183,944
Meirionnydd	1,962,175	2,111,987
Merthyr Tydfil[1]	6,147,747	6,617,127
Monmouth[1]	4,365,897	4,699,233
Montgomery	2,468,077	2,656,515
Neath	4,388,349	4,723,399
Newport	14,884,973	16,021,441
Ogwr	10,344,711	11,134,530
Port Talbot	4,151,593	4,468,567
Preseli	4,385,572	4,720,410
Radnor	1,192,231	1,283,258
Rhondda	4,929,628	5,306,005
Rhuddlan	4,424,658	4,762,481
Rhymney Valley	9,702,133	10,442,891
South Pembrokeshire	3,207,215	3,452,086
Swansea[1]	16,363,043	17,612,361
Taff-Ely	6,853,527	7,376,794
Torfaen	7,156,647	7,703,057
Vale of Glamorgan	7,071,089	7,610,967
Wrexham Maelor	7,375,515	7,938,634
Ynys Môn	5,132,232	5,524,078

Note: The outturn figures have been extracted from local authorities' final claims to housing benefit subsidy some of which (at [1]) have not yet been audited.

Table 5

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1986-87

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 Prices* £
Aberconwy	4,330,322	4,525,186
Alyn and Deeside	4,140,675	4,194,700
Arfon	4,582,320	4,788,524
Blaenau Gwent	9,187,800	9,601,251
Brecknock	2,301,530	2,405,099
Cardiff	36,450,000	38,090,250
Carmarthen	3,061,509	3,199,277
Ceredigion	4,020,500	4,201,423
Colwyn	4,852,280	5,070,633
Cynon Valley	5,233,813	5,469,335
Delyn	5,037,000	5,263,665
Dinefwr	1,988,785	2,078,280
Dwyfor	1,645,490	1,719,537
Glyndwr	2,566,300	2,681,784
Islwyn	5,054,862	5,282,331
Llanelli	5,531,364	5,780,275
Lliw Valley	4,198,287	4,387,210
Meirionnydd	2,427,421	2,536,655
Merthyr Tydfil	5,482,000	5,728,690
Monmouth	4,313,837	4,508,085
Montgomery	2,763,900	2,888,276
Neath	4,666,711	4,876,713
Newport	14,801,000	15,467,045
Ogwr	11,548,455	12,068,135
Port Talbot	4,108,975	4,293,879
Preseli	4,665,100	4,875,030
Radnor	1,343,000	1,403,435
Rhondda	5,643,400	5,897,353
Rhuddlan	5,011,000	5,263,495
Rhymney Valley	10,617,272	11,095,049
South Pembrokeshire	3,541,644	3,701,018
Swansea	17,357,600	18,138,692

Authority	*Outturn* £	*1987 Prices* £
Taff-Ely	7,666,390	8,011,378
Torfaen	10,312,769	10,776,844
Vale of Glamorgan	8,200,000	8,569,000
Wrexham Maelor	7,401,800	7,734,881
Ynys Mon	6,105,446	6,380,191

Note: The outturn figures have been extracted from local authorities' mid-year revisions of their estimates of housing benefit costs made when claiming payments on account of subsidy.

Table 6

Expenditure on housing benefit in Welsh district authorities 1987-88

Authority	*Outturn* £
Aberconwy	4,203,000
Alyn and Deeside	4,481,692
Arfon	5,082,000
Blaenau Gwent	9,986,730
Brecknock	2,364,000
Cardiff	34,400,000
Carmarthen	3,136,606
Ceredigion	3,994,730
Colwyn	5,155,500
Cynon Valley	5,480,690
Delyn	4,845,000
Dinefwr	1,956,650
Dwyfor	1,579,910
Glyndwr	2,355,000
Islwyn	5,165,970
Llanelli	5,937,175
Lliw Valley	4,383,046
Meirionnydd	2,147,797
Merthyr Tydfil	6,646,000
Monmouth	4,821,997
Montgomery	2,819,480
Neath	4,993,532
Newport	15,280,000
Ogwr	11,382,782
Port Talbot	4,500,000
Preseli	5,005,500
Radnor	1,251,000
Rhondda	5,962,200
Rhuddlan	5,528,000
Rhymney Valley	11,109,547
South Pembrokeshire	3,714,532
Swansea	17,552,800
Taff-Ely	8,433,030
Torfaen	10,583,528
Vale of Glamorgan	7,957,000
Wrexham Maelor	7,210,623
Ynys Mon	6,233,500

Note: The outturn figures have been extracted from authorities' preliminary estimates of housing benefit costs made when claiming payments on account of subsidy.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Mr. John Marshall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current price of liquid milk in Britain; how this compares with the price in other EEC countries; and what is his assessment of the effect on the price differential of the Milk Marketing Boards' monopoly.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The retail price of ordinary pasteurised milk varies from 20p per pint to 27p per pint depending on the packaging used and the type of retail outlet through which it is sold. The price range is even wider if other types of drinking milk are included. Comparison with the price in other member states is therefore very difficult and is further complicated by currency fluctuations and by differences in fat contents. There is, however, no evidence that our milk marketing arrangements result in a price to the consumer which is out of line with that in other member states.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The policy in my Department towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act, is as follows:

(a) members of staff will not be charged for reasonable access;

(b) other data subjects will be charged a standard fee of £10 for access to each registration.

My Department has made 40 registrations under the Act.

In organising the registrations, officials have sought, wherever possible, to restrict individual registrations to geographical areas or specific areas of work. Ten registrations have only members of staff as the data subjects. Of the other 30 registrations, five registrations cover administrative functions in the Department's five regions and a further six registrations cover the work of ADAS in the regions and Wales. Although possible, it is thought to be unlikely that an individual would wish to access all of these 11 regional registrations. The remaining 19 registrations cover the work of the various divisions concerning the agricultural, fishing and food industries.

The number of registrations to be accessed by data subjects to obtain all personal data held about them in my Department will, therefore, vary considerably from case to case according to the business interests of the individual, at a cost which could range from £10 to £300.

However, whilst data subjects may refer to the data protection register to determine which registrations are likely to hold their personal data, it is intended that an explanatory leaflet will be sent by my officials to each data subject who requests access, as a guide to the coverage and contents of each registration, with a view to minimising the costs to the data subjects.

Dairy Farmers (Incomes)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was the estimated income of dairy farmers in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland in 1978-79, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 expressed at 1978 prices.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested, expressed in 1978-79 real price terms, is given in the table. I regret that figures for 1986-87 are not yet available.

£ thousands

	England	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*
1978-79	8·8	7·3	6·4	7·7
1982-83	8·2	6·5	7·4	6·7

	England	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*
1983-84	4·6	5·2	4·9	5·6
1984-85	4·9	3·7	4·8	5·4
1985-86	6·1	5·6	3·3	3·3

Notes:

(a) Net farm income is defined as the return to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and on tenant type capital in livestock, crops, machinery etc., but not on land and buildings. It is calculated before the deduction of interest payments on any farming loans.

(b) The incomes for 1982-83 and subsequent years have been expressed in 1978-79 prices by deflating by the all items retail prices index with 1978-79 = 100.

Source: Farm Business Survey.

CAP (Surpluses)

Mr. Grocott asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost, in the latest year for which figures are available, of disposing of Common Agricultural Policy surplus foodstuffs.

Mr. MacGregor: Community expenditure on export refunds and internal disposal subsidies, (including loss on sale out of intervention) for commodities in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, olive oil, wine, beef, milk and milk products) in 1986 was 12,726 million ecu (£8,245 million).

Radiation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms in England have been affected by the restrictions on sale or movement of livestock due to excessive radiation levels since the nuclear plant explosion at Chernobyl.

Mr. Donald Thompson: 1,676 holdings in England were affected when restrictions were first introduced on 20 June 1986. Currently 150 of these holdings are still subject to restrictions.

Schemes to permit the movement and marketing of sheep from restricted holdings were introduced in August 1986 and are continuing.

Storm Damage

Miss Widdicombe asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what compensation he will make available to farmers in Kent who suffered losses during the storm of 15 and 16 October; if he will make special compensation available to fruit farmers; if he has any plan to visit affected farms in Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I informed the House on 22 October, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) that, whilst I am very sympathetic to the losses to farmers as a result of storm damage, I see no reason to depart from the longstanding position, which is that farmers normally bear the cost of bad weather. The majority normally insure against such risks and it is not the practice of the Government to pay compensation in situations of this kind.

Nevertheless, some farmers have lost a very large number of hedges and trees and the environmental impact has been considerable. I am therefore having urgent consultations with the European Commission to see if increased rates of grant can be given under the agriculture improvement scheme for shelter belts, hedges and traditional walls.

So far as fruit farmers are concerned, I am still assessing the losses in consultation with the NFU and others, and will consider the position after I have done so.

I am very much aware of the situation in the affected area in Kent.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support efforts to strengthen the international code of conduct on the use and distribution of pesticides, with particular reference to article 9 on information exchange at the forthcoming Food and Agriculture Organisation council and conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

There is not yet sufficient practical experience of operating the existing information exchange procedure based on the FAO code of conduct and the UNEP London guidelines to decide whether the code of conduct needs to be modified.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list, with regard to the interim notification scheme and the London guidelines for the exchange of information on chemicals in international trade, part II, notification and information regarding banned and severely restricted chemicals, how many notifications of control action and what relevant information has been sent to other countries when an export of such a chemical is occurring; and if he can list the chemicals notified, the companies involved and the countries to which they have been sent and on what dates;

(2) if he is satisfied that, under the provisions of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, adequate information has been provided voluntarily by pesticide exporting companies to permit the Government to fulfil their international obligations for information exchange on banned and severely restricted pesticides; what information has been provided concerning the products countries and date of export; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply to these questions.

The United Kingdom was among the first countries to implement the UNEP provisional export notification scheme and the UNEP London guidelines.

The United Kingdom has issued control actions for 41 chemicals which are listed at table 1, 22 of which can be used as pesticides. In accordance with the requirements of the UNEP scheme, the notification of control action contains information concerning the reason for the control action, the title of the legislation under which the substance is controlled and the name and address of a contact point from whom further relevant information may be obtained, and any exceptions or derogations. Copies of all the legislation referred to in the control actions are available from the international register of potentially toxic chemicals and the United Kingdom banned or severely restricted chemicals are listed in the second issue of the United Nations consolidated list of products whose consumption and/or sale have been banned, withdrawn, severely restricted or not approved by Governments.

A list of 22 export notifications, four of which can be used as pesticides, is at table 2. The date, destination and name of the compounds exported is given. Details of the companies involved are confidential. All this information has been provided voluntarily, but under part III of FEPA 1985 Ministers may require the provision of any information necessary to fulfil their international obligations to supply information.

Table 1

Aldrin
4-Aminodiphenyl and its Salts
Amosite
Arylmercury Compounds
Auramine
Azobenzene
Benzidine and its Salts
Cadmium Compounds
Calcium Arsenate
Chlordane
Crocidolite
DDT
Dianisidine
1, 2 Dibromoethane
Dichlorobenzidine
Dieldrin
Endrin
Inorganic Fluorides
Hexachlorobenzene
Kepone
Magenta
Mercury (I) Chloride
Mercury (II) Chloride
Mercury (II) Oxide
Methoxethyl Mercury Acetate
Methyl Mercury
L–Napthylamine
B–Napthylamine and its Salts
1–(1–Naphthy)—2–Thiourea
4–Nitrodiphenyl
Nitrofen
Organomercury Dips and Steeps
Polychlorinated Biphenyls and Polychlorinated Terphenyls
Phenyl Mercury Acetate
Phenyl Mercury Salicylate
White Phosphorous
Potassium Arsenite
Selenium Compounds
Sodium Arsenite
1,1,2,2–Tetrachloroethane
O–Tolidine

Table 2

Date of notification	*Importing country*	*Name of banned or severely restricted compound notified*
September 1986	Sudan	Aldrin
	Italy	Phenyl Mercury Acetate
November 1986	Netherlands	Auramine
	West Germany	Auramine
	Venezuela	Auramine
	Australia	Auramine
	Tunisia	Auramine
	Egypt	Auramine
	Italy	Auramine
	Mexico	Auramine
	Norway	Auramine
	Portugal	Auramine
December 1986	Nigeria	Aldrin
	Argentina	Magenta
February 1987	Belgium	Auramine
	Spain	Auramine
May 1987	Nigeria	Pheny Mercury Acetate
June 1987	Tanzania	Magenta
	Algeria	Magenta
	Nigeria	Sodium Arsenite
July 1987	Canada	Mercury Chloride
September 1987	West Germany	Magenta

SCOTLAND

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. MacDonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to establishing a series of permanent radiation monitoring stations in the Highlands and Islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 30 June, at columns *65-67* in which she announced the framework of a new national plan for responding to radioactivity incidents which may occur outwith the United Kingdom. The monitoring network which will be set up under the plan will consist of more than 80 fixed stations for the initial detection and measurement of radioactivity, of which about 15 are likely to be in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Rates

Mr. MacDonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Western Isles for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Western Isles Islands Council

	Average domestic rate bill £	*Percentage change*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change*
1978-79	60	—	122	—
1979-80	67	12	117	−4
1980-81	94	40	138	18
1981-82	128	36	171	24
1982-83	151	18	188	10
1983-84	160	6	191	1
1984-85	175	9	200	5
1985-86	181	3	195	−2
1986-87	194	7	203	4
1987-88	206	6	206	2

Notes:

1. Source—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Monklands, West constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in East Lothian for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

East Lothian District Council

	Average domestic rate bill £	*Percentage change*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change*
1978-79	165	—	335	—
1979-80	198	20	344	3
1980-81	280	41	411	19
1981-82	413	48	552	34
1982-83	380	−8	474	−14
1983-84	348	−8	415	−12
1984-85	387	11	442	7
1985-86	433	12	466	6
1986-87	460	6	481	3
1987-88	549	19	549	14

Note: The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Aberdeen constituency for each year since 1978 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Aberdeen District Council

	Average domestic rate bill £	*Percentage change*	*1987-88 prices* £	*Percentage change*
1978-79	133	—	270	—
1979-80	161	21	280	4
1980-81	199	24	292	4
1981-82	239	20	319	9
1982-83	289	21	360	13
1983-84	300	4	358	−1
1984-85	301	0	344	−4
1985-86	344	14	370	8
1986-87	378	10	395	7
1987-88	390	3	390	−1

Notes:

1. *Source*—Rating Review.
2. The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill for Cunninghame, North constituency since 1978 (i) in real terms, (ii) showing in each case the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Clydesdale constituency for each year since 1978 in real terms, showing the percentage change between the years in each case.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is as follows:

Clydesdale District Council

	Average domestic rate bill 1987-8 prices	*Percentage change*
1978-79	264	—
1979-80	251	−5
1980-81	296	18
1981-82	354	19
1982-83	394	11
1983-84	379	−4
1984-85	389	3
1985-86	409	5
1986-87	443	8
1987-88	504	14

Notes:

(1) Source—Rating Review.

(2) The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the rate fund contribution figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the rate fund contribution figure for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Outturn rate fund contribution

Year	*Scotland £ million*	*Edinburgh £ million*
1978-79	55·6	1·1
1979-80	72·9	2·9
1980-81	79·4	0·7
1981-82	106·3	3·1
1982-83	124·7	6·1
1983-84	117·9	4·0
1984-85	139·1	6·7
1985-86	97·3	3·2
1986-87	76·2	5·3
1987-88[1]	43·6	1·8

[1] Estimated figure.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the rate fund contribution figure, repriced for inflation, for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the rate fund contribution figure for Edinburgh district council, repriced for inflation, for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Outturn Rate Fund Contribution at 1987-88 Prices[1]

Year	*Scotland £ million*	*Edinburgh £ million*
1978-79	113·0	2·2
1979-80	126·7	5·0
1980-81	116·4	1·0
1981-82	141·9	4·1
1982-83	155·2	7·6
1983-84	140·5	4·8

Year	Scotland £ million	Edinburgh £ million
1984-85	158·9	7·7
1985-86	105·9	3·4
1986-87	79·6	5·5
1987-88[2]	43·6	1·8

[1] Using GDP deflators.
[2] Estimate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give Edinburgh district council's rate fund contribution figure as a proportion of the total rate fund contribution figure for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

	Per cent.
1978-79	2·0
1979-80	4·0
1980-81	0·8
1981-82	3·0
1982-83	5·0
1983-84	3·0
1984-85	5·0
1985-86	3·0
1986-87	7·0
1987-88[1]	4·0

[1] Estimate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage change in rate fund contribution over the previous year for Scotland for each year from 1978 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the percentage change in rate fund contribution over the previous year for Edinburgh district council for each year from 1978 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Percentage Change in Rate Fund Contribution over Previous Year

	Scotland Per cent.	Edinburgh Per cent.
1978-79	+31	+ 33
1979-80	+31	+162
1980-81	+ 9	− 77
1981-82	+34	+368
1982-83	+17	+ 95
1983-84	− 5	− 34
1984-85	+18	+ 66
1985-86	−30	− 53
1986-87	−22	+ 67
[1]1987-88	−43	− 66

[1] Based on estimates.
1978-79 to 1986-87 information based on outturn figures.

SSHA (Tenants)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the constituency of Monklands, West in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the tourist industry in Scotland about the level of funding made available to the Scottish tourist board; and if he will state what increases he proposes in 1988's block grant to the Scottish tourist board.

Mr. Lang: A number of representations have been received from the tourist industry about the level of funding for the Scottish tourist board and my noble friend the Minister of State recently met a delegation from the Scottish Confederation of Tourism. Decisions on the level of funding for 1988-89 will be taken soon.

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied that the allocation of the funds from central Government made by the Scottish tourist board adequately takes account of the needs of the local area tourist boards; and if he will make a statement outlining the increases he proposes in 1988's allocation to assist the development work being undertaken by the area tourist boards.

Mr. Lang: It is for the three partners in area tourist boards—the trade, local authorities, and the Scottish tourist board or the Highlands and Islands development board in its area—to consider the balance of funding. The trade is expected to make a substantial contribution to the operation of area tourist boards whose main function is servicing visitors to their areas. Government assistance can only be supplementary. It is for the relevant board to determine how much it allocates to area tourist boards in relation to its priorities and the resources available.

Housing

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Aberdeen, South constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing numbers of tenants in Scottish Special Housing Assocition accommodation in Cunninghame, North constituency since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Pupils (Statistics)

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Strathkelvin and Bearsden can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Arts

Mr. Menzies Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he has any plans to establish an independent council with responsibility for the arts in Scotland with similar powers and responsibilities to those of the Scottish Sports Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Free School Meals

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each education authority in Scotland, the number of children who take school meals who are entitled to free school meals by reason of (i) their family being entitled to family income supplement or supplementary benefit, and (ii) the discretionary power of the local authority to extend free meal provision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

AIDS

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the rate of increase in new sufferers of AIDS both in Scotland as a whole and in the Strathclyde region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Up to the end of September 1987, 31 persons in Scotland had been registered with the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit as suffering from AIDS; this represents an increase of 17 over the cumulative total of AIDS cases in Scotland reported up to the end of September 1986. Since the figure for a particular region may be very low, and its publication may in consequence endanger medical confidentiality, a geographical breakdown of AIDS cases in Scotland is not at present published.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures of National health Service patients treated for AIDS.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Up to the end of September 1987, 31 cases of patients in Scotland suffering from AIDS had been reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit. Of this total, 15 had died.

School Meals

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what instructions he will give to the proper authorities so that they closely check that, after the abolition of meal facilities for school children at school, the nutritional needs of such children do not suffer;

(2) what steps he will take to ensure that, after the abolition of meal facilities for school children at their schools, such children will be able to choose the kind of food which contains the nutritional values they require for their good health and development;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that the compensation given after the meal facilities for school children are abolished will cover the needs for adequate nutrition of the children.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not the Government's intention to abolish school meal facilities. From 1 April 1988 the children's rates of family credit will take account of the cost of school meals and it is estimated that more pupils will be assisted with the cost of school meals than qualify under family income supplement and discretionary schemes now. These changes will not constrain the freedom of education authorities to decide the form and nutritional content of school meals.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in Dunfermline, East in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection, and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer in Fife will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in Fife.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration of all adults in the Clydesdale constituency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Clydesdale constituency in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of (1) 100 per cent. collection, (2) 95 per cent. collection, (3) 90 per cent. collection, (4) 85 per cent. collection, (5) 80 per cent. collection, (6) 75 per cent. collection and (7) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Pupil-Teacher Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Dunfermline, East for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Dunfermline, East can be obtained from Fife regional council.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total numbers of pupils on school rolls, and the pupil to teacher ratio in (1) primary and (2) secondary schools in the Clydesdale constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Clydesdale can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in Dunfermline, East in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Closures

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in Dunfermline, East in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Higher and Further Education

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from Dunfermline, East have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils from the Clydesdale constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage in each group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what cumulative volume of *(a)* high level, *(b)* intermediate level and *(c)* low level nuclear waste has been created by the operation of nuclear installations in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested because much of the waste from the operation of Scottish nuclear installations arises at Sellafield when fuel is reprocessed and is not separately identifiable. However such waste is included in the national radioactivity waste inventory published in the annual reports of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee—RWMAC—which also contain information about the wastes being stored at Scottish nuclear installations.

In general, low level wastes are disposed of as they arise and the most recent information for Scottish sites is in the Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin No. 1/1986 — "Radioactive Waste Disposals from Nuclear Sites in Scotland: 1980 to 1984". The bulletin and the RWMAC reports are available in the Library.

Immunisation

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a table giving details of all childhood immunisations in Scotland, for each health board, for the years 1976 to 1986 inclusively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is in the table:

Immunisation Acceptance Rates—Measles

Percentage

Children born in	[1]*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	48·6	50·8	54·5	56·0	51·8	54·4	57·0	60·3	64·3	72·7	76·0
Argyll and Clyde	—	42·4	48·7	51·3	50·1	48·8	55·5	59·5	64·1	71·7	72·8
Ayrshire and Arran	—	44·1	46·3	43·1	34·8	43·3	46·6	52·0	54·5	66·1	72·7

Children born in	[1]*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Borders	—	74·7	75·2	75·6	71·3	65·7	64·8	82·1	84·9	88·2	92·7
Dumfries and Galloway	—	65·8	65·9	68·0	62·1	65·7	64·1	69·6	69·9	77·5	83·5
Fife	—	61·6	61·8	59·0	60·2	59·2	61·6	62·0	72·0	81·4	85·6
Forth Valley	—	59·9	63·1	67·0	68·7	69·9	71·1	67·5	78·5	79·2	88·1
Grampian	—	66·8	64·2	66·9	65·9	64·1	62·8	68·1	72·0	79·1	82·3
Greater Glasgow	—	50·3	50·5	50·7	43·8	51·6	58·7	62·7	62·3	71·3	75·2
Highland	—	52·9	54·1	58·6	54·4	52·8	58·7	60·6	60·2	77·3	84·3
Lanarkshire	—	30·6	50·1	55·4	43·9	47·6	45·5	46·9	50·4	59·4	63·1
Lothian	—	48·9	52·5	53·8	53·5	52·5	53·7	57·7	66·1	73·7	72·4
Orkney	—	51·8	62·3	77·0	48·2	83·4	70·8	82·6	81·7	77·0	80·0
Shetland	—	50·4	64·6	43·6	44·9	63·6	67·1	66·9	76·8	77·2	71·9
Tayside	—	64·6	61·0	62·2	57·3	60·5	63·3	65·8	70·2	77·4	78·1
Western Isles	—	20·3	33·0	33·3	45·5	36·2	36·1	39·8	32·3	47·5	53·2

Source: Form ISD(S)11pt1

[1] Data on live births and neonatal deaths, required in the calculation of rates, are only available by health board for children born in 1974 and onwards.

Immunisation Acceptance Rates—Diphtheria

Percentage

Children born in	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	72·7	77·8	79·1	75·8	79·3	79·8	83·0	82·7	85·2	86·6	85·6
Argyll and Clyde	68·2	82·3	77·5	75·7	78·7	77·9	84·5	79·1	82·6	81·3	83·6
Ayrshire and Arran	61·3	72·4	66·6	68·9	76·5	77·4	79·0	83·3	82·9	87·6	90·0
Borders	98·3	80·8	92·0	88·7	84·8	93·9	95·3	97·9	97·1	97·8	93·6
Dumfries and Galloway	90·1	92·0	90·5	87·1	89·3	90·2	88·0	89·5	90·9	90·5	92·7
Fife	87·2	84·2	85·8	85·3	87·2	87·7	90·3	88·1	90·9	93·4	90·0
Forth Valley	79·5	81·9	89·5	86·0	89·0	86·3	85·5	84·5	90·7	91·5	93·0
Grampian	82·7	84·7	88·4	86·2	83·3	84·1	84·6	83·3	84·2	88·5	87·6
Greater Glasgow	64·7	67·0	63·6	63·2	71·7	74·2	82·6	81·1	82·4	85·4	85·7
Highland	76·5	78·2	75·7	77·6	80·2	79·0	84·1	72·2	86·1	89·8	90·7
Lanarkshire	61·9	76·0	92·9	75·0	76·4	79·7	76·7	77·1	82·4	83·6	82·5
Lothian	76·2	83·0	79·8	78·6	82·9	77·8	80·1	87·9	88·5	84·2	76·5
Orkney	72·7	89·4	100·0	76·1	97·6	95·8	100·0	95·6	95·7	72·7	100·0
Shetland	69·9	100·0	100·0	91·2	89·3	84·7	92·5	90·2	90·1	87·1	88·8
Tayside	83·0	76·3	78·6	73·9	75·9	79·6	85·8	84·0	83·8	88·3	86·8
Western Isles	54·4	88·1	75·3	83·0	69·1	57·9	63·6	60·3	66·5	69·0	71·3

Source: Form ISD(S)11pt1

Immunisation Acceptance Rates—Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Percentage

Children born in	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	55·2	55·4	49·1	47·7	51·8	53·7	58·1	60·0	68·6	69·2	70·7
Argyll and Clyde	51·9	61·1	47·6	47·9	51·3	53·4	60·3	59·1	68·6	67·5	69·6
Ayrshire and Arran	41·2	87·9	37·1	36·1	49·0	53·5	55·4	60·8	67·6	70·6	75·1
Borders	60·8	58·0	55·8	60·0	60·9	68·3	72·2	77·7	81·9	83·1	80·6
Dumfries and Galloway	72·1	69·9	67·1	59·9	64·6	65·3	68·1	70·9	75·6	74·1	79·8
Fife	61·7	55·0	42·3	45·2	48·5	49·4	55·4	55·2	65·5	67·7	69·3
Forth Valley	65·9	56·8	52·1	50·8	62·0	63·2	67·9	69·0	77·6	77·6	82·3
Grampian	64·7	63·4	53·4	55·1	55·1	57·5	61·2	63·9	69·2	74·3	75·5
Greater Glasgow	59·9	52·7	49·2	49·1	51·6	53·3	59·7	58·7	66·4	66·5	68·9
Highland	66·9	64·3	48·6	47·9	49·2	52·8	59·4	48·4	69·8	74·2	75·0
Lanarkshire	38·7	55·5	58·0	41·6	47·6	53·0	48·9	52·9	61·3	64·1	65·5
Lothian	52·3	58·4	46·9	48·7	51·7	50·0	54·7	62·8	71·9	65·9	62·6
Orkney	60·0	62·7	41·0	26·5	40·3	41·7	55·2	62·7	74·0	56·4	83·8
Shetland	33·0	13·0	38·1	50·7	41·9	45·7	58·9	61·8	67·0	64·2	71·5
Tayside	57·2	57·7	47·3	46·5	51·4	51·8	59·9	64·2	71·2	73·5	75·6
Western Isles	48·8	75·5	60·8	62·5	46·6	41·2	49·7	44·2	60·2	59·7	61·2

Source: Form ISD(S)11pt1

Immunisation Acceptance Rates—Tetanus

Percentage

Children born in	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	72·8	77·7	79·0	75·8	79·4	79·9	83·0	82·7	85·1	86·6	85·7
Argyll and Clyde	68·2	82·4	77·6	75·9	78·9	77·9	84·5	79·1	82·5	81·4	83·6
Ayrshire and Arran	61·9	72·5	66·6	69·0	76·5	77·4	79·1	83·3	82·9	87·7	90·0
Borders	98·6	80·9	92·2	88·8	84·8	93·9	95·4	98·2	97·2	97·8	93·7
Dumfries and Galloway	90·2	92·0	90·6	87·1	89·4	90·4	88·1	89·7	90·9	90·6	92·7
Fife	87·3	84·3	85·9	85·5	87·2	87·9	90·5	88·2	90·8	93·4	90·0
Forth Valley	79·5	81·9	89·5	86·0	89·0	86·3	85·5	84·5	90·7	91·5	93·0
Grampian	82·7	84·7	88·5	86·3	83·4	84·2	84·7	83·4	84·2	88·6	87·6
Greater Glasgow	64·7	66·9	63·5	63·1	71·9	74·3	82·6	81·1	82·5	85·4	85·7
Highland	76·6	78·8	76·2	78·7	81·0	79·7	84·2	72·3	86·2	89·9	90·8
Lanarkshire	61·8	75·0	91·2	74·4	76·3	79·6	76·5	77·2	82·1	83·3	82·7
Lothian	76·6	83·2	80·0	78·7	83·0	78·3	80·4	87·9	88·2	84·2	76·5
Orkney	72·7	89·4	100·0	80·5	98·0	95·8	100·0	95·6	95·7	72·7	100·0
Shetland	69·9	100·0	100·0	91·2	89·3	84·7	92·5	90·2	90·6	87·1	89·4
Tayside	83·1	76·4	78·8	74·0	76·1	79·7	85·9	84·0	83·9	88·7	86·9
Western Isles	54·4	88·1	75·3	83·0	69·1	59·3	63·6	60·3	63·7	68·7	69·2

Source: Form ISD(S)11pt1

Immunisation Acceptance Rates—Poliomyelitis

Percentage

Children born in	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
immunised by end of	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	69·6	76·6	79·0	75·2	79·5	81·9	82·4	81·9	84·2	85·1	85·3
Argyll & Clyde	66·0	84·5	86·7	75·1	77·1	78·1	83·5	79·0	82·5	81·5	83·6
Ayrshire & Arran	60·7	68·9	66·7	70·0	75·7	77·1	78·0	82·4	81·5	86·4	88·8
Borders	94·3	75·4	89·8	91·1	80·6	92·9	96·0	96·8	95·3	98·3	93·3
Dumfries & Galloway	90·9	93·0	90·8	90·4	90·5	91·4	87·9	90·4	89·7	90·0	93·4
Fife	84·6	81·5	83·3	82·1	85·9	91·0	91·0	85·5	89·1	90·2	86·2
Forth Valley	79·2	80·9	89·6	86·6	87·8	87·3	85·8	82·9	89·8	90·3	92·8
Grampian	80·6	87·9	84·1	84·1	82·9	82·4	84·8	83·8	83·4	85·4	87·0
Greater Glasgow	64·1	66·7	63·6	63·0	72·1	74·4	82·6	81·1	82·3	85·3	85·7
Highland	82·1	79·8	80·0	76·2	77·8	79·6	82·9	68·3	86·3	89·5	90·3
Lanarkshire	55·2	73·0	91·9	72·3	77·0	28·9	74·9	78·3	81·3	81·9	82·0
Lothian	69·2	77·5	78·1	80·6	88·0	93·6	80·7	86·2	86·0	80·6	78·4
Orkney	74·1	89·0	100·0	70·8	97·6	90·0	93·8	82·5	85·5	69·5	97·9
Shetland	72·0	98·9	100·0	93·0	89·0	85·5	92·5	93·9	88·6	90·3	88·8
Tayside	73·7	76·1	76·1	72·8	75·5	78·7	80·7	81·7	83·4	86·5	85·3
Western Isles	53·7	88·5	66·0	78·7	63·3	58·1	64·7	56·8	65·5	67·3	68·9

Source: Form ISD(S)11ptl

SHARPEN Report

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the SHARPEN report, "Scottish Health Authorities Resource Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October 1987. A statement by the Government will be possible only after advice about the report Scottish Health Authorities Review of Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties — SHARPEN — and its recommendations has been received from the Scottish Health Service Planning Council which will consider the report in detail at its meeting in March 1988.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the circulation of the report on the Scottish Health Service "Scottish Health Authorities Resource Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October 1987.

Carstairs State Hospital

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail planned capital expenditure for Carstairs state hospital to improve facilities for patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is presently considering proposals by the state hospital management committee for upgrading the ward accommodation at the hospital.

Dredging Operations

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any intention to police and control dredging operations arising from widespread seabed trawling for shellfish off the Scottish coastline.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Almost all seabed trawling for shellfish in waters off the Scottish coast takes place in muddy grounds where nephrops—prawns—are found. Light gear is used and disturbance of the seabed is minimal. Fishing operations are subject to European Community conservation and control measures which are vigorously enforced by the fishery protection service. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce further control measures.

Adult Education

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* statistics for the most recent available period, and for the five previous years, relating to Government expenditure on adult education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Education Department does not maintain separate records of educational expenditure for those who have reached the age of majority.

National Health Service

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service beds in Clydesdale constituency and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Haemophilia Centres (Funding)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will provide funding for the haemophilia centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow to enable them to carry out AIDS-related work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The funding of the haemophilia centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow is a matter for Lothian and Greater Glasgow health boards to consider in the context of the various demands which AIDS and HIV infection are placing and will place on them.

Air Misses

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the reports of near misses involving aircraft in Scotland in the last five years; and if he will publish the reports which have been made following investigations of these incidents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible through National Air Traffic Services—NATS—for airspace management. The authority has told me that the total reported air misses over Scotland and adjacent inshore waters were as follows:

	Number
1982	20
1983	19
1984	22
1985	12
1986	19
1987	[1]17

[1] To 1 October.

Reports of the investigations carried out by NATS into reported air misses are confidential and are not made public.

Benefits

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in the Western Isles are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit, *(c)* housing benefit *(d)* sickness benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance and *(f)* maternity benefit; and how many people have received single payments in the current financial year.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

Social security benefits for the Western Isles are paid by the Department's office at Stornaway. Housing benefit is dealt with by the Western Isles regional council. The information requested is as follows, the dates are the latest dates for which information is available.

1. Supplementary benefit claimants as at 28 July 1987 were 4,574.
2. Sickness and invalidity benefits claimants at 20 October 1987 were 717; separate records are not kept of recipients of sickness and invalidity benefit.
3. Mobility allowance is administered centrally and details are not available of the numbers of beneficiaries in the Western Isles.
4. Maternity benefit claimants at 20 October 1987 were five.
5. Single payments: During the current financial year until 20 October 1987 there have been 519 decisions which resulted in either a full or part payment.
6. Housing benefit: Information is not available in the precise form requested. In the current financial year the provisional figure for rate rebate recipients is 4,215. This figure is the normal pointer used for housing benefit recipients.

Rents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the average rents for council houses in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(2) if he will give the average rents for council houses in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1986, repriced for inflation;

(3) if he will give the average rents for council houses in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987, repriced for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Average Weekly Council House Rent in Edinburgh

Year	*Cash prices* £	[1]*At 1987-88 prices* £
1977-78	5·17	11·64
1978-79	5·71	10·50
1979-80	6·52	11·34
1980-81	7·63	11·18

Year	Cash prices £	[1]At 1987-88 prices £
1981-82	9·54	12·73
1982-83	11·04	13·74
1983-84	12·28	14·63
1984-85	13·53	15·46
1985-86	13·35	14·37
1986-87	13·39	13·99
1987-88	15·00	15·00

[1] Using GDP deflators.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Benefit

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had regarding the imposition of taxes on child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: This subject was discussed during the social security review that preceded the Social Security Act 1986.

Job Creation

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of jobs created for the expenditure of £1 billion in (i) defence spending, (ii) public transport, (iii) construction, (iv) health and (v) education.

Mr. Major: Irrespective of composition, higher overall public expenditure is unlikely to have any lasting beneficial effect on the level of employment for the economy as a whole. Estimates of the short-run effects are unreliable because they depend critically on the economic model and the underlying assumptions that are used.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the current status of the Government data network project, including a description of the discussions he has had with the Data Protection Registrar concerning the project.

Mr. Major: Following the shortlisting in March this year, further discussions and demonstrations have taken place with consortia. It is expected that memoranda of agreement will be signed shortly and tenders invited before the end of the year. A final decision on whether or not to proceed will be taken after tenders have been evaluated.

The Paymaster General met the Data Protection Registrar on 8 September and discussed the nature of GDN as a shared physical network facility for data but which will consist of a collection of virtual networks for each of the participating Departments. Further work is continuing on guidance to be offered to Departments about good practice to be adopted before linking to GDN. The Paymaster General and the Data Protection Registrar also discussed how the DPR might carry forward his planned contact with the four participating Departments, which are themselves responsible for the care and ownership of data transferred across the network.

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury's policy towards fees for subject access under the Data Protection Act will be to make no charge to employees and ex-employees. For anyone else the charge will be £10.

The Treasury has two registrations under the Act: one for the Chessington computer centre as a bureau, the other for the remainder of the Treasury as a user and a bureau.

The total cost to a data subject for each access request will be £10.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Inland Revenue to publish its accounts (1) for the year ended 31 March 1986 and (2) for the year ended 31 March 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue's appropriation account for the year ended 31 March 1986, together with a summary statement of the revenue receipts for that year, was published with the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 1986. Similar accounts for the year ended 31 March 1987 have been submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General and will be published with his report in due course.

A more detailed account of revenue receipts for the two years in question will be contained in the Board of Inland Revenue's next report. Following the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service the report will in future be based on a financial year, rather than a calendar year as now. In consequence the next report will cover the 15 months ending 31 March 1987: it is due for publication in December 1987.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will recalculate the figures given in the answer to the hon. Member for Kensington on 23 March 1987, *Official Report*, column *35*, about personal allowances on the basis of the existing income tax rate of 27 per cent., and assuming weekly basic incomes of *(a)* £10, *(b)* £11 and *(c)* £12.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 October 1987, c. *790*]: The yield to the Exchequer of replacing all existing personal allowances with basic incomes of £10, £11 and £12 per week would be £5 billion, £3 billion and nil respectively in a full year at 1987-88 income levels. The offsetting costs from allowing tax discounts on earned and unearned incomes for each individual are estimated to be as follows:

Weekly tax discount on earned income (£)	*Cost in a full year at 1987-88 income levels (£ billion)*
3·00	4
6·00	8
7·50	10

Weekly tax discount on investment income[1] (£)	*Cost in a full year at 1987-88 income levels (£ billion)*
3·00	3
6·00	5
7·50	6
21·00	10
30·00	11

[1] Assuming that occupational pensions and state retirement pension are treated as investment income.

BP Share Offer

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the underwriters and sub-underwriters, both United Kingdom-based and foreign, committed to the current BP share offer, and the maximum proportion of financial commitment in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The obligations of the United Kingdom and overseas underwriters for the BP offer are set out in paragraph 7 of section 10 of the United Kingdom prospectus, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

The names of the 17 United Kingdom underwriters are given on page 1 of the United Kingdom prospectus. However, in the United Kingdom this underwriting risk has been passed on to a large number (measured in hundreds) of sub-underwriters, generally investors such as United Kingdom pension funds and insurance companies. The United Kingdom underwriters are liable to take up shares to the extent they are not taken up by sub-underwriters.

The four United States underwriters are Goldman, Sachs & co., Morgan Stanley & Co. Incorporated, Salomon Brothers Incorporated and Shearson Lehman Brothers Incorporated.

The three Canadian underwriters are Wood Gundy Inc., McLeod Young Weir Limited and Dominion Securities Inc.

The five Japanese underwriters are Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd., the Nomura Securities Co. Ltd., the Nikko Securities Co. Ltd., S. G. Warburg Securities (Japan) Inc. and Yamaichi Securities Company, Limited.

The 87 European underwriters are as follows.

Swiss Bank Corporation International Limited
Algemene Bank Nederland NV
Banca Commerciale Italiana
Banque Bruxelles Lambert SA
Banque Nationale de Paris
Banque Paribas Capital Markets Limited
Commerzbank Aktiengesellschaft
Creditanstalt-Bankverein
Credit Suisse First Boston Limited
Deutsche Bank Capital Markets Limited
Dresdner Bank Aktiengesellschaft
EBC Amro Bank Limited
Enskilda Securities—Skandinaviska Enskilda Limited
Generale Bank
Girozentrale under Bank der osterreichischen Sparkassen Aktiengesellschaft
Mediobanca—Banca di Credito Finanziario SpA
Pierson, Heldring & Pierson NV
Swiss Volksbank London Branch
Union Bank of Switzerland (Securities) Limited
Die Erste osterreichische Spar-Casse—Bank
Genossenschaftliche Zentralbank Aktiengesellschaft
Osterreichische Landerbank Aktiengesellschaft
Zentralsparkasse und Kommerzialbank Wien
Banque Inernationale a Luxembourg SA
Dewfin SA
Kredietbank NV
Kredietbank SA Luxembourgeoise
Petercam Securities SA
Bayerische Hypotheken-und Wechsel-Bank Aktiengesellschaft
Bayerische Landesbank Girozentrale
Bayerische Vereinsbank Aktiengesellschaft
Berliner Handels-und Frankfurter Bank
DG BANK Deutsche Genossenschaftsbank
Hamburgische Landesbank—Girozentrale
Schweizerischer Bankverein (Deutschland) AG
Vereins-und Westbank Aktiengesellschaft
Westdeutsche Landesbank Girozentrale
Banque Indozuex
Banque de l'Union Europeenne Caisse Centrale des Banque Populaires
Caisse des Depots et Consignations
Caisse Nationale de Credit Agricole
La Compagnie Financiere Edmond de Rothschild Banque
Credit Commercial de France
Credit Industriel et Commercial de Paris
Credit Lyonnais
Lazard Freres et Cie
Rothschild et Associes Banque
Societe Generale
Banca Nazionale del Lavoro
Banco di Roma
Credito Italiano
Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino
SIGE SpA
Bank Mees & Hope NV
F van Lanschot Bankiers NV
Nederlandsche Middenstandsbank nv
Cooperative Centrale Raiffeisen-Boerenleenbank BA (Rabobank Nederland)
Bergen Bank A/S
Den norske Creditbank
Den Danske Bank of 1871 Aktieselskab
Kansallis-Osake-Pankki
Privatbanken A/S
Svenska Handelsbanken PLC
Union Bank of Finland Ltd
Banca del Gottardo
Banca della Svizzera Italiana
Bank in Liechtenstein AG
Bank J Vontobel & Co AG
Banque Paribas (Suisse) SA
Compagnie de Banque et d'Investissements
Darier & Cie
HandelsBank NatWest
MM Hentsch & Cie
Julius Baer International Limited
Leu Securities Limited
Lombard, Odier International Underwriters SA
Pictet International Ltd
Privat Kredit Bank
Rothschild Bank AG
Sarasin Investment Management Limited
Swiss Cantonalbanks
Unigestion SA
SG Warburg Soditic SA
Banco de Bil:o SA
Banco Hispano Americano SA
Banco Santander de Negocios
Banco de Vizcaya

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute inquiries into discussions which have taken place between certain underwriters of the current BP share issue about the organisation of concerted buying operation to lift the price of existing BP shares on the market and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If the hon. Member has evidence of any activity of this nature in connection with the BP share sale, he should notify me immediately.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what decisions have been made on the imposition of value added tax on bus travel in the United Kingdom following the European Economic Community's considerations on the harmonisation of value added tax rates in its various member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have already made it clear that we would not accept proposals which restricted our ability to use zero rating.

Alcohol

Dr. Godman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised from taxes on alcohol in the financial year 1986-87; and what were the comparable figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is as follows (figures are in £ million)

	Excise	[1]*VAT*	*Total tax*
1986-87	4,195·6	2,150	6,345·6
1985-86	4,197·3	2,050	6,247·3
1984-85	3,760·6	1,890	5,650·6

[1] Estimated VAT receipts based on consumers' expenditure data.

DEFENCE

Nimrod Early Warning Programme

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of the failures of management in his Department during the Nimrod airborne early warning programme, and on the findings of that review.

Mr. Sainsbury: The review to which my hon. Friend refers was to examine our arrangements for the scientific and technical specification and monitoring of major projects against the background of our experience with Nimrod AEW. It has now been completed and the report is being examined. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as this work is completed.

Anglo-American Community Relations Committee

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will *(a)* list the members of the Anglo-American Community Relations Committee; *(b)* state the criteria for selection of members; *(c)* list the relevant qualifications of present members; *(d)* indicate the number of Trades Union Congress-nominated places; and *(e)* indicate how many Trades Union Congress-nominated places are held by women.

Mr. Freeman: An Anglo-American community relations committee exists at each of the main bases made available to United States forces. There is no central committee.

The chairmanship of each local committee carries no financial reward and the person appointed by me is selected from a list of volunteers. The secretary of each committee is, without exception, the community relations adviser to the base and is a MOD-employed civil servant. The viewpoint of the base authorities is represented by the RAF commander and the United States base commander. The remaining members of each committee representing the local community are volunteers appointed by the chairman, without reference to MOD.

Given the voluntary nature of these committees, no organisations other than the base authorities are represented. Therefore the question of Trades Union Congress nominated places does not arise.

Arms and Ammunition (Security)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what instances of theft of ammunition or firearms have occurred in the last 12 months at training establishments of air training corps or other similar bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Over the past 12 months there have been 53 break-ins at a total of 3,327 service cadet corps establishments resulting in the theft of the following firearms and ammunition:

	Firearms	*Ammunition*
Air Training Corps	5 × ·22" rifles (1 rifle recovered)	4,877 rounds of ·22" ammunition (838 rounds recovered)
Army Cadet Force and Combined Cadet Force	18 × ·177" air rifles (6 air rifles recovered)	Nil
Sea Cadet Corps	Nil	Nil

In addition 39 inert non-firing drill purpose rifles have been stolen, of which 16 have been recovered, and 107 inert drill purpose rounds of which 35 have been recovered.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what security arrangements are made for ammunition and fire arms in the possession of air training corps and other similar bodies.

Mr. Freeman: Firearms held by service cadet forces are stored in secure or structurally approved armouries, except that where it is not possible or economical to provide an armoury small bore ·22" rifles and ·303" non-firing drill purpose rifles may be stored in approved steel arms chests. Ammunition is stored in regular service armouries or properly constructed ammunition stores except that where it is not possible or economical to provide an ammunition store small quantities of small arms ·22" ammunition may be stored in approved steel containers; ammunition is kept separate from firearms.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Sainsbury: The departmental equal opportunities officer, who is generally responsible for industrial relations policy in the Department, allocates some 5 per cent. of personal working time to specific equal opportunities work. The promotion of equal opportunities is an integral part of personnel management, and it is not possible to attribute specific costs. The departmental equal opportunities officer or his representative regularly meets colleagues from other Government Departments at committees chaired by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and at other meetings to discuss specific issues. Action is being taken to ensure that women have access to relevant training, including women-only courses, and equal opportunities awareness is being promoted on all appropriate courses and through an instruction to all staff. In conjunction with the MOD Council of Civil Service Unions, a survey has been conducted to determine the demand for job-sharing and part-time working. As a result a circular is being issued throughout the Department drawing attention to the possibility of creating job shares or part-time posts. Arrangements exist to accommodate requests for special leave to cope with domestic responsibilities.

Northern Norway

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been received for British forces to fill the gap left by the Canadian decision to withdraw the CAST brigade from the reinforcement of northern Norway.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No request has been made for British forces to assume this role. The Canadian proposal to withdraw the CAST brigade from its role in the reinforcement of northern Norway is presently the subject of assessment by NATO military authorities, in accordance with normal procedures. The United Kingdom already makes a significant contribution to the defence of northern Norway and will, along with allies, give careful consideration to the NMA's assessment.

Fort Chaffee, Arkansas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of troops expected to take part in operations next year at the Joint Readiness Training Centre at Fort Chaffee in Arkansas; and what is the purpose of the training.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to my answer of 22 October to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) at column *874*.

Irish Sea (Submarines)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the Royal Navy, through the Flag Officers Scotland and Northern Ireland, will arrange a meeting with the Northern Ireland fishing industry to discuss submarines in the Irish Sea, as was suggested in the letter of 15 April from his Department to the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Association Ltd.

Mr. Ian Stewart: An invitation has now been sent to the Northern Ireland fish producers organisation to attend a meeting on this subject with representatives of the Royal Navy.

Rosyth Dockyard

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Defence if in the light of the recent court decision in favour of Mr. Alex Falconer, MEP, he will now seek to identify all those who have been exposed to excessive levels of asbestos at Rosyth dockyard; he will provide proper screening for lung damage for those concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Employees at Rosyth dockyard who may have been exposed to asbestos fall into two categories; those whose work requires them to operate in an environment where they may be exposed to high levels of asbestos dust and those who may have been accidentally exposed to low levels of dust. The former, classified as registered asbestos workers, are provided with personal protective equipment and are subject to special health surveillance procedures laid down by the Health and Safety Executive. Every effort is made to ensure that safe working practices eliminate the possibility of accidental exposure but individuals who believe that they may have been exposed in this way are able to request that their personal records be annotated to that effect. These methods of identification continue to be available following the transfer of the dockyard to commercial management in April 1987.

With regard to health screening, existing health checks for registered asbestos workers include regular chest X-rays. In addition, my Department made available in November 1986, and again in early 1987, facilities at Rosyth for full plate X-rays for any MOD employee who was about to transfer to Babcock Thorn and who, not being a registered asbestos worker, had not had access to this level of scrutiny for some time.

Courts Martial

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on procedure for Army courts martial, including the procedure for selection of Army officers to adjudicate;

(2) what training is given to Army officers who adjudicate over courts martial; and approximately how frequently in a year any one officer undertakes the duty.

Mr. Freeman: Serious cases are usually investigated by the Special Investigation Branch, Royal Military Police, who submit a report to the commanding officer. It is the CO's responsibility then to decide what, if any, action is to be taken. If he is of the opinion that the case should be tried by court-martial, after complying with certain formalities, he will send the relevant papers to an officer empowered to convene courts-martial, usually of the rank of brigadier or above. If this officer agrees that trial by court-martial is appropriate, he will convene a court. Legal advice is, of course, available to the officers concerned at all stages.

All Army officers are required to undergo instruction in military law as part of their general training, and have to pass an examination in this subject. They are also expected to attend trials as an officer under instruction on a number of occasions before they actually sit as a member of a court. Additionally, many officers will have practical experience of the disciplinary process by virtue of an appointment as adjutant or assistant adjutant of their unit. So far as the selection of officers to compose a particular court is concerned, the usual practice is to nominate the president by name, and to delegate to the commanding officers of various units the duty of nominating a suitably qualified officer to sit on the court. Courts-martial trying the more serious cases will have a judge advocate sitting with them to advise on the law and to sum up the facts for them.

It is not possible to say how frequently in a year any one officer sits with a court, as this will vary from individual to individual.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions over the past five years a court martial has ruled that charges be dropped because of lack of evidence.

Mr. Freeman: Cases where a court martial has accepted a submission of no case to answer or has used its power to stop a case are not separately recorded and could be identified only at disproportionate cost.

Bullying and Brutality

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence at what level in the armed forces complaints about bullying are held; how many units at this level there are; and what would be the cost of relaying the information to his Department for central collation.

Mr. Freeman: Investigations are held variously at unit or command level, and with reference to MoD centrally where the circumstances dictate. I will write to the right hon. Member on the further detail.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence during the current year, what action has been taken by the Adjutant General, Sir David Mostyn, that has been specifically aimed at preventing bullying and brutality.

Mr. Freeman: Bullying is not tolerated in the British Army. The Adjutant General regards such matters very seriously and takes every opportunity including his annual conference and his numerous visits to units at home and overseas to remind commanders of the importance of careful supervision at all levels. More specifically, in January he directed that a letter be sent to senior commanders drawing their attention to recent alleged incidences of bullying. The subject was discussed at his conference in May and in July he wrote further to all commanders, to remind them of the need for continued vigilance, and for firm disciplinary action to be taken against offenders in cases where allegations of ill-treatment or bullying are substantiated. He has asked commanders to report back to him by December after thorough investigation in their own areas of command, and to make proposals fo future means of combating bullying.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for defence if he will make provision for soldiers to be able to make complaints about bullying to Army personnel who are not in the same battalion.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the right hon. Member to the answers I gave him on 2 April, *Official Report,* at column *565*. Provision already exists for a soldier to complain not only up his own chain of command but also to senior visiting officers. It is also open to him to approach other officers in a unit, not in direct line of command, or various welfare agencies. He may also submit a redress of grievance.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions over the past five years it has been found that initiation rites of an undesirable nature are taking place in the Army; what was the source of information; and what action was taken.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army courts martial there have been in each of the last five years; how many of them have been concerned with Army brutality; in how many of these the accused was found guilty; and what sentences were imposed.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions over the past five years witnesses for a pending court martial involving bullying have been temporarily removed from their regiment for their own protection.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how frequently it is found impossible to pursue allegations of bullying because no witness is willing to give evidence.

Mr. Freeman: Where the complainant himself is prepared to give witness, inquiries are invariably initiated.

Anonymous allegations of bullying are most difficult to pursue, because there is no full statement of the complaint, nor sufficient detail of alleged offences, to enable proper investigation.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any indications or suggestions that fear of the consequences restrains recruits from complaining about Army bullying.

Mr. Freeman: The Army is well aware that there could be a reluctance on the part of some recruits to complain about bullying, and that this can be a risk when dealing anywhere with matters of this kind. All possible steps are taken to try to overcome this difficulty. Each soldier knows of his right to go over the head of his immediate commander, to a higher level, if this should prove necessary, or to approach any senior visiting officer. Other forms of advice and help are also available, for example, the unit medical officer, the padre, the families' officer, and the staff of welfare agencies such as the WRVS and SSAFA.

Absent Without Leave

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any form of counselling or contact with welfare officers is automatically provided after personnel are absent without leave.

Mr. Freeman: Counselling is not provided as a matter of course. However, if during the investigation of his case or in discussion with the soldier concerned the commanding officer felt that counselling would be of any value, this would be arranged.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the punishments that are given when Army personnel return or are found after being absent without leave, showing how many people received each punishment, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Punishments vary widely according to the circumstances and seriousness of each case. Trivial absence of a few hours or half a day would probably mean only a fine or lesser punishment, but a more serious case could entail detention or dismissal. In cases where the commanding officer judges that the soldier is not blameworthy, or where there proves to be a good reason for absence, there would not necessarily be any punishment.

On the further detail requested, I will write to the right hon. Member.

Sentencing Policy

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure the Army has, similar to judges' sentencing conferences, to enable a general discussion by relevant people about the level of sentences.

Mr. Freeman: The Army holds a biannual discipline seminar which is attended by the permanent presidents of district courts-martial, and by representatives of Army Legal Services and of the disciplinary branches of formations responsible for convening courts martial. The Judge Advocate General or his representative also attend. Additionally, the Judge Advocate General, from his experience of sentencing in Crown courts, advises convening officers in the great majority of cases.

Young Recruits (Experience)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions are placed on the freedom of young recruits who voluntarily leave the Army within six months to talk publicly about their experiences in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: There are no restrictions placed on recruits who leave the Army, other than the normal obligations not to disclose information learnt in the course of their official duties.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 29 October 1987

WALES

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Ten per cent., but see *(c)* below.

(b) The equal opportunities officer is also responsible for pay and allowances policy, superannuation, training including the senior management development programme, pay superannuation and conditions of service of staff of non-departmental public bodies, terms of appointment of consultants and line management of operational staff.

(c) This is not separately identifiable. The equal opportunities officer is responsible for co-ordinating the Civil Service policy on non-discrimination in my Department; other staff within personnel management division and line managers are to varying degrees responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring equal opportunities policy.

(d) There is a number of occasions throughout the year when equal opportunities officers from all Departments meet.

(e) The general guidelines on training were included in the "Programme of Action for Women in the Civil Service" issued by the OMCS(MPO) in 1984 and these were brought to the attention of the equal opportunities officer and departmental training officer.

(f) Applications for job sharing, part-time working and parental leave are sympathetically considered against the needs of efficient management. My Department will shortly be issuing to all staff a leaflet on coping with domestic changes which will provide comprehensive information and advice on the facilities available for part-time working and job sharing, special leave, maternity leave and reinstatement.

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much was spent by his Department in each of the last five years on the care and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia: and what percentage each figure was of total expenditure on *(a)* mental and *(b)* all health services;

(2) what is the current annual cost overall per patient to his Department's health and social security budget of the care and treatment of patients with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not collected in Wales.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many current occupants of National Health Service hospital and unit beds in Wales have a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis; and what those figures are as a percentage of *(a)* mental and *(b)* all hospital beds in Wales; and how those figures compare with each of the past five years;

(2) how many people discharged from hospital following a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis and subsequently taken by the police under section to hospital have been refused admission by hospitals in Wales in each of the last five years;

(3) if he will list for each of the last five years in Wales how many people discharged from mental illness hospitals, after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis, having been proved vulnerable boarders, subsequently became voluntary boarders.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic pychosis were discharged from mental illness hospital in Wales in each of the last five years; and how many of them were taken into local authority residential care in the same year.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of people discharged from mental illness hospitals with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis is not collected centrally. The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of discharges, giving the numbers of discharges directly to local authority residential care (including those discharges to local authority homes for the mentally disordered), the number of deaths, and the numbers of those discharged elsewhere. These figures relate only to the number of discharges and will therefore include a number of patients who were subsequently readmitted and re-discharged within the same year.

Schizophrenic psychosis: Discharges from mental illness hospitals and units in Wales: 1982-1986

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Discharges directly to Local Authority residential care	26	14	19	21	18
Other discharges	1,627	1,701	1,682	1,812	1,750
Deaths	31	21	20	22	26
All deaths and discharges	1,684	1,736	1,721	1,855	1,794

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been specifically earmarked for the care of the mentally ill following the closure of mental hospitals in Wales in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: There have been no closures of mental illness hospitals in Wales in the last year. However, over £1·7 million of central funding has been allocated during

1987-88 under the joint finance and mental health development schemes to new projects designed to cater for mentally ill people in the community.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many community psychiatric nurses there have been in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: The required information, measured on the basis of whole-time equivalents as at 30 September, is as follows:

Mental Illness Community Psychiatric Nurses

	Whole-time equivalents
1983	143·5
1984	143·5
1985	138·0
1986	142·5
1987	150·1

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the admissions by diagnosis and order of admissions, including percentage change in numbers and rates per 100,000 population, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Wales for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

Schizophrenic psychosis, admissions by diagnosis and order of admission
Mental illness hospitals and units in Wales

	Numbers			*Percentage change in numbers*	*Rates per 100,000 population*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
All Admissions							
All types	1,731	1,888	1,836	+ 6·1	62	67	65
Simple type	31	55	37	+ 19·4	1	2	1
Hebephrenic type	23	18	26	+ 13·0	1	1	1
Catatonic type	12	20	11	− 8·3	—	1	—
Paranoid type	232	265	247	+ 6·5	8	9	9
Acute schizophrenic episode	25	32	59	+136·0	1	1	2
Latent schizophrenia	4	—	3	− 25·0	—	—	—
Residual schizophrenia	303	286	284	− 6·3	11	10	10
Schizoaffective type	129	167	145	+ 12·4	5	6	5
Other	15	13	13	− 13·3	1	—	—
Unspecified	957	1,032	1,011	+ 5·6	34	37	36
First Admissions							
All types	209	222	193	− 7·7	8	8	7
Simple type	4	12	5	+ 25·0	—	—	—
Hebephrenic type	3	2	1	− 66·7	—	—	—
Catatonic type	1	6	2	+100·0	—	—	—
Paranoid type	51	32	36	− 29·4	2	1	1
Acute schizophrenic episode	10	6	16	+ 60·0	—	—	1
Latent schizophrenia	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Residual schizophrenia	11	3	10	− 9·1	—	—	—
Schizoaffective type	12	19	15	+ 25·0	—	1	1
Other	7	5	3	− 57·1	—	—	—
Unspecified	109	137	105	− 3·7	4	5	4

Source: Mental Health Inquiry

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the discharges and deaths by length of stay, including percentage change in numbers and percentage distribution, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Wales for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

Schizophrenic psychoses, discharges and deaths by length of stay
Mental illness hospital and units in Wales

	Numbers			*Percentage change*	*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Discharges and Deaths							
All lengths	1,721	1,855	1,794	+4·2	100·0	100·0	100·0

	Numbers			*Percentage change*	*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Under one month	977	1,109	1,088	+11·4	56·8	59·8	60·6
One month	478	504	462	−3·3	27·8	27·2	25·8
Three months	212	186	190	−10·4	12·3	10·0	10·6
One year	54	54	51	−5·6	3·1	2·9	2·8
Five years	—	2	3	—	—	0·1	0·2
Discharges							
All lengths	1,701	1,833	1,768	+3·9	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under one month	972	1,107	1,085	+11·6	57·1	60·4	61·4
One month	474	503	459	−3·2	27·9	27·4	26·0
Three months	209	182	181	−13·4	12·3	9·9	10·2
One year	46	40	40	−13·0	2·7	2·2	2·3
Five years and over	—	1	3	—	—	0·1	0·2
Deaths							
All lengths	20	22	26	+30·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under one month	5	2	3	−40·0	25·0	9·1	11·5
One month	4	1	3	−25·0	20·0	4·5	11·5
Three months	3	4	9	+200·0	15·0	18·2	14·6
One year	8	14	11	+37·5	40·0	63·6	34·6
Five years and over	—	1	—	—	—	4·5	—

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations he has received on the provision of community care for patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis discharged from mental illness hospitals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what guidance his Department gives to mental illness hospitals on the retention of patients whose condition is unlikely to improve; and what is the current policy of each hospital in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Representations are received from time to time from patients, their families, carers, voluntary organisations and others. Our policy is for the development by district health authorities, in collaboration with other authorities, of a locally based pattern of services for those suffering from mental illness, including schizophrenia. To this end authorities are developing services to prevent avoidable hospital admissions and long-term institutional care.

District Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of over or underspending by each Welsh district health authority.

Mr. Grist: A number of health authorities in Wales are currently reported to be experiencing overspending relative to the budgets which they determined in their operational plans at the start of the year. There are particular difficulties in Gwynedd, but while minor overspendings on programmes have also been reported in Clwyd, East Dyfed, Gwent, Mid Glamorgan, Pembrokeshire, West Glamorgan and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, it is not expected that these authorities will exceed their cash allocations this year.

In all cases, authorities have a statutory duty to keep their cash spending each year within allocated resources; they must therefore take action to ensure that cash limits are not breached. As in the case of Gwynedd, the Department is prepared to assist by providing temporary cash loans to prevent any breach of cash limits until spending is brought back under control.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each Welsh local education authority the pupil to teacher ratio for 1978-79, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The overall pupil-teacher ratios in maintained nursey, primary and secondary schools are given in the following table. Information in respect of 1987-88 is not yet available.

At January each year

Welsh counties	*1978-79*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Clwyd	19·1	18·4	17·8	18·7	18·5	18·8
Dyfed	17·0	16·6	16·4	16·7	16·8	16·7
Gwent	18·6	18·0	17·7	17·7	17·6	18·0
Gwynedd	18·3	17·0	16·1	16·2	16·0	15·8
Mid Glamorgan	18·7	18·3	17·5	18·2	17·5	18·1
Powys	16·4	16·0	15·5	15·8	15·3	15·1
South Glamorgan	18·9	18·6	18·4	18·5	18·3	18·1
West Glamorgan	17·2	16·9	16·9	17·0	16·7	16·5

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Walker: My Department has registered 42 uses of personal data under the terms of the Data Protection Act. Details are contained in the register of data users, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

No charge will be made for the provision of information which is presently made available free of charge. In other cases, my Department will recover the costs, which will vary from one data holding to another, of complying with requests for access to data holdings, within the limit of the maximum fee which may be charged.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Alyn and Deeside constituency by the Welsh Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentages in payments between years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Welsh Development Agency spending in Alyn and Deeside constituency

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Cash prices[1]	2·5	3·6	9·0	3·6	2·4	1·3	6·1	1·6
Percentage change on previous year (per cent.)	—	44	150	−150	−33	−46	369	−74
1986-87 prices[2]	4·2	5·1	11·5	4·3	2·7	1·4	6·3	1·6
Percentage change on previous year (per cent.)	—	21	125	−63	−37	−48	350	--75

[1] The figures comprise WDA spending on land reclamation, investment, and factory building (including site development).

[2] Adjusted using GDP deflator.

Industrial Support and Development

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure upon industrial support and development in Clwyd for each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance and regional development grants in Clwyd for the financial years 1980-81 to 1986-87 is as follows:

	£ million
1980-81	10·0
1981-82	17·3
1982-83	21·3
1983-84	15·4
1984-85	26·6
1985-86	27·9
1986-87	34·2
Total	152·7

Pre-School Playgroup Association

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the annual funding of the Pre-School Playgroup Movement in Wales for each of the years from and including 1980 up to the most convenient date.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The annual grants paid to the Pre-School Playgroup Association in Wales in respect of its headquarters expenses for the years ending 31 March 1981-87 were as follows:

	£
to 31 March 1981	57,000
31 March 1982	70,000
31 March 1983	84,928
31 March 1984	95,699
31 March 1985	97,450
31 March 1986	101,800
31 March 1987	118,500

Maternity Statistics (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many maternity beds there are in Clwyd; what percentage of births of residents in *(a)* Alyn and Deeside and *(b)* Clwyd take place in (i) Clwyd hospitals and (ii) hospitals in Cheshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The figures for 1986 are as follows:

(a) average number of maternity beds available each day—134·22

(b) percentage of births of residents in Alyn and Deeside taking place in Clwyd hospitals—38·7 per cent.

(c) percentage of births of residents in Clwyd taking place in Clwyd hospitals—82·3 per cent.

The figures at *(b)* and *(c)* above include both live and still births. Figures for births in Cheshire hospitals either in respect of Alyn and Deeside residents or of those in Clwyd are not available centrally.

Waiting Lists (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to reduce waiting lists in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Clwyd health authority was given additional funds of £56,000 in 1986-87 and has been offered some £80,000 in 1987-88 to help tackle the worst problems on hospital waiting lists. In addition, the authority is being encouraged to carry out management action aimed at shortening the time which patients have to wait.

Schoolchildren (Deafness)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how he proposes to help those who are deaf or hard of hearing in the schools of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Education Act 1981 imposes duties on local education authorities to make appropriate provision for children with special education needs, including those who are deaf or who have impaired hearing.

Rating Reform

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to introduce legislation imposing the community charge on Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have already announced my intention that a complete changeover in Wales from domestic rates to the community charge should take place in 1990.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Stanley: Equality of opportunity for Northern Ireland civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments is the responsibility of an equal opportunities unit within the Department of Finance and Personnel. For the much smaller group of Home civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office, responsibility lies with the establishment division in London.

Taking each of the elements *(a)* to *(f)* in the hon. Member's question in turn:

(a) The equal opportunities unit of the Northern Ireland Civil Service has a staff of seven full-time officers and one part-time officer headed by a grade 7 officer (principal). The Home Civil Service has one equal opportunities officer who is a senior executive officer and spends a small but varying amount of his/her time on equal opportunities duties.

(b) The other duties carried out by NICS staff of the equal opportunities unit are negligible. The duties of the HCS equal opportunities officer include a range of personnel management policy issues.

(c) As far as the NICS is concerned, this information is not readily available in the form requested. In addition to the eight staff of the equal opportunities unit many other officers throughout the NICS have a responsibility for equal opportunities as part of other duties and the unit is also supported in its analytical work by other specialist staff within the Department of Finance and Personnel. Since the HCS equal opportunities officer undertakes that role in conjunction with a number of other duties, it is similarly difficult to quantify the budgetary implications.

(d) Equal opportunities are frequently the subject of consideration at inter-departmental meetings of Personnel Officers of the NICS. The HCS equal opportunities officer normally meets his/her counterparts at least once a year.

(e) The training branch within the Department of Finance and Personnel, in association with the equal opportunities unit, is reviewing its policy on single sex training for women. This has involved the use of a questionnaire together with a number of pilot courses. The departmental training officer and equal opportunities officer in the HCS are ready to promote the use of section 47 where appropriate.

(f) Formal guidance in respect of part-time working and job sharing arrangements recently agreed with trade unions has been circulated widely throughout the NICS. Each application for parental leave is considered on its merits under the special leave provisions which are widely known throughout the NICS. The Civil Service policy statements on equal opportunities have been circulated to HCS staff. Officers are free to apply for job sharing, part-time working and parental leave and any such applications are considered sympathetically. The HCS equal opportunities officer is also in the process of producing a guide on equal opportunities' policies and practices. This will be issued to all staff.

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take to follow up the publication of the consultative paper, "Equality of Opportunity in Employment in Northern Ireland."

Mr. Tom King *[pursuant to his reply,* 15 July 1987, *c. 490-1]*: The chairman of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights submitted the commission's "Report on Fair Employment" to me on 30 September. It forms part of a major review by the commission of the laws and institutions dealing with religious and political discrimination and equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. The report is being published today as a Command Paper (Cm. 237). A study on "Equality and Inequality in Northern Ireland", undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute as part of the commission's review, is also being published today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

I am grateful to the commission for the work which has gone into its detailed report, which will be of great value to the Government. We shall be taking the report's recommendations into account in framing our detailed proposals for new legislation on fair employment. We are firmly committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment for everyone in Northern Ireland whatever their religious background.

TRANSPORT

M4 Motorway

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of constructing the M4 between London and Maidenhead Thicket; what was the cost of widening this section of the M4 from two lanes to three; and what estimate was made at the time of construction of the cost of constructing with three lanes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information in the precise form sought is not readily available. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Highway Inquiries

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider appointing two independent assessors to sit with an inspector in relation to public inquiries into highway routes, the assessors having relevant experience in the field of conservation and agriculture.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Inspectors nominated by the Lord Chancellor and appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct public inquiries into road scheme proposals are experienced in the general nature of problems faced, including conservation and agriculture. In certain cases, where particular specialist knowledge is required, assessors have been appointed to assist inspectors, and this practice will continue.

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will propose changes in the existing regulations so that in his decision in relation to inquiries affecting highway routes and related matters, the statement giving the inspector's decision should be accompanied by the reasons of the inspector.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations governing highways inquiries procedures are the Highways (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1976 (S.I. 1976 No. 721).

Under these rules the Secretary of State is required to notify objectors and others of his decision and the reasons for it. The rules also require the inspector to report to the Secretary of State his conclusions and recommendations, if any, or his reasons for not making any recommendations. In practice, the inspector's conclusions amount to the reasons for his recommendations.

There are no plans to amend these rules.

If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department proposes to charge two fees for subject access by members of the public: £3·50 for inquiries of the driving licence record and £10 for other inquiries. There is no current intention to charge the Department's own staff seeking access to personal data held about them as employees.

There are eight register entries. Each covers a number of separate systems. In the unlikely event of a data subject wishing to have access to all entries, the total cost would be £73·50.

Buses

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the number of bus routes *(a)* registered and *(b)* deregistered between 26 October 1986 and 30 September 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of services registered between 1 November 1986 and 30 September 1987 was 4,257 and the number deregistered 3,200.

Taxis

Mr. Morley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many taxi registration plates have been issued since the Transport Act 1986 and deregulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: On the latest figures available it is estimated that between mid-1985 and mid-1986, 1,900 new taxi licences were issued by licensing authorities in England and Wales (excluding London).

Airports

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the procedures adopted by the Civil Aviation Authority relating to the licensing of new passenger airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The licensing of airports is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the necessary technical competence in such matters.

London City Airport

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the arrangements made by the Civil Aviation Authority concerning emergency procedures at London City airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The approval of emergency procedures is wholly a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority in conjunction with aerodrome managers. The authority satisfied itself on these procedures before issuing the aerodrome licence.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the emergency orders relating to emergency procedures at London City airport, stating which of the non-airport local emergency services have assented to its provisions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Copies of emergency procedure instructions have been sent by the airport management to the local emergency services concerned, who were consulted in drawing them up. Provision of a copy for the Library is a matter for the discretion of the airport managers. I have drawn their attention to the hon. Member's request.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates announcing an increase in the salaries due to the board members of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 October, at columns 849-50. The salaries of the board members of London Regional Transport are still under review.

Hydraulic Fluid

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans to introduce quality checks on hydraulic fluid being sold to motorists and car manufacturers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Hydraulic fluid is produced in accordance with specific international standards and is sold to car manufacturers and motorists in sealed containers. We have no reason to suspect the quality of brake fluid sold in Britain. There are no plans to introduce quality checks.

Knaresborough and Harrogate (Bypass)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out his reasons for ordering a further public inquiry into the proposals for the southern bypass of Knaresborough and Harrogate; and if he will give details of such evidence as he received.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The orders for the bypass require confirmation by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State cannot decide whether or not to confirm orders unless he is fully informed as a result of a public inquiry. In this case he received 79 representations after the inquiry closed, including one from the Nature Conservancy Council. These representations raised points material to the decision which the Secretary of State was to make.

He has decided that the inquiry should be reopened. If he were to make a decision without being fully informed on the points in question, he would not be properly discharging his statutory functions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees (Staff)

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will detail the number of staff, and their grades, who are employed to staff the House's Select Committees; and if he will detail the work they have been involved in, Committee by Committee, since the middle of May, and the salary costs of their staffs since that date.

Mr. Beith: The following staff in the Department of the Clerk of the House are currently wholly or mainly employed in connection with the work of select committees:

	Number
Clerk of Committees (Grade 2)	1
Principal Clerks (Grade 3)	3
Deputy Principal Clerks (Grade 5)	11
Senior Clerks (Grade 7)	12
Assistant Clerks (AT/HEO (D))	7
Senior Executive Officers	4
Higher Executive Officers	10
Specialist Assistants	3
Chief Office Clerks	1
Senior Office Clerks	6
Senior General Assistant/General Assistants	6
Personal Secretaries (Grade 4)	20

The particular duties carried out by the staff of the House are the responsibility of the heads of the House Departments concerned. There are currently 13 Select Committees in existence; however, staff will not be fully deployed until the departmentally-related Committees have been set up.

Total salaries, at the mean of the salary scale for the grades of those listed above, from 1 June to 31 October (excluding night allowances) would amount to £544,727. Inner London weighting has been included, but allowances and proficiency payments have not. The salary cost does not include provision for superannuation or employer national insurance, which together add 30 per cent. to the above figure. It is not practicable to break down this figure Committee by Committee.

PRIME MINISTER

Northern Region

Q35. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit the northern region.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Warrington

Q76. **Mr. Butler** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Warrington.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Fraud

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she will estimate the current level of fraud at the expense of the European Economic Community (i) in Britain and (ii) in all the countries in the EEC; and what proposals she has to reduce the level of fraud.

The Prime Minister: Reliable estimates of fraud in the Community are not available.

The United Kingdom has taken the lead in pressing for more effective Community action against all financial irregularities. Under our presidency we secured agreement on a revised food aid regulation to tighten control in this sector. When the results of a Commission review into all aspects of Community financial control is completed we shall press for such further measures as may be necessary.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Favell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the trend on employment in the north-west.

The Prime Minister: The latest estimate for the civilian employed labour force (that is employees in employment plus the self-employed) in the north-west is 2,545,000 in June this year. This compares with 2,530,000 in June 1986.

To help in the process of job creation, the north-west attracts very high levels of Government assistance. Many parts have assisted area status and benefit under the urban programme. Two city action teams, two urban development corporations and three inner city task forces operate there and there are three enterprise zones.

The Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission operate over 30 employment, enterprise and training measures described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet, all of which are available in the north-west. For example, around 63,000 in the north-west are training under YTS and around 35,000 are currently benefiting from the community programme.

Parliamentary Answers (Cost)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what is the sum above which an answer to a parliamentary question is considered to represent disproportionate cost.

The Prime Minister: It is for Ministers to decide whether to decline to answer a question on grounds of disproportionate cost. Any question likely to cost more than £200 is referred to the responsible Minister before significant resources are committed.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister how many questions she has refused to answer since 1979 on the grounds of disproportionate cost.

The Prime Minister: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

USA (Official Duties)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *847*, if she will give details of the official duties she undertook in the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: My visit to the United States was a private one, during which I continued in the normal way to fulfil my duties as Prime Minister.

Paintings (10 Downing Street)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, columns *845-46*, if she will give such details of the paintings, engravings and photographs *(a)* removed and *(b)* hung in 10 Downing street as are available.

The Prime Minister: Excluding personal possessions, the paintings, reproductions (engravings or otherwise) and photographs currently at 10 Downing street are as follows:

Prints — Reproductions of Prime Ministers — Prints and photos on grand staircase
Reproduction—Milsuoki Tosa—Quails and flowers
Reproduction—Pissarro—View from Louveciennes
Reproduction—Helder—Eynsford
Reproduction—Klee Paul—Fish magic
Reproduction—Turner (Michael)—Out with the rolls
Photograph—Anon—Largs, Baron Kelvin of
Reproduction—Monet Claude—Venice
Reproduction—Hobbema—Avenue of trees
Reproduction — Anon — Prospect of the city of London (facsimile of engraving)
Reproduction — Van Gogh — Basket of fruit with blue gloves
Reproduction—Monet—Le Seine Bougival
Reproduction—Utrillo—Rue de village
Reproduction—Pissarro—Seine at Marly
Reproduction — Jean Baptiste Corot — St. Nicholas-lez-Arras
Reproduction—Turner—Calais Sands
Reproduction—Canaletto—Eton College
Reproduction—Canaletto—City of London from Somerset House
Photograph — Photo of copy of 17 Century painting — Downing, Sir George (Copyist: R. Pratt)
Reproduction—Turner J. M. W.—Grand canal Venice
Reproduction—Canaletto—Regatta
Painting—Beer Richard—Oxford: Oriel college 30/100
Painting—Beer Richard—Oxford: Magdalen college A/P
Print — Danckerts Hendrik — Whitehall from St. James's park circa. 1675
Painting — Lambert George — St. James's park from the terrace of 10 Downing street
Painting — Salisbury Frank O — Churchill, Sir Winston (1874—1965) Prime Minister
Painting — Loo Jean Baptiste Van — Orford, Sir Robert Walpole, Earl (1676-1745) Prime Minister.
Painting — Stuart Gilbert — Siddons, Sarah (1755-1831) Actress circa 1785.
Painting — Gainsborough Thomas — Garrick, David (1717-79) Actor.
Painting — Stuart Gilbert — West, Benjamin (1738-1820) History Painter.
Painting — Phillips Thomas — Chantrey, Sir Francis (1781-1841) Sculptor.
Painting — Organ Bryan — Macmillan, Harold (B. 1894) Prime Minister.
Painting—Chapman John—Horseguards Parade circa 1760.
Painting — Loo Jean Baptiste Van — Orford, Sir Robert Walpole, Earl (1676-1745) Prime Minister.
Painting — Hoare William — Chatham, William Pitt, 1st Earl (1708-78) Prime Minister.
Print—Boys Thomas Shotter—Westminster from Waterloo Bridge.
Print—Boys Thomas Shotter—The Club Houses and Pall Mall.
Painting—Velde William Van De II—Dutch Men-of-War and small vessels in a calm.
Painting — Greenwood Ernest — Downland Path, Hollingbourne 1977.
Painting—Troubetskoy Pierre—Gladstone, William Ewart (1809-98) Prime Minister.
Print — Gilbert John — The Aberdeen Cabinet considering Crimea Expedition.
Print—Gales Henry—The Derby Cabinet of 1867
Painting — Watts George Frederick — Terry, Dame Alice Ellen (1847-1928) Actress.
Painting — West Benjamin — Leeds, Francis Osborne, 5th Duke of (1751-99).
Painting — Lawrence Thomas — Moore, Sir Graham (1764-1843) Admiral.
Painting — Landseer Edwin — Melbourne, William Lamb 2nd Viscount (1779-1848) Prime Minister 1836.
Painting — Watts George Frederick — Gladstone, William Ewart (1809-98) Prime Minister 1859..
Print—Tombleson William—Windsor Castle.
Print—Beer Richard—St. Lawrence Jewry 1970 35/75.
Print — Beer Richard — St. Augustine, Watling Street 1970 35/75.
Print—Beer Richard—St. Martin, Ludgate 1970 35/75.
Print—Beer Richard—St. Bride's Fleet Street 1970 35/75.
Print—Beer Richard—St. Benet, Paul's Wharf 1970 35/75.
Print—Beer Richard—St. Magnus the Martyr 1970 35-75.
Print — Collins James — North Prospect of Westminster Abbey.
Painting—Turner William (of Oxford)—A Watermill.
Print—Robbie Enid—Westminster circa 1972 4/5 1974.
Print—Hawkins George Junior—Tower of the Grey Friars.
Painting—Gainsborough Thomas—Vestris, Marie Auguste.
Painting—Luny Thomas—River Scene.
Painting — Maris Jacobus H. — A Beach (Seashore and Boats).
Painting—Gainsborough Thomas—Marlborough, A Duke of.
Print — Anon 19 century (Waterworks London Bridge) — Waterworks at London Bridge.
Print—Orr Chris—The Ruskin Portfolio: Ruskin's Room 1972.
Print—Moss William—Somerset House Internal View circa 1777.
Print—King Cecil—Berlin Suite IV 22/75 1970.
Print—King Cecil—Berlin Suite VI 22/75 1970.
Print—Faber Johan Senior—Gasparus, Johannes: Probably J. B. Gasparus (1620?-1691).
Painting—Burne-Jones, Edward Coley—Kipling, Rudyard (1865-1936) Writer 1899.
Print — Birley Oswald — Baldwin, Stanley, 1st Earl (1867-1947) Prime Minister.
Print—Anon French 18 century (Falkland)—Map of Bay and Port to East of Falkland Islands.
Print — Seeman Enoch — Newton, Sir Issac (1642-1727) Scientist.
Print—Beer Richard—Oxford: St. John's College A/P.
Print—Beer Richard—Oxford: Worcester College 76/100.
Print—Beer Richard—Oxford: Queen's College 48/100.
Painting — Kneller Godfrey — Lexington, Lady Margaret (1673-1703).
Painting—Cox Marian Roalfe—Young man in open neck shirt.
Painting—Cox Marian Roalfe—Man in waistcoat.
Print — Rowlandson T. and Pugin A. C. — St. Paul's Cathedral
Print — Rowlandson T. and Pugin A. C. — Westminster Abbey
Print—Marlow William—View near Blackfriars bridge
Print—Marlow William—View near Westminster bridge
Print—Buck S. N.—Worcester: S. W. Prospect
Print — Tiliemans Peter — Town of Stanford from Parsons cross
Print—Buck S. N.—Canterbury: S. W. Prospect
Painting — Scanlan Robert Richard — Peel, Sir Robert (1788-1850) Prime Minister

Painting—Romney George—Matthews, Dr. John 1786
Painting — Romney George — Fane, the hon. Thomas (1760-1807) MP
Painting — Romney George — Matthews, Mrs. John (Elizabeth Ellis) 1786
Painting — Romney George — Westmoreland, John Fane, Lord Burghersh, 10th Earl of
Painting — Abbott Lemuel Francis — Nelson, Horatio Nelson, First Viscount (1758-1805)
Painting — Ward James — Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, First Duke (1769-1852) 1829
Painting — Marlow William — A view of St. Pauls and Blackfriars bridge
Painting — Orchardson William Q — Four generations: Queen Victoria, Edward VII, George V, Duke of Windsor
Painting — Sickert Walter Richard — Belvedere, Bath Circa 1917
Painting — Gilman Harold John Wilde — Edwardian interior
Painting — Gilman Harold John Wilde — Interior with Nursemaid
Painting—Niemann Edmund John—Nottingham landscape
Painting—Stark James—Landscape: A Country road
Painting — Buchanan George F. — Derwentwater Circa 1850
Painting — Buchanan George F. — Derwentwater Circa 1850
Painting—Wilkinson Norman—The "Winston Churchill" goes to sea, 1970
Painting—Fergusson David—Summer Landscape 1963
Painting—Turner William (of Oxford)—Skating
Print — Houbraken Jacobus — Sunderland, Charles Spencer, Third Earl of (1674-1722)
Print — Reynolds Joshua — Pulteney, William, Earl of Bath (1684-1764)
Print — Kneller Godfrey — Montagu, Charles Earl of Halifax (1661-1715)
Print — Anon 18th Century (Duke of Shrewsbury) — Shrewsbury, Charles Talbot, First Duke of (1660-1718)
Print—Kneller Godfrey—Carlisle, Charles Howard, Third Earl of (1669-1738)
Print — Kneller Godfrey — Oxford, Robert Harley, First Earl of (1661-1724) Politician
Painting — Orpen William — Lloyd George, David, First Earl (1863-1945) 1927
Print—Constable John—Dedham vale
Print—Constable John—Salisbury cathedral
Print—Constable John—The lock
Print—Constable John—The cornfield
Print—Constable John—The young waltonians
Painting—Laszlo Philip a de—Balfour, Arthur J. Balfour, First Earl of (1848-1930) Prime Minister
Print—Constable John—A heath
Print—Constable John—Old sarum
Painting — Lawrence Thomas — Canning, George (1770-1827) Prime Minister
Painting — Cappelle Jan Van de — Coast scene with passengers disembarking
Painting—Constable J. Imitator of—A landscape
Painting—O'Connor James Arthur—Landscape
Painting—Nasmyth Patrick—Landscape with haystack
Painting—Norwich School—Landscape with cottage and figures
Painting—Constable John—A water mill
Painting — Nasmyth Patrick — Landscape with boy on horseback
Painting — O'Connor James Arthur — The devil's glen, county Wicklow 1828
Painting — Romney George — Pitt, William (1759-1806) Prime Minister
Painting — Aikman William — Kent, William (1685-1748) architect
Painting—Dobson William—Two cavaliers
Painting — Reynolds Joshua — Fawcett, Sir William (1728-1804) general and privy counsellor
Painting — Riley John — Boyle, Robert (1627-91) chemist and natural philosopher
Painting — Lawrence Thomas — Bloomfield, John A. D. Second Baron (1802-79) diplomat
Painting — Velde Willem Van De II — Dutch Man-of-War and other vessels. Strong breeze
Painting — Anon 18 century Joseph Priestley — Priestley, Joseph (1733-1804), Theologian and Scientist
Painting — Hogarth William — Schomberg, Sir Alexander (1720-1804) Navy Captain
Painting—Linnell John—Davy, Sir Humphry (1778-1829), Scientist
Painting — Northcote James — Graves, Sir Thomas (1747-1814), Admiral 1801
Painting — Shackleton John — George II (1683-1760) Reigned 1727-60
Painting—Scott Samuel—View of Horseguards circa 1760
Print—Highmore Anthony—The East Front of Kensington Palace
Print — Highmore Anthony — The South Front of Kensington Palace
Print — Nash Joseph — Opening of London Bridge, 1st August 1831
Print—Wickes Charles—St. Peter's, Oundle, Northants
Print — Turner William (of Oxford) — Abingdon from the Thames Navigation
Painting—Nasmyth Patrick—The Angler's Nook
Print—Westall William—Staines Bridge
Print—Turner William (of Oxford)—Donnington Castle
Print—Farington Joseph—Truro
Print—Farington Joseph—Poulton Bridge and Launceston
Print—Farington Joseph—North View of Polperro
Painting—Piper John—Covehithe Church 1983
Painting—Corot J. B. C.—Cows Standing in a Marsh
Painting — Lavery John — Spencer-Churchill, Clementine (1885-1977) and Sarah
Painting—Churchill Winston Spencer—Seascape
Painting — Sherlock Marjorie — Liverpool Street Station 1917
Painting — Fuger Friedrich Heinrich — Nelson, Horatio Nelson, Viscount (1758-1805) Vice-Admiral
Painting—Gainsborough Thomas—Hilly Landscape
Print—Beer Richard—Oxford: Wadham College 55/100
Print—Malton Thomas Jnr—Lothbury Court, Bank
Print—Jameson Susan E.—Castle Rigg II 1977 9/100
Print — Kip Jan — Dumbleton, Seat of Sir Richard Cocks Baronet
Print—Disbrey Stephen—Landmark 29/50 1976
Print—Disbrey Stephen—Loch 18/46 1976
Print—Piranesi Giov. Battista—Carcere, Plate IX No. 357
Print — Anon circa 1820 Highgate Archway — Highgate Archway from Turnpike Gate at Holloway
Print—Knyff Leonard—Badminton, Seat of Prince Henry, Duke of Beaufort
Print—Dyck Anthony Van—Cromwell, Oliver (1599-1658), Lord Protector
Painting—Applebee Leonard—The Path Dardenne
Print—Salt Henry—The Town of Abha in Abyssinia
Painting — Dobson William — Man in Buff Jerkin with Cuirass circa 1645
Print—Westall William—Oxford from Iffley
Print—Westall William—Oxford from the South West
Print—Buck S. and N.—Leicester: South Prospect
Print—Bawden Edward—Audley End House 1973 97/150
Print — Hofland Thomas C. — South East view of Bolton Priory No. 6
Print—Werff Adriaen van der—Mary I of England
Print—Werff Adriaen van der—Philip II of Spain
Print—Buck S & N—Norwich: South East Prospect
Print — Anon 17 C Engr(Chas II) — Statue of Charles II (1630-1685) reigned 1630-85
Print—Buck S & N—Ely: South East Prospect
Print—Nash Joseph—Drawing Room at Broughton Castle Oxford, 1845
Print—Nash Joseph—Hall, Penshurst, Kent
Painting—Milner Donald Ewart—Across the Stour
Print—Northcote James—Pius VI Blessing British Officers
Print—Buck S & N—Hereford: North East Prospect
Painting—Salisbury Frank D—Stanmore, Arthur Hamilton Gordon, 1 Baron (1829-1912)
Print — Robertson Archibald — View of the East Front of the Bridge at Veja
Print — Robertson George — Fort William Estate, Jamaica showing Roaring River
Print—Buck S.& N.—Salisbury: North East prospect

Print — Pockock Nicholas — Engagement of Frigate Java and Constitution
Print — Eastlake Charles Lock — Napoleon Buonaparte (1769-1821) Emperor
Print — Weisz Victor ("Vicky") — Perhaps we should have Second Thoughts
Print—Buck S & N—Warwick: South East Prospect
Print—Rushbury Henry George—Adelaide House
Print — Frith William Powell — Life at the Seaside, Ramsgate 1854
Print—Rushbury Henry George—St. Olave's, Tooley Street 1927
Painting — Salisbury Frank O. — Churchill, Sir Winston (1874-1965) Prime Minister 1943
Print—Boydell John—View of Lord Duncannon's House, Kent
Print—Schnebbelie Robert B.—North View of the Interior of Furnival Inn
Print—Boydell John—View of the Treasury and Canal in St. James's Park
Painting—Spear Ruskin—Low tide
Print—Maurer John—Perspective view of Whitehall and Whitehall Gate C.1753
Print—Alexander William—South West View of Thorney Abbey Church
Print—Burgess William—Camp of the 93rd Highlanders, Western Heights, Dover
Print — Burgess William — A Field Day of the Highland Brigade, Dover
Print — Burgess William — Camp of the 41st Regiment, Dover Heights
Print — Burgess William — Camps of the 44th and 49th Regiments, Dover
Print — Mornewick Henry Claude — 50th Queen's Own Regiment 1850
Print—Martens Henry—14th King's Light Dragoons
Print—Martens Henry—2nd Royal North Dragoons, 1846
Print—Campion George Bryant—Review at the Moat park of East and West Kent Yeomanry
Print—Farington Joseph—Penryn
Print—Farington Joseph—Matlock Church
Print—Havell Robert—Horseguards and Melbourne House
Print—Pugin Augustus Charles—New Palace, St. James's Park
Print—Marchant J.—West Front of the Horse Guards
Painting — Lowry Laurence Stephen — Lancashire Fair: Good Friday, Daisy Nook 1946
Print — Marchant J. — The New Extended Front at Buckingham Palace
Print — Barry Charles — The New Treasury Offices Whitehall
Print—Boys Thomas Shotter—Guildhall
Print—Kip Jan—The Tower of London
Print—Daniell William—Black Marble Quarry near Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey
Print—Bawden Edward—The Guildhall A/P
Painting—Gore Frederick—Puig Major from Forna Luxh, near Soller, Majorca
Print—Bicat Andre—Aubergines 14/100
Painting—Elwyn John—Savernake Encounter, 1965
Print—Kay Bernard—Cathedral School, Hereford (final state proof)
Print—Turner William (of Oxford)—Newbury from Speen Hill
Painting — Roussel Theodore Casimir — Rochester Harbour: a September Afternoon
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Honister Pass
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Old Man of Hoy
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Snow Mountains
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Theedmir Hill
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Loch Quoich
Photograph—Wakefield, Paul—Chichester Harbour

Hospitality (10 Downing Street)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *845*, if she will provide such details of the number of Conservative right hon. and hon. Members who have received hospitality in 10 Downing street as are readily available for any convenient recent period.

The Prime Minister: Since 1 January 1987, 71 Conservative right hon. and hon. Members have attended lunches (including working lunches), dinners (including working dinners) and receptions in 10 Downing street.

South Africa

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister if she will arrange for publication in the *Official Report* in a suitable format of all the information which she used to support her remarks at the recent Commonwealth Conference about the growth of trading links between each other Commonwealth country and the Republic of South Africa.

The Prime Minister: The figures on which I drew at Vancouver are available from published sources, including those relating to trade between Canada and South Africa.

Privatised Companies (Ex-Ministers)

Mr. Wilson asked the Prime Minister if she will make it a condition of acceptance of ministerial office that an individual who subsequently leaves office will not undertake work as a consultant to or a director of a company privatised from public ownership during the time the Minister was in office.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. John M. Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Stern asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Fearn asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 29 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I attended the memorial service for Lord Soames at Westminster Abbey. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Inner London Weighting

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which education authorities in London pay their teachers inner London weighting; and what criteria are used in determining such authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: London allowances at the inner area rate are paid to primary and secondary school teachers who serve in the area of the Inner London education authority, and of the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Ealing, Haringey, Merton, and Newham. The arrangements were agreed by the Burnham committee and remain unchanged. My right hon. Friend has invited the interim advisory committee to examine and report to him on whether there should be any change in London area allowances.

British Geological Survey

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his decision regarding the future of the British Geological Survey, following the report of Sir Clifford Butler, a copy of which he has received.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to make a statement on Sir Clifford Butler's report on geological surveying.

Mr. Jackson: The recommendations of the report of the study group into geological surveying, chaired by Sir Clifford Butler, that fall to be considered by Government are being discussed with the Departments concerned. My right hon. Friend will make a statement when these consultations have been completed.

School Meals

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give, for each education authority in England and Wales the number of children who take school meals who are entitled to free school meals by reason of (a) their family entitled to family income supplement or supplementary benefit and (b) the discretionary power of the local authority to extend free meal provision.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is included in the October 1986 school meals census, copies of which are available in the Library.

CERN

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding his policy towards continued British membership of CERN.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to make a statement on United Kingdom's participation in CERN.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 28 October.

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from Sheffield university about the implications for the university of continued United Kingdom membership of CERN; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have received a letter from the hon. Member for Sheffield Heeley (Mr. Michie) relaying the views of staff in the department of physics at the University of Sheffield.

Education Reform

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he estimates as being the additional cost likely to be incurred by local education authorities by the proposed legislation on the core curriculum, grant-maintained schools, increased financial responsibility to head teachers and open enrolment.

Mrs. Rumbold: All these proposals are designed to give local authorities and schools the opportunity to achieve better value for the resources provided for education. Implementation of the proposals will involve some redirection of funds; any particular requirements which emerge as LEAs and governing bodies progressively put them into practice will fall to be considered in the annual public expenditure discussions.

School Places

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many surplus secondary school places there are in England and Wales; and if he will give a breakdown by individual local education authorities.

Mr. Dunn: It is estimated that in January 1987 there were approximately 720,000 surplus secondary school places in England. The Department does not collect information about the position in Wales or in individual local education authorities.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated total cost of providing surplus secondary school places.

Mr. Dunn: The premises-related costs of retaining a surplus secondary place are estimated at £200 a year. There is also an additional but unquantified teaching cost.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many surplus primary school places there are in England and Wales; and if he will give a breakdown by individual local education authorities.

Mr. Dunn: It is estimated that in January 1987 there were approximately 710,000 surplus primary school places in England. The Department does not collect information about the position in Wales or in individual local education authorities.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated total cost of providing surplus primary school places.

Mr. Dunn: The premises-related costs of retaining a surplus primary place are estimated at £120 a year. There is also an additional but unquantified teaching cost.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he measures the pupil capacity of secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to my hon. Friend to explain how the stock of school places was assessed for the purpose of setting national targets for the removal of surplus places.

DEFECTIVE PRINTING

Teachers (Salaries and Conditions)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish a consultation document on the future machinery for the negotiation of teachers' salaries and conditions.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend laid before Parliament on 27 October a Green Paper entitled "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: A Consultative Document".

Education Authority Staff

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* teachers and *(b)* non-teaching staff, whole-time equivalent, are employed by each local educational authority in England at the latest convenient date.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows 1987 numbers in full-time equivalent terms and full-time and part-time non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff numbers are not available for individual non-metropolitan counties, nor in full-time equivalent terms for any individual local education authority.

Teaching and non-teaching staff—First half 1987

Local Education Authority	*Teaching Staff Full-time equivalent*			*Non-teaching Staff Number*		
	Schools	*Further education*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
Barking	1,422	856	2,278	650	1,568	2,218
Barnet	2,633	380	3,013	1,007	2,453	3,460
Bexley	1,828	270	2,098	493	1,939	2,432
Brent	2,629	644	3,274	1,252	2,417	3,669
Bromley	2,117	380	2,497	562	1,939	2,501
Croydon	2,644	551	3,195	780	2,780	3,560
Ealing	2,378	702	3,080	994	2,020	3,014
Enfield	2,367	961	3,328	617	1,963	2,580
Haringey	2,056	478	2,534	1,121	2,358	3,479
Harrow	1,616	377	1,994	491	1,544	2,035
Havering	2,202	291	2,493	621	1,815	2,436
Hillingdon	1,863	183	2,046	640	2,103	2,743
Hounslow	2,025	404	2,429	618	1,840	2,458
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,083	843	1,926	874	1,156	2,030
Merton	1,314	164	1,478	346	636	982
Newham	2,405	364	2,769	1,147	1,989	3,136
Redbridge	1,783	214	1,998	453	1,616	2,069
Richmond-upon-Thames	997	389	1,367	319	976	1,295
Sutton	1,245	217	1,461	444	1,316	1,770
Waltham Forest	2,390	336	2,727	862	2,466	3,328
Inner London	22,180	9,654	31,834	19,676	29,481	49,157
City of London	—	—	—	120	37	157
Birmingham	10,319	2,060	12,379	4,155	9,764	13,919
Coventry	3,107	1,197	4,305	2,031	4,327	6,358
Dudley	2,764	585	3,349	867	2,665	3,532
Sandwell	3,113	655	3,768	1,252	3,183	4,435
Solihull	1,960	314	2,274	431	1,875	2,306
Walsall	3,054	633	3,687	1,121	3,998	5,119
Wolverhampton	2,814	1,130	3,944	1,628	2,626	4,254
Knowsley	1,864	196	2,060	789	2,140	2,929
Liverpool	4,933	1,708	6,641	2,814	6,185	8,999
St. Helens	1,936	345	2,281	732	2,211	2,943
Sefton	2,608	412	3,019	1,067	2,471	3,538
Wirral	3,017	544	3,561	829	3,679	4,508
Bolton	2,575	650	3,225	1,222	2,872	4,094
Bury	1,634	251	1,885	524	1,779	2,303
Manchester	4,981	2,317	7,298	4,193	6,891	11,084
Oldham	2,253	330	2,582	876	2,041	2,917
Rochdale	2,267	237	2,504	966	2,200	3,166
Salford	2,316	577	2,893	1,095	2,575	3,670
Stockport	2,554	492	3,046	929	2,316	3,245
Tameside	2,067	260	2,327	862	2,024	2,886
Trafford	1,669	355	2,024	538	1,797	2,335
Wigan	3,315	680	3,995	1,103	3,076	4,179
Barnsley	2,106	298	2,404	811	2,412	3,223
Doncaster	2,852	413	3,265	1,139	3,592	4,731
Rotherham	2,597	444	3,040	772	2,621	3,393
Sheffield	5,097	1,884	6,981	2,814	6,754	9,568
Bradford	5,191	906	6,097	2,103	6,075	8,178
Calderdale	1,961	280	2,240	650	1,861	2,511
Kirklees	3,797	1,298	5,095	1.771	5,080	6,851
Leeds	6,982	1,908	8,890	3,103	7,119	10,222
Wakefield	3,041	629	3,669	1,263	3,529	4,792
Gateshead	1,979	224	2,204	868	1,651	2,519
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,789	1,232	4,021	2,282	3,281	5,563
North Tyneside	2,171	216	2,387	926	1,787	2,713
South Tyneside	1,571	412	1,982	770	1,698	2,468
Sunderland	2,995	753	3,748	1,663	3,169	4,832
Isles of Scilly	25	0	25	—	—	—
Avon	7,670	2,209	9,880	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	4,951	1,064	6,015	—	—	—

Local Education Authority	*Teaching Staff Full-time equivalent*			*Non-teaching Staff Number*		
	Schools	*Further education*	*Total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
Berkshire	6,312	1,555	7,867	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	5,131	986	6,117	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	5,429	1,177	6,607	—	—	—
Cheshire	8,618	1,492	10,110	—	—	—
Cleveland	5,867	1,465	7,338	—	—	—
Cornwall	3,717	619	4,336	—	—	—
Cumbria	4,553	862	5,415	—	—	—
Derbyshire	8,542	1,348	9,890	—	—	—
Devon	7,458	2,134	9,593	—	—	—
Dorset	4,569	1,147	5,716	—	—	—
Durham	5,261	939	6,200	—	—	—
East Sussex	4,730	1,344	6,074	—	—	—
Essex	12,285	2,198	14,483	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	4,377	699	5,076	—	—	—
Hampshire	12,141	3,393	15,533	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	5,494	1,227	6,721	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	8,999	2,011	11,010	—	—	—
Humberside	8,209	1,649	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	993	190	1,183	—	—	—
Kent	12,083	2046	14,128	—	—	—
Lancashire	12,346	3,199	15,545	—	—	—
Leicestershire	8,046	2,195	10,241	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	4,668	833	5,501	—	—	—
Norfolk	5,848	907	6,755	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	3,702	1,054	6,756	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	5,541	978	6,519	—	—	—
Northumberland	2,829	208	3,037	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	9,125	2,443	11,568	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	4,431	1,272	5,704	—	—	—
Shropshire	3,664	558	4,221	—	—	—
Somerset	3,449	887	4,336	—	—	—
Staffordshire	9,131	2,106	11,237	—	—	—
Suffolk	5,066	862	5,928	—	—	—
Surrey	7,128	1,461	8,589	—	—	—
Warwickshire	4,288	1,090	5,378	—	—	—
West Sussex	5,164	819	5,983	—	—	—
Wiltshire	4,276	976	5,252	—	—	—
Non-Metropolitan Counties	248,122	53,602	301,724	89,462	280,272	369,734
Total England	421,530	99,085	520,616	174,508	470,018	644,526

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Attorney-General what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to the Lord Chancellor's departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion and amount of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, and *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and departmental equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act; and what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

The Attorney-General: *(a)* The Lord Chancellor's departmental equal opportunities officer spends about 50 per cent. of his time on these duties. Two and a half other members of staff are also fully engaged on them;

(b) He also deals with employment and industrial relations matters;

(c) No specific budget is allocated for equal opportunities work; The cost is subsumed in other departmental budgets and could be quantified only at disproportionate cost;

(d) The equal opportunities officer meets other equal opportunities officers, formally and informally, several times a year;

(e) Central guidance on equal opportunities matters has been issued to departmental training officers and departmental equal opportunities officers. The Department has run courses for women middle managers and nominates women for similar courses. A domestic absence scheme has recently been established; similar agreements in relation to job sharing and part-time working are currently being discussed with the departmental trade union side.

Marconi

Mr. Soames asked the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement as to the nature of inquiries into Marconi by the Ministry of Defence police.

The Attorney-General: The inquiries by the Ministry of Defence police relate to allegations of fraud in connection with Ministry of Defence contracts with Marconi.

DEFECTIVE PRINTING

Personation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General when was the last occasion the Director of Public Prosecutions ordered the prosecution of an individual for falsely claiming to be a police officer.

The Attorney-General: No separate records are kept by the Crown Prosecution Service of prosecutions brought under section 52 of the Police Act 1964. It would not therefore be possible to give an accurate answer to the hon. Member's question for the period since the inception of the Crown Prosecution Service in October 1986. Prior to that date the Prosecution of Offences Regulations 1978 did not require chief officers of police to report cases of personating a police officer to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Small Claims

Mr. Pawsey asked the Attorney-General whether he is satisfied with the operation of the small claims procedure in the county court in England and Wales; and what plans the Government have for amendment of the procedure.

The Attorney-General: A factual study of the small claims procedure, carried out as part of the Lord Chancellor's civil justice review, indicates that the procedure is generally working well and that there is a high level of satisfaction among those who have used it. Any recommendations for reform will be contained in a report of the review as a whole which is due to be put before the Lord Chancellor in early 1988.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Attorney-General how many cases, for the most recent five years for which figures are available, were dealt with under the small claims procedure in the county courts of England and Wales.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of arbitration cases heard under the small claims procedure in county courts in the years 1982 to 1986 are shown in the table.

Number of arbitration cases heard under the small claims procedure in county courts in England and Wales, 1982-86

Year	Number
1982	31,609
1983	39,266
1984	43,576
1985	44,652
1986	44,670

Mr. Pawsey asked the Attorney-General if he will estimate the additional cost to public funds in operating the small claims procedure in the county court in England and Wales if disputes currently referred to outside arbitration in accordance with compulsory arbitration clauses in contracts with consumers were instead, at the option of the consumer, made subject to disposal through the county court.

The Attorney-General: No accurate information is available as to the number of disputes currently referred to outside arbitration of the number which falls within the limits of the small claims procedure. It is therefore not possible to estimate the possible additional cost to public funds of handling these cases in the county courts.

ENERGY

Coal

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the price of coal on the world market; and how this compares with the price charged by British Coal to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Ranges of spot prices for steam coal at Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp are published regularly in "Coal Week International". The prices paid by the CEGB for its coal are a commercial matter for the board.

Bradwell

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the Central Electricity Generating Board to respond to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate's report requiring the integrity of the pressure circuits and the direct examination of components in inaccessible and highly radioactive areas of the reactor at Bradwell power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the CEGB that the agreed programme of further work is under way and is on schedule to meet the time scales set by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Power Stations (Low-grade Heat)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated annual value of the low-grade heat which remains in water emerging from steam condensers in coal and nuclear power stations and which is unable to be put to economic use.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Low grade heat emerging in water is equivalent to some 50 per cent. of the calorific value of fuel burnt in power stations. Any economic uses for such heat are a matter for the CEGB.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department will not charge employees or ex-employees for subject access under the Act; other persons will be charged £8 per inquiry.

My Department has seven entries in the Data Protection Register covering 21 standard purposes.

In the unlikely event of other persons seeking access to personal data held under all register entries, the total cost would be £56.

Electricity

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether, in the event of privatisation of the national electricity system, he will consider the establishment of a public authority with sufficient powers and resources to monitor and ultimately decide about the standards, quality of supply and cost of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We shall ensure that the electricity supply industry is properly regulated after privatisation, for the benefit of consumers. The precise nature of the regulatory regime will depend on the decisions to be taken about the future structure of the industry.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps would be necessary for the protection of the environment and of the health and safety of the people in the event that nuclear electricity plants were transferred to private or foreign ownership.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Very high safety standards currently exist for the operation of nuclear power stations to protect the environment and the health and safety of both the work force and the general population. The Government have not yet decided on the structure of the privatised electricity supply industry but there will be no question of compromising safety standards or the regulatory framework which ensures that current standards are maintained.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what special provisions he will make for the protection of electricity supplies to pensioners in the event of privatisation of electricity supply;

(2) what consultation he is having so as to ensure that privatisation of the electricity system does not worsen the situation as regards electricity supplies to pensioners, single parent families, the unemployed and students living on their own.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our aim is to create a more efficient, economic and competitive industry for the benefit of all consumers. We are developing plans and consulting widely on the issues involved.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy that the national electricity service gives priority to the satisfaction of the energy requirements of the population.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I are developing proposals for privatisation. Consumer service is a top priority.

Gas

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, for every year since 1974, the number of gas supplies cut due to unpaid bills.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for British Gas plc. I have asked the chairman of British Gas to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he is having with medical experts and others on the health risks affecting people living in areas where nuclear electricity plants operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In fulfilment of a recommendation of the independent advisory group. which undertook an investigation of the possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria (the Black report, a copy of which is in the Library), the Government established the independent Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) in 1985. Its terms of reference are to assess and advise the Government on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment and assess the adequacy of the available data and the need for further research. My Department maintains a close interest in the work of COMARE.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Energy what safeguards he proposes to introduce as regards the further use of nuclear materials by the electricity generation industry, in the event of privatisation of electricity gereration.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All nuclear material in civil use is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom — Euratom — IAEA agreement regardless of whether it is in the private or public sector.

Coal Industry (Subsidence)

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he now expects the White Paper in reply to the Waddilove report on "The Repair and Compensation System for Coal Mining Subsidence" to be published.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's response to the report of the subsidence compensation review committee, chaired by Mr. Lewis Waddilove CBE JP, has been published and laid before Parliament today by the Secretaries of State for Energy, for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales.

The Government endorse the view of the Waddilove committee that a balance must be achieved between the justified claims of individuals who have experienced subsidence damage and the need to avoid an undue burden of cost to the British Coal Corporation and, indirectly, to the taxpayer.

The Government also endorse Waddilove's view that it is British Coal's primary duty to repair damage. British Coal has already made a significant number of improvements to the management of its compensation scheme in line with this and other of the committee's recommendations.

BCC has accepted the Government's view that there should be further improvements in line with the committee's recommendations. These include extending the scope of non-statutory compensation to householders and to tenants and owners of agricultural land; and allowing claimants, subject to the agreement of British Coal, to choose their own contractors to carry out repairs.

Information about and monitoring of the compensation system will continue to be improved. British Coal will make an annual report on the operation of the scheme to the Secretary of State for Energy which he will lay before Parliament.

The Government are considering introducing legislation to put on a statutory basis a number of the committee's recommendations, which would provide a single basis for coal mining subsidence compensation. A consultation document will issue early next year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many current occupants of Her Majesty's prisons in England and Wales have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis;

(2) how many people were admitted to Her Majesty's prisons in England and Wales who had previously been discharged from mental illness hospitals and units after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psyschosis in each of the last five years; and how many were recidivists;

(3) how many people were admitted to Her Majesty's prisons in Wales who had previously been discharged from mental illness hospitals and units after a main diagnosis of schizophrenia psychosis in each of the last five years; and how many were recidivists.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Places

Mr. Steinberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison places have been made available by the opening of ex-Army camps; and how many vacancies there are at existing prison establishments.

Mr. John Patten: One Army camp, at Rollestone on Salisbury Plain, has been brought into use as a temporary prison this year. Since it opened on 3 August it has accommodated 430 prisoners who would otherwise have been held in other prison establishments. It is staffed by prison service personnel.

The population in all prison establishments on Friday 23 October was 47,494 against a total certified normal accommodation of 42,957, a shortfall of 4,537 places. The total number of vacancies at individual establishment, including Full Sutton (which has just opened and has begun to receive prisoners), and at establishments which have been temporarily closed to allow staff to be deployed elsewhere, was 2,826.

Fiji

Mr. Boswell asked the Secretary of state for the Home Department what are the consequencies of Fiji's current withdrawal from the Commonwealth for these areas within the responsibilities of his Department, including specifically entitlement to register as British citizens and to vote in British elections.

Mr. Renton: Our understanding is that unless and until the law is changed citizens of Fiji who meet the requirements for registration as British citizens under section 7 of the British Nationality Act 1981 are eligible to be registered and retain the right to vote.

Automatic Weapons

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of people that have been killed by automatic weapons from 1979 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information on homicides is published in table 4.3 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1986", (Cm. 233) a copy of which is in the Library. The information colllected centrally does not distinguish automatic weapons from other types of firearms.

Opium Poppies

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied that existing statutory controls are adequate to deal with the cultivation in the United Kingdom of opium poppies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The production of opiates from poppies is already controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, having assessed the level of risk from commercial opium poppy cultivation in this country, has advised us that there is no case at present for extending those powers.

We have studied the advisory council's report very carefully, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We have concluded that poppy cultivation on the present scale seems unlikely to be an additional source of illicit drugs and that the 1971 Act provides an adequate level of control. However, it is important that we continue to watch the situation and I have arranged for the Home Office drugs inspectorate to monitor all such crops in future for any evidence of improper diversion.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the procedures which operate in respect of inquiries to the police national computer to ensure that information is divulged only to those entitled to it; that the reasons for inquiries are subject to check to ensure that they are justified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the procedure for ensuring that information from the police national computer is divulged only to those entitled to it, is as described in my reply to the hon. Member of 18 November 1986, at column 89.

A sample of the requests for information from the police national computer is checked each day to ensure that these related to a bona fide police purpose and that the appropriate records were correctly completed.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police authorities have not fully implemented the guidelines proposed in paragraph 38 of the report by the Police Complaints Authority on the police national computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The attention of all chief officers has been drawn to the guidelines proposed in paragraph 38 of the Police Complaints Authority report on the police national computer. Records are not held centrally on the way in which each chief officer acted on these guildelines.

In addition, the Association of Chief Police Officers is preparing a code of practice for police computer systems, including the police national computer, as encouraged under section 36(4) of the Data Protection Act, 1984. This will take full account of the recommendations of the Police Complaints Authority. The intention is to make this available to the public and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Prisons (Mothers and Babies)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mother and baby places there are in prisons; how many current prisoners gave birth in the past two years; how many in the second category are not allowed their babies with them despite requesting it.

Mr. John Patten: There are 37 mother and baby places in prisons. Information on how many current inmates gave birth in the past two years, and how many of these are not allowed to have their babies with them despite requesting it, is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of prison inmates reported as having been indentified as HIV antibody positive, at the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: On 23 October 1987 the prison population of England and Wales included 33 inmates reported as having been identified as HIV antibody positive. 128 such cases had been reported since central monitoring began in March 1985.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Renton: Following an internal assessment of the actual cost likely to be incurred in responding to subject access requests, data subjects will be charged a subject access fee of either £5, £7·50 or £10, depending on the particular Home Office registration to which they are seeking access, for each application.

On 26 October 1987 the Home Office had 88 confirmed entries in the register, with a further seven applications at various stages of consideration by the registrar. Twenty of these registrations contain data used solely for preparing statistics or carrying out research and, as such, will not contain any data which the Home Office is required to reveal to data subjects, and two relate solely to the provision of bureau services. Of the remaining 73 registrations, four will attract a subject access fee of £5, and four a fee of £7·50. The remainder will attract a fee of £10. This means that fees totalling £700 would be payable if a data subject were to apply for subject access to all Home Office registrations: this is an unlikely eventuality given the wide spread of Home Office registrations as listed in the departmental pamphlet, "Summary of Home Office Registrations", a copy of which I am placing in the Library.

Police (Efficiency)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what performance indicators are at present being used to measure the efficiency and cost effectiveness of police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The setting of objectives, and the monitoring and evaluation of performance, is part of the responsibility of police managers at all levels. Central guidance on this and other good management practices is set out in the Home Office circular 114/1983, a copy of which is in the Library. Objectives are set in relation to local circumstances, and their evaluation is a matter for each chief officer of police, in consultation where appropriate with the local police authority.

The Home Office has traditionally judged a force's efficiency and effectiveness by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary's professional assessment of its overall performance, taking into account such matters as the extent and nature of policing problems in the area and the level of resources available to it. Statistical and other information is collected centrally from forces.

Suspects (Questioning)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if all interviews and questioning that takes place in police stations will be subject to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act codes of practice.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The provisions of the code of practice for the detention, treatment, and questioning of persons by police officers relate primarily to the questioning of persons suspected of an offence and who are detained in police custody. All such interviews must be conducted in accordance with the code's provisions.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will be taking any action in regard to the Spastics Society's report on disabled people and the 1987 general election, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby, (Mr. Wareing) on 21 October, at column 779.

Anti-Apartheid Movement

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding telephone and mail interceptions affecting the staff and property of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Mr. Hurd: None.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning attacks against the staff and property of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Mr. Hurd: Representations have been received direct from the Anti-Apartheid Movement about the safety of members of the African National Congress following the arrest of persons later charged with conspiracy to kidnap members of the ANC. A reply was sent on 21 August. I have not received any representations related specifically to attacks against the staff and property of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take measures to protect the property of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will take measures to protect the safety of the staff working at the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: Advice on security measures is freely available from the police.

Airports (Security)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what standing arrangements exist between the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the Civil Aviation Authority concerning procedures for dealing with emergencies at airports within the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that it is a condition of licences issued to the operators of civil airports by the Civil Aviation Authority that the operators draw up and review contingency plans for emergencies, in consultation with the police and other emergency services. The Commissioner has informed me that he has been consulted about such contingency plans by the operators of the Heathrow, London City, Biggin Hill and Elstree airports and the Westland heliport, Battersea.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much is owed by his Department to the London Residuary Body in respect of unsettled Greater London council accounts.

Mr. Hurd: Pending receipt of audited grant claims, we estimate that £1·1 million still remains due to the London Residuary Body.

Anti-Apartheid Demonstration

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were deployed in connection with the anti-apartheid demonstration on 24 October; what was the estimated cost; what was the police estimate of the number of demonstrations; and how many arrests were made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 809 police officers were deployed in policing this demonstration at an additional cost of about £25,000. Some 25,000 people took part and there were seven arrests.

Impersonation of Police Officers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in each of the past five years have been prosecuted for impersonating a police officer.

Mr. John Patten: The information recorded centrally is given in the following table:

Defendants proceeded against under section 52 of the 1964 Police Act for impersonating a police officer: England and Wales

Year	*Total proceeded against*
1982	120
1983	108
1984	79
1985	74
1986	72

Illegal Passport (Waterfield)

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to withdraw the illegal passport in the name of Waterfield, being used by Preta, the German-born common law wife of a Scottish narcotics criminal, Forbes Mitchell, to enable her to travel between Ibiza and Sweden with the knowledge of the Swedish authorities, for the purpose of visiting Mitchell while he is in prison; if he will institute inquiries with a view to taking appropriate action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The passport department cannot trace any passport application in the name of Preta Waterfield. If my hon. Friend can provide any further information about the alleged passport irregularity and will write to me, the matter will be further investigated.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will allocate specific additional funds to police authorities to pay for the erection on lighting columns of approved neighbourhood watch scheme signs at the discretion and under the control of local police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to provide funds additional to those provided directly through the police grant, which is paid on 51 per cent. of all police expenditure. It is for police authorities to decide on the allocation of the resources at their disposal. I understand that some have funded the erection of neighbourhood watch street signs. However, many schemes have obtained private sponsorship to cover the cost of signs and this is to be encouraged. Effective local crime prevention initiatives such as neighbourhood watch need and deserve the support of all sectors of the community.

Metropolitan Police (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *841*, why he is not able to state how many Metropolitan police officers have been temporarily attached for duties in Northern Ireland in each of the past three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Metropolitan police officers are temporarily attached for duties in Northern Ireland in response to operational requirements as they arise. No central record is kept of these attachments, which are few and usually of short duration.

Immigration

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce a quota for the admission of husbands and wives of British citizens to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Whilst a quota would be among the options if changes were to be made, no proposals are now before me.

Fresh Start

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the progress being made in the implementation of new working practices in the prison service known as fresh start; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Seventy-three establishments and part of Her Majesty's remand centre, Pucklechurch are now on fresh start. Firm plans are made for the rest of Pucklechurch remand centre and another 23 establishments to move to full or transitional fresh start working during November, mostly on 1 November. Local discussions continue about moving the remaining 21 establishments on to fresh start. I know that prison service managers are doing their best to iron out problems so that these establishments can move to fresh start at the earliest possible date.

We are continuing to aim to have every establishment on full fresh start working by the end of February 1988. To this end we plan to recruit a total of about 1,800 new officers in 1987-88. This will use our two training schools to full capacity throughout the year. In addition, we are hiring two police training centres in which to train 160 staff. After allowing for wastage and the staff needed for new accommodation this should produce about 750 additional staff for fresh start. The balance will come from a mix of redeployment and the recruitment of civilians, prison auxiliaries and night patrols.

The next stage of the implementatiotn process is to establish as objectively as possibie what has been the outcome of every aspect of the change to fresh start, including staffing levels. Information will be collected on every establishment and visits will be paid to a representative group of 10 establishments. It will be open to the trade union side to make its views known to the evaluation team. This work will be done in November, evaluated quickly and the results reviewed by senior management in the first part of December.

I recognise that the change to fresh start is a formidable task for the prison service. There is accumulating evidence that we are set on the right course. I am satisfied with progress so far and look forward to full implementation relatively soon.

EMPLOYMENT

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Cope: The Department of Employment group, comprising the Department of Employment, the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Manpower Services Commission has a total of 94 entries on the data protection register. A fee of £10 will be charged for access to information held on most of its register entries, except that free access will be allowed to information held for the following purposes: the national unemployment benefit central computer system; job finding, training and related activities; the Department of Employment small firms service; the administration of the redundancy payments scheme; the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; industrial tribunals administration; and internal departmental personnel administration.

Employees (Reductions)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that those employees who heeded police warnings to stay at home on 16 October do not have deductions made by their employers from their pay.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no power to intervene in matters of this kind.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much is owed by his Department to the London residuary body in respect of unsettled Greater London council accounts.

Mr. Lee: No central record is kept of my Department's non-statutory financial liabilities under contract to individual local authorities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

International Space Year

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements Her Majesty's Government are making to participate in International Space Year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Arrangements for the United Kingdom's participation in International Space Year 1992 are being co-ordinated by the Royal Society through its British National Committee on Space Research (BNCSR)

The Government are represented on the BNCSR and play a full part in the work of the committee.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why the Director General of the Office of Fair Trading did not obtain from Arthur Young Management Consultants specific data concerning the effects of the proposed regulations pursuant to the Financial Services Act upon the incomes and viability of single-person firms of practitioners in the financial services industry before communicating his final recommendations to the Secretary of State prior to the coming into force of the new regulations; and whether he will ensure that this action is taken forthwith.

Mr. Maude: The Financial Services Act provides that, in deciding whether to give leave for the recognition of a self-regulation organisation, my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State must have regard to the report made by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 122(2) of the Act. No such report has yet been submitted in respect of any of the organisations whose applications for recognition are currently under consideration. I understand that, in order to assist him in preparing these reports, the director general commissioned a report from Arthur Young Management Consultants (AYMC) on the effect of certain rules on small financial intermediaries. I am informed that the sample surveyed by AYMC included a number of sole practitioners.

Space Research

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current total public expenditure on United Kingdom space research; and if he has any plans to increase it.

Mr. Butcher: The current total public expenditure on civil space research and development is £112 million a year. There are no plans to increase this figure.

European Space Agency

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will state how much is the current United Kingdom contribution to the European Space Agency comparing it in percentage terms with those of other member states.

Mr. Butcher: United Kingdom expenditure on European Space Agency activities in the financial year 1986-87 was £79 million. Member states' contributions in percentage terms to European Space Agency expenditure in 1986 were:

	Per cent.
Belgium	3·4
Denmark	1·1
France	30·6
Germany	25·8
Ireland	0·2
Italy	15·0
Netherlands	3·7
Spain	2·5
Sweden	2·5
Switzerland	2·0
United Kingdom	13·1
	100·0

Austria and Norway were not members in 1986

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the breakdown of annual expenditure proposed to Her Majesty's Government by the European Space Agency, listing it in the following four categories: Ariane 5, Hermes spacecraft, Columbus spacecraft, and other ventures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The latest comprehensive proposal from the European Space Agency, dated June 1987, gives total expenditure figures (in million European currency units (ecu) at today's prices) for the Columbus, Ariane 5 and Hermes development programmes as listed in the table.

We are still awaiting the ESA director generals's final proposals for the Ministerial Council on 9-10 November, but one change of which we have been informed is that the cost of Columbus development has increased to 3.9 billion ecu.

The proposed development programmes are optional, and, if they are agreed, it will be for each member state to decide on its level of participation.

European Space Agency: Director General's Proposals of June 1987
(All figures in million European currency units, constant prices)

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*Total*
Columbus Development	—	158	258	324	418	427	453	443	423	350	109	—	—	—	3,363
Ariane 5 Development	—	72	410	485	510	565	565	430	350	109	—	—	—	—	3,496
Hermes Development	—	76	170	318	322	380	464	535	565	560	525	475	39	—	4,429
Other expenditure	1,486	1,288	1,043	1,010	1,101	1,152	1,180	1,254	1,326	1,608	1,993	2,153	2,583	2,618	21,795
Total	1,486	1,594	1,881	2,137	2,351	2,524	2,662	2,662	2,664	2,627	2,627	2,628	2,622	2,618	33,083

Note: Today's exchange rate is £1 = 1·44 ecu.

Space Industry

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department is taking to encourage public awareness of the potential and importance of the British space industry; and to encourage private sector investment.

Mr. Butcher: Through the British National Space Centre (BNSC), the Government aim to encourage public awareness of the potential and importance of the British space industry to scientific research and to industrial applications. This it does through press notices; publications; newsletters and posters; the encouragement of articles and a programme of speeches. The BNSC also participates in major aerospace exhibitions and has published a directory of United Kingdom space capabilities.

The BNSC also works closely with the Department of Education and Science to encourage an awareness of the uses of space activity in school curricula and has published a guide to courses, research opportunities and sponsorship for students.

Following the Prime Minister's invitation to the Private sector to come forward with further resources, major aerospace companies agreed to continue work at company expense on certain key national space programmes until the European Space Agency Ministerial Council meeting in November. Meanwhile, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is having discussions with industry on possible long-term co-operation in the United Kingdom's space activities.

Space Policy

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recommendations for future United Kingdom space policy arose from the recent meeting of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology.

Mr. Butcher: The advice received from the Advisory Council on Science and Technology on the subject of space research and development was given in confidence.

HOTOL

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of HOTOL.

Mr. Butcher: For the present until end-1987 British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce have agreed to continue on their own responsibility the proof of concept studies on HOTOL commenced in 1986. We are currently reviewing the future progress of HOTOL with the companies.

Ariane 5 Launch Vehicle

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much British investment is required for United Kingdom companies to qualify for contracts for the Ariane 5 launch vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The preparatory work for the Ariane 5 programme has indicated a potential United Kingdom industrial involvement amounting to 2·8 per cent. At this rate of contribution the United Kingdom would have to contribute about £84 million to ESA between now and 1997. This programme will be one of the programmes to be considered at the ESA ministerial meeting on 9-10 July.

Shipbuilding Industry

Dr. Godman asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the projected number of jobs in the shipbuilding industry from 1987 to 1991.

Mr. Atkins: There are presently some 32,000 employed in shipbuilding in Great Britain, 8,000 in BS and other merchant yards and 24,000 in yards privatised by BS. There is no reliable basis on which to forecast the position in future years.

Advisory Committee on Science and Technology

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology has met since its formation; what subjects have been discussed at its meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: One full meeting of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology (ACOST) has taken place since its inception.

Among the items discussed were draft reports on optoelectronics and on the industrial impact of the decision to go ahead with the construction of a pressurised water reactor at Sizewell B; and the second stage of a study on barriers to growth for small companies.

The meeting also gave preliminary consideration to national priorities for science and technology, both in basic science and in strategic areas, such as space research, and Sir Francis Tombs reported progress in setting up the centre for exploitation of science and technology.

ACOST derives considerable benefit from the ability to conduct its business in confidence. It is not customary for the outcome of its discussions to be made public unless the chairman specifically requests the Prime Minister's permission to publish the council's advice. However, in the past, ACOST's predecessor, the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development (ACARD) has published many valuable reports on a range of important subjects and I anticipate that ACOST will produce similar reports within its enlarged terms of reference in due course.

EC Trade Marks Office

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on recent developments in the bid by the United Kingdom to house the European Community Trade Marks office in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: There has been little progress in Brussels recently towards reaching a decision on where to house the Community trade marks office. The European Commission drew up a short-list, including the United Kingdom bid, in February, but has not yet decided what its recommendation to the Council of Ministers should be. The Government are continuing to pursue their bid with vigour in Community circles.

Pensions

Mr. Butterfill asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from the National Consumer council on proposed revisions to the Lautro rule book permitting pension quotations to be made in both monetary and real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No such representations have been received.

Invisibles and Surpluses

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what extent he estimates official statistics to be understating *(a)* the United Kingdom's surplus on trade in invisibles and *(b)* the United Kingdom's share of world trade in services.

Mr. Maude: Although the official statistics on invisibles, especially for recent periods, are recognised to be subject to a significant range of possible error, there is no clear evidence to indicate that either the United Kingdom surplus on invisibles or the United Kingdom share of world trade in services is being significantly understated.

Whale Products

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will impose a ban on the import of all whale products as separate items or as part of fully or semi-manufactured goods; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what efforts are made by his Department to establish the extent of the use of whale products in manufactured or semi-manufactured goods imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: EC regulation 3626/82 (in force since 1 January 1984) bans the import of all whale products for commercial purposes. The Department of the Environment, through the agency of Customs and Excise, is responsible for ensuring compliance with it.

Arbitration

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the Government's policy on approval by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 124 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 of a code of practice promoted by a trade association under which arbitration is compulsory, so excluding a consumer's right to recourse to the courts for settlement of disputes.

Mr. Maude: The exercise of the powers under section 124 of the Fair Trading Act is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. I will ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which trade associations have codes of practice approved by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 124 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 which make provision for arbitration to settle disputes under the code which is compulsory, and exclude the right of the consumer to take the matter to court.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for the director general. I will ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the codes of practice approved by the Director General of Fair Trading under section 124 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 which make provision for arbitration to settle disputes, while at the same time preserving the right of the consumer to have recourse to the courts.

Mr. Maude: The codes of practice drawn up in consultation with the Director General of Fair Trading which make such provision are as follows:

Association of British Travel Agents: Tour Operators Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Booking Conditions.
Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances Principles for Domestic Electrical Appliance Servicing.
British Holiday and Home Parks Association and National Caravan Council.
  Code of Practice for Selling and Siting Holiday Caravans;
  Code of Practice for Letting Holiday Caravans
  Code of Practice for the Photographic Industry.
  Domestic Electrical Appliance Servicing by Electricity Boards in England and Wales.
  Domestic Electrical Appliance Servicing by Scottish Electricity Boards.
  Finance Houses Association Code of Practice.
  Glass and Glazing Federation: Code of Ethical Practice.
  Mail Order Traders Association: Code of Practice.
  National Association of Funeral Directors: Code of Practice.
  Voluntary Code of Practice for Furniture.
  Code of Practice for Postal Services.
  Code of Practice for Vehicle Body Repairs
  Code of Practice for the Motor Industry.
  Code of Practice for the Motorcycle Industry.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the trade organisation in respect of which the Director General of Fair Trading has refused approval of the organisation's proposed code of practice under the Fair Trading Act 1973 on the grounds that arbitration under the proposed code was to be compulsory, without the option for the consumer to have recourse to the courts for the disposal of disputes.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for the director general. I will ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

Inner Cities

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about progress on his Department's inner cities initiatives.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to say that the work of our 16 inner city task forces is going ahead well with more than 200 projects supported since the initiative began in February 1986. The private sector is playing a growing part in our efforts.

Clydesdale Tube Plant

Dr. Reid asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if Her Majesty's Government plan to announce any further investment in plant and machinery at the Clydesdale tube plant at Mossend.

Mr. Atkins: Investment by BSC at individual plants is a matter for the Corporation, subject to requirements for Government approval laid down under the Iron and Steel Act. BSC are continuing to invest in their Clydesdale plant as part of their overall programme of capital investment agreed with Government.

Regional Development

Ms. Quin asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the decline in regional development grant payments to the north-east of England results from changes in development and special development areas since 1980, what proportion results from a fall in investments by manufacturing industry in the region and what proportion results from changes in the scheme itself.

Mr. Atkins: It is not possible to quantify separately the effects of these various factors on the level of regional development grant payments in the north-east. Between 1980 and 1984, however, the proportion of the region's working population covered by development and special development areas—the latter status being abolished in November 1984 — fell from nearly 100 per cent. to around 80 per cent.

The north-east region's share of RDG payments in Great Britain in 1986-87 was higher than in the preceding four years and has risen further in the first six months of 1987-88.

Iraq (Credit)

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent lines of credit have been made available to Iraq; of what value and with what conditions as to the use of the funds made available; and what loans have been made available in each of the past five years.

Mr. Butcher: One. The Governments of the United Kingdom and Iraq signed a financial protocol on 24 September 1987 under which ECGD will provide support for a £100 million line of credit for the supply of United Kingdom capital goods, equipment and services on credit terms of up to five years and a £75 million line of credit for the supply of prepared pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, veterinary medicines, the bulk supply of semi-processed pharmaceuticals, insecticides, powdered milk and baby milk powder on credit terms of up to 18 months. These loan facilities will be signed in 1988.

2. Two earlier protocols for £250 million each were signed in 1983 and 1984 and the uptake of these loans is as follows. All of the pharmaceutical lines of credit were additional to the protocol amounts.

1983-84

£250 million general purpose line of credit (including two project buyer credits).

£25 million pharmaceutical line of credit.
1985
£100 million general purpose line of credit.
£50 million pharmaceutical line of credit.
1986
£50 million pharmaceutical line of credit.
1987
£50 million pharmaceutical line of credit.
£20 million veterinary medicine line of credit.
£50 million general purpose line of credit.
£28 million buyer credits for 3 water resource projects
£52 million general purpose line of credit.

Greenock and Port Glasgow (Enterprize Zone)

Dr. Godman asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received regarding the possibility of creating an enterprize zone in Greenock or Port Glasgow.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

We have received no recent representations regarding the possibility of creating an enterprise zone in Greenock or Port Glasgow.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Industry

Mrs. Peacock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing output in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing output in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing output in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: In the three months to August 1987 manufacturing output was 6 per cent. higher than a year earlier.

60. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how United Kingdom performance in terms of the growth of manufacturing productivity compares with that of other major industrialised countries.

77. **Mr. Brazier** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how United Kingdom performance in terms of the growth of manufacturing productivity compares with that of other major industrial countries.

81. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how United Kingdom performance in terms of the growth of manufacturing productivity compares with that of other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Lilley: Over the year to the second quarter of 1987, manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom grew 6½ per cent. which is substantially faster than in any other major industrial country.

74. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the growth of manufacturing productivity in the north-west.

Mr. Major: On the accepted definition of productivity, no figures are available on a regional basis. In the United Kingdom as a whole manufacturing productivity in the three months to August was 6·8 per cent. higher than a year earlier.

Value Added Tax

17. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to alter the 15 per cent. value added tax rate for United Kingdom to bring confectionery into zero rate like other foods.

Mr. Lilley: No.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the time limit within which traders must account for value added tax compared with the average time it takes them to collect the value added tax owed to them on their own invoices.

Mr. Lilley: As my hon. Friend will be aware, subsequent to him putting down this question my hon. Friend the Paymaster General made an announcement about cash accounting on 17 August. There have been persistent representations from small businesses that they frequently have to pay VAT before their own bills are paid. To meet this, my hon. Friend the Paymaster General introduced, from the start of this month, an optional system of cash accounting for VAT, under which small traders no longer have to pay VAT until they have received their payment from their customers.

World Debt

18. **Mr. David Nicholson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report recent progress following his debt initiative for the benefit of the poorer countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lawson: There has been wide recognition of the need for special help for the poorest, most heavily indebted countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Good progress has been made on two of the proposals in my initiative: the United Kingdom has converted aid loans into grants for 13 African countries, and other creditor countries are following suit, and five countries have had their official debts rescheduled over longer than usual periods in the Paris club. I am continuing to press for international action to reduce interest rates on rescheduled official debt.

19. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent meetings he has had with other Finance Ministers regarding world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Last month my right hon. Friend attended the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting and the meetings of the IMF and World Bank where the Debt problems of some of the developing countries, especially those of the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa, were discussed.

27. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report recent progress following his debt initiative for the benefit of the poorer countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

51. **Mr. Wells** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report recent progress following his debt initiative for the benefit of the poorer countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

83. **Mr. Key** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report recent progress following his debt initiative for the benefit of the poorer countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lilley: Considerable progress has been made towards implementing two of the specific proposals that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made at the April meeting of the Development Committee: The United Kingdom has converted aid loans into grants for 13 African countries; other creditor countries are following suit. Five countries have had their official debts rescheduled over longer than usual periods in the Paris club. We are continuing to press for international action to reduce interest rates on rescheduled official debt.

Service Sector

20. **Mrs. Gorman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of the service sector in the United Kingdom.

57. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of the service sector in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Couchman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of the service sector in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: The service sector grew by 5 per cent. over the year to the second quarter of 1987.

Economic Growth

21. **Mr. Watts** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how the growth of the United Kingdom economy compares with that of the other major industrialised countries.

45. **Mr. Boswell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how the growth of the United Kingdom economy compares with that of the other major industrialised countries.

48. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how the growth of the United Kingdom economy compares with that of other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over the year to the second quarter of 1987, the United Kingdom economy grew almost 4 per cent., which is substantially faster than any other major industrial economy.

23. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been the change in output in the first six months of 1987 compared with the equivalent period of 1986.

62. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the rise in output in the first six months of 1987 compared with the equivalent period in 1986.

80. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been the rise in output in the first six months of 1987 compared with the equivalent period in 1986.

Mr. Major: 4·3 per cent.

IMF

22. **Mr. Carrington** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington.

33. **Mr. Arnold** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington.

Mr. Wareing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his recent discussions at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentleman to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Public Expenditure

24. **Mr. McAllion** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning total for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

37. **Mr. Livingstone** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning totals for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

65. **Mr. McLeish** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning total for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

75. **Mr. Graham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the public spending planning totals for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett).

87. **Mr. Nelson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement in the current financial year.

Mr. Major: The Budget forecast for the public sector borrowing requirement in 1987-88 was £3·9 billion. A new foreast will be published in the autumn statement.

Privatisation

25. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the proceeds from privatisation sales in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy).

Unemployment Costs

26. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in the east midlands.

34. **Mrs. Walley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will prepare a region-by-region estimate of the total annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment.

47. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in Wales.

59. **Mr. Buckley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

66. **Mrs. Fyfe** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in Scotland.

68. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment in the northern region.

73. **Mr. Illsley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will prepare a region-by-region estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of unemployment.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

National Economic Development Council

Dr. Moonie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the National Economic Development Council.

Ms. Primarolo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Macdonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Hardy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend plans to attend the next meeting of the National Economic Development Council, which will be on 13 January 1988.

Exchange Rates

Sir John Farr asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of the pound sterling—US dollar exchange rate.

Mr. Lilley: At the London close on 28 October the sterling—dollar exchange rate was 1·71.

Oil Revenues

Mr. Mullin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total (a) gross and (b) net revenue received since 1979 by the Exchequer from North sea oil.

Mr. Lilley: Available information was provided to the hon. Member on 14 July, at column 568, by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

54. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of North sea oil revenues in 1987-88.

85. **Mr. McFall** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of North sea oil revenues in 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: An updated forecast for Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production in 1987-88 will be provided in the 1987 autumn statement.

Income Tax

32. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised by the higher rates of income tax in 1978-79 and 1986-87, respectively.

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised by the higher rates of income tax in 1978-79 and 1986-87, respectively.

41. **Mr. Ian Taylor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised by the higher rates of income tax in 1978-79 and 1986-87, respectively.

72. **Mr. David Shaw** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised by the higher rates of income tax in 1978-79 and 1986-87, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total tax liability resulting from the difference between the higher rates of income tax and the basic rate rose from £810 million in 1978-79 to about £2,500 million in 1986-87. This represent an increase in real terms of about 60 per cent. calculated by reference to the movement in the retail prices index.

55. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total yield of income tax is paid by the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers; and how this figure compares with five years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Income tax liabilities of the top 5 per cent. of taxpaying single people and married couples are estimated to be 28·5 per cent. of the total in 1987-88 compared with 25·4 per cent. in 1982-83. The estimate for 1987-88 is based on a projection of the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and is therefore provisional.

Disposable Incomes

35. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in real personal disposable incomes over the past year.

76. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of personal disposable incomes over the past year.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth).

£2 Coin

36. **Mr. Janner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals for the introduction of a £2 coin.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no plans to introduce a £2 coin for general circulation.

Inflation

38. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

50. **Mr. Soames** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

53. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of inflation.

58. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

79. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The increase in retail prices over the 12 months ending September 1987 was 4·2 per cent.

European Monetary System

39. **Mr. MacLennan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement as to his policy on British membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

56. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given recently to the United Kingdom seeking full participation in the European monetary system.

Mr. Peter Lilley: The matter is kept under review.

Company Investment (Rate of Return)

42. **Mr. Grylls** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the net real rate of return in the company sector.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack).

Unit Labour Costs

43. **Mr. Hind** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for unit labour costs in the United Kingdom.

44. **Mr. Charles Wardle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for unit labour costs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: The latest figures show that in the first quarter of 1987 unit labour costs for the whole economy rose by 3·7 per cent. Manufacturing unit wage costs rose by 1·5 per cent. over the previous year in the three months ending in August.

Invisible Earnings

46. **Mr. Quentin Davies** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of invisible earnings in the United Kingdom; and how it compares with the levels five and 10 years ago.

69. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of invisible earnings in the United Kingdom; and how it compares with the levels five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood).

Private Shareholding

49. **Mr. Wood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures on the extent of private shareholding in the United Kingdom.

86. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures on the extent of private shareholding in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon).

Taxation

52. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to reduce capital taxation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mortgage Interest Relief

61. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will introduce measures to extend the mortgage interest relief allowance for married couples.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The level of mortgage interest relief has to be fixed each year and will be considered in framing the Budget proposals.

Price Stability

63. **Mr. Latham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on progress towards achieving Her Majesty's Government's ultimate objective of price stability.

Mr. Major: Price stability remains the Government's ultimate objective. Recent movements in the retail prices index have been consistent with the Budget forecast of 4 per cent. inflation in the fourth quarter of 1987. A new forecast will be published in the autumn statement.

Tax Reform

67. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining his long-term plans for tax reform.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Chancellor has made clear that he will continue to pursue policies of tax reform and tax reduction aimed at sharpening incentives, stimulating enterprise and thus promoting sustained economic growth. The hon. Member will not expect me to comment on any specific measures in advance of the Chancellor's Budget statement.

Small Businesses

70. **Mr. Butler** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further fiscal measures he intends to implement to benefit small businesses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government will continue to pursue policies designed to promote a vigorous, enterprising economy in which small businesses can flourish.

I cannot anticipate decisions on specific measures which may be announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's next Budget statement. A list of some of the measures helpful to the small businesses which have been introduced was given in the Chief Secretary's written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 20 July 1987, at column 72.

Interest Rates

78. **Mr. Darling** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

82. **Dr. Reid** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall).

Milk Quotas

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the absence of tax relief on the sale of milk quotas and the effect this has on farmers moving between farms or leaving the industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Legislation will be introduced in next year's Finance Bill extending capital gains tax rollover relief to both milk and potato quotas. The relief will be available where there is a disposal or acquisition of milk or potato quota after midnight tonight.

Parliamentary Papers (Printing)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current difficulties in printing parliamentary papers and particularly questions and motions at Her Majesty's Stationery Office's Parliamentary Press.

Mr. Lilley: With St. Stephen's Parliamentary Press now closed the new Parliamentary Press began to produce the Votes and Proceedings bundle from 20 October using new technology. Everything possible has been done in the summer recess to simulate live production and to ensure the necessary computer formats have been tested but there is no substitute for live production.

I regret that the very heavy submission of questions in the first few days following the recess led to difficulties which were compounded by a computer system fault which caused delays to the provision of printed papers in the usual form.

The Parliamentary Press is very conscious of the inconvenience caused to right hon. and hon. Members and is sparing no efforts to restore normal service. In the meantime copies of the papers will be produced in an alternative form and held in reserve for use if necessary until it is clear that system faults have been overcome.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the proposed EEC/Cyprus customs union agreement will in practice include the Turkish Republic of northern Cyprus; whether it will only apply in practice to that part of the island of Cyprus governed by the Greek Cypriots; and if he will make a statement to explain how this new agreement can help both Greek Cypriots in the south and Turkish Cypriots in the north of Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: The protocol to the EC — Cyprus association agreement, implementing the commitment in the agreement to develop a customs union, which was signed on 19 October, is governed by article 5 of the association agreement. This rules out discrimination between nationals or the companies of Cyprus. The Community has made it clear that the provisions of the protocol apply to the whole population of Cyprus. The interests of the Turkish Cypriot community were taken fully into account during the negotiations. We shall continue to trade with them. I am confident that they will benefit in practice.

Arms Exports

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for Her Majesty's Government's ability to act as an honest broker in the middle east of its policy on arms exports to different middle east countries.

Mr. Mellor: All exports of defence-related equipment are considered on a strict case-by-case basis. Each transaction is subject to stringent export licensing procedures, including an assessment of foreign policy and regional security implications and consideration of the human rights record of the country concerned.

These strict procedures are applied uniformly to all defence equipment exports worldwide, including the Middle East. In addition, special ministerial guidelines or restrictions are applied to exports to certain Middle Eastern countries, reflecting Her Majesty's Government's wish not to exacerbate or prolong conflicts in the region, and our determination to take a firm line on state-sponsored terrorism. Consequently, our policy on the export of defence related equipment in no way compromises our ability to work for a negotiated settlement to problems in the Middle East.

Gibraltar

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the status of Gibraltar; what was the outcome of the most recent expression of opinion on their future by the people of Gibraltar; and what discussions are currently taking place with the Spanish Government on this matter.

Mrs. Chalker: We will continue to stand by the undertaking in the 1969 Gibraltar constitution to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar on the future status of Gibraltar. Repeated opinion polls have confirmed the findings of the 1967 referendum in which the people of Gibraltar voted overwhelmingly in favour of retaining their links with Britain. My right hon. and learned Friend meets the Spanish Foreign Minister at regular intervals for discussions under the 1984 Brussels agreement. He will be doing so again at the end of November.

Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir Tufeld

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government about the case of Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir Tufeld of Moscow and the refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow them to join their son and daughter-in-law in Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We deplore the refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow Mr. and Mrs. Vladimir Tufeld to join their family in Israel. Their name was included on the list of refusenik cases which my right hon. and learned Friend handed to Mr. Shevardnadze in March. We shall continue to press the Soviet Government to adopt a more humane approach in cases of this kind.

Fiji

Mr. Boswell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the consequences of Fiji's current withdrawal from the Commonwealth for those areas within the responsibilities of his Department, including specifically the accreditation of the respective high commissioners and under Commonwealth auspices and the subscription to the Commonwealth Secretariat and other bodies.

Mrs. Chalker: If Fiji remains outside the Commonwealth, the application of a number of Acts of Parliament will have to be reviewed. Fiji's lapsed Commonwealth membership does not invalidate the accreditation of diplomatic representatives. The question of a reallocation of Fiji's share of the budgets of various Commonwealth organisations — 0·75 per cent. of the total in respect of the Commonwealth Secretariat—is a matter for the organisations themselves.

Namibia

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new measures Her Majesty's Government will apply in order to bring help to the international community trying to end the occupation of Namibia by South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 26 October 1987.

Benguela Railays

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the offer made in Vancouver at the Commonwealth conference of British aid to the front-line states includes funds, technical co-operation and military protection of the Benguela railways.

Mrs. Chalker: A programme of co-ordinated Commonwealth assistance to the front-line states was agreed at Vancouver, giving priority attention to the Limpopo railway and port of Maputo initially, to which we had already committed £16 million. No separate British offer was made.

Southern Africa (Attacks)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the last information received by Her Majesty's Government of the cost of the damages inflicted by the attacks by South African troops or their mercenaries on the economies of Mozambique, Angola, and other front-line states.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no reliable information.

Mr. Oscar Arias (Congratulations)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the date of the congratulatory messages sent by Her Majesty's Government to the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Oscar Arias, for his Nobel peace prize.

Mr. Eggar: 14 October.

Chile (University Students)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information he has received from Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago with regard to the new wave of repression against university students and academics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago has reported fully on the current strike and regrettable disturbances at the University of Chile.

Human Rights (Commonwealth)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining information available to Her Majesty's Government on the human rights record of each member country of the Commonwealth, stating specifically in each case the extent to which that country practises racial, religious, political or colour discrimination.

Mrs. Chalker: No country currently a member of the Commonwealth has a constitution which discriminates on the grounds of race, religion or colour. Where Commonwealth countries' practice on human rights gives cause for concern, we make representations as necessary. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State told the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 23 January 1986, such representations are sometimes more productive if undertaken without publicity, and it would therefore not be helpful to disclose full details.

Mr. Scallan (Detention)

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Italian Government about the detention of Mr. Scallan, the captain of a ship held by the Italian authorities in Savona; what consular access has been granted to Mr. Scallan; and what information he has received from the Italian Government about the circumstances of his arrest.

Mr. Eggar: We have made no representations to the Italian Government about the detention of Mr. Scallan. He is a citizen of the Republic of Ireland and we understand that the Irish embassy in Rome are providing consular assistance to him.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate the whole range of nuclear weapons which are located on European soil.

Mr. Mellor: We warmly welcome the prospect of an intermediate nuclear force agreement which, if attainable, will eliminate a whole class of nuclear weapons, many of which are deployed in Europe. It is not United States or NATO policy to seek the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons from Europe. Even after an INF agreement, NATO faces a formidable threat from Soviet and Warsaw Pact nuclear, conventional and chemical forces. It is our policy to continue to rely for our security on deterrence based on a mix of conventional and nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future.

East Timor (Civil Rights)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is his intention to raise with the Indonesian authorities the question of the provision of arms and the protection of civil rights in East Timor.

Mr. Eggar: We have no plans to do so. Defence equipment is supplied to Indonesia in accordance with our normal criteria. The Indonesian Government are well aware of our views on human rights in East Timor.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: The Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme has been an outstanding success, bringing in £15 million of new money into the arts and attracting 600 new sponsors. During the summer sponsorship continued to grow and there was a marked increase in awards at the maximum amount. This led to the cash-limited annual funds being used up earlier than anticipated. However, I was able to allocate further modest sums to enable the scheme to continue at a reduced maximum amount per head. The scheme will be strengthened next year.

DEFENCE

Weather Forecasts

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will initiate inquiries into the nature of weather forecasts provided for the south of England in respect of 15-16 October, and in particular the reasons for the discrepancies between the forecasts issued by his Department and the meteorological services of other countries on that night.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Director-General of the Meteorological Office is already conducting an internal investigation into the nature and sequence of meteorological events surrounding the storm which struck the south and east of England on 15 and 16 October. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer FRS, chairman of the University Grants Committee, and Professor Robert Pearce, head of the department of meteorology at Reading university, to examine the findings of that inquiry and to present their conclusions to him. He proposes to make these public. In the meantime, I do not wish to anticipate the outcome of the inquiries.

Directorate General of Quality Assurance

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be able to announce a decision about the future location of the headquarters of the Directorate General of Quality Assurance.

Mr. Sainsbury: The appraisal of future locations for the work done by the Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance continues to make steady progress.

Low-flying Exercises

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the different parts of the territory of the United Kingdom which are affected by low-flight exercises.

Mr. Freeman: Since the introduction of the revised United Kingdom low-flying system in 1979, all parts of Great Britain have, in principle, been open to low-flying aircraft, the aim being to spread the activity as widely and evenly as possible. To reduce disturbance on the ground, however, aircraft avoid overflying major population centres, and, for safety reasons, civil air traffic zones. Major low-flying exercises also take place throughout Great Britain, although many tend to be centred on military ranges or training areas.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flight exercises the Royal Air Force carried out over United Kingdom territory for each year since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of military low-level training sorties flown in the United Kingdom since 1975 are as follows:

	Number
1975	78,000
1976	77,700
1977	76,000
1978	76,000
1979	108,860
1980	122,850
1981	131,840
1982	130,310
1983	128,000
1984	133,500
1985	141,760
1986	151,160
1987	[1]113,405

[1] Up to 30 September.

Approximately 82 per cent. of these involved United Kingdom military aircraft; 70 per cent. involved RAF aircraft.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average cost of each low-flight exercise since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: The cost of a low-level flight varies according to the duration of the flight, the aircraft type and the sort of training involved. Major exercises are only part of our low-flying training programme and are not costed separately. The figures requested could not be produced without disproportionate effort.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average duration of low-flight exercises over populated parts of United Kingdom territory.

Mr. Freeman: The average duration of a low-level flying training sortie is approximately 45 minutes during which time a distance of around 400 miles may be covered. Aircrew are instructed to avoid overflying the centres of main built-up areas but cannot always avoide overflying the outskirts of such areas, or other smaller settlements. These instructions apply both to day-to-day training and major low-flying exercises.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians affected by human or property loss due to accidents of low-flight operations have pending claims for damages from his Department; and if he will detail how long such claims have awaited a decision.

Mr. Freeman: No civilian has a claim pending in respect of human loss but 20 have claims outstanding for property damage. Two arise from a crash in December 1984, five from two crashes in December 1986 and the remainder from crashes earlier this year.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will instruct the commanding officers in charge of low-flight operations to consult local authorities and local communities about the scale, frequency and timing of such exercises.

Mr. Freeman: There is no need to issue new instructions: all use of the United Kingdom low-flying system is already regulated carefully in order to minimise any disturbance to those on the ground. Where major low-flying exercises are concerned, it is our policy to give advance warning to hon. Members whose constituencies will see additional low-flying activity, as well as to the local press and local organisations such as the National Farmers' Unions.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many people have been killed, injured or had their property damaged or destroyed as a consequence of low-flight exercise accidents; and how many of these were civilians;

(2) how many low-flying exercise accidents occurred for each year since 1975; where they took place; and what was the population for each of the areas affected by such accidents.

Mr. Freeman: Information prior to 1979 is not readily available. Since 1 January 1979, 11 Royal Air force personnel have died and a further seven Royal Air force personnel have suffered major injuries as a result of the following accidents on land in the United Kingdom involving low-flying operations by fast jet aircraft.

Date	*Location*	
6 July 1979	Tintagel, Cornwall	One major injury
23 November 1979	Central Scotland	One fatality
10 December 1979	Lumsden, Aberdeenshire	One fatality and one major injury
12 February 1980	Isle of Skye	One fatality
18 November 1981	Lock Luichart, Ross	One fatality
13 May 1982	Near Aberystwyth, Wales	One major injury
24 June 1983	Near Ramsey, Isle of Man	Two fatalities
12 July 1984	Near Sheringham, Norfolk	One major injury
7 October 1985	Alston, Cumbria	One fatality
7 January 1986	Aysgarth, North Yorkshire	Two major injuries
17 June 1987	Near Keswick, Cumbria	One fatality
24 June 1987	Builth Wells, Wales	One fatality
27 July 1987	Fadmoor, North Yorkshire	One major injury
26 August 1987	Near Aberystwyth, Wales	Two fatalities

Two civilians sustained minor injuries as a result of the accident on 6 July 1979. There have been no civilian fatalities. All of these accidents occurred in sparsely populated areas. Resulting claims for compensation to the value of £80,804 have been settled so far, but some claims originating from recent accidents are still under consideration.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if, after consultations with the local authorities of areas affected by low-flight exercises, he will instruct the commanding officers in charge of such operations to reduce to a minimum such flights and to conduct them at the hours of the day or night at which they are likely to cause the minimum of inconvenience to the people affected by them;

(2) what specific instructions exist about the time of the day or night in which low-flight operations are conducted in case they affect populated areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Every effort is already made to minimise the disturbance caused by this essential activity as far as possible, commensurate with our training needs and safety considerations. Most low-flying training takes place on weekdays between 7 am and 11 pm. Only a small amount of activity takes place outside these hours and this is strictly limited.

Environment Protection

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the instructions given to the armed forces with regard to the respect and protection of the environment when building accommodation for their personnel, preparing exercises or conducting any kind of operations.

Mr. Freeman: The Crown is exempt from the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Acts but Government Departments are required to consult local planning authorities before proceeding with development, and the Ministry of Defence adheres strictly to this procedure. Plans to build accommodation for the armed forces are therefore submitted to the local planning authorities, which will take environmental aspects into consideration at that stage.

The Ministry of Defence takes seriously its responsibility to conserve the land used for military purposes and puts much effort into protecting the environment on its estate. When preparing exercises the armed forces consult the landowners and environmental agencies as appropriate and seek to minimise disturbance to the environment from their activities.

Personation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the past five years individuals have been apprehended in possession of a false Ministry of Defence police warrant card.

Mr. Sainsbury: Only one instance, the recent Larsen case, has come to the notice of the Ministry of Defence police. We know of no instance where the use of a false MOD police warrant card has been used in the commission of a crime, or to attempt to gain unauthorised access to MOD property.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents have been recorded in the last five years of individuals entering defence establishments wearing military uniforms to which they were not entitled.

Mr. Sainsbury: No central records are held of individuals entering or attempting to enter defence establishments in these circumstances and it would require a disproportionate effort to collect them.

Marconi

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police liaised with or operated in conjunction with the chief constable of Hampshire in executing the recent Ministry of Defence police raid on the Marconi company's premises in Portsmouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence police, in accordance with guidelines, informed the Hampshire constabulary on 22 October of their intention to execute a warrant to search the premises of Marconi Defence Systems at Portsmouth on the following day.

Inter-force Working Arrangements

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police and the Association of Chief Police Officers reached an agreement on inter-force working arrangements, when a copy of that agreement will be placed in the Library as announced to *Standing Committee B* on the Ministry of Defence Police Bill *[Lords]* on 12 February, *Official Report*, column 58; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: During the passage of the legislation my predecessor referred to the fact that discussions were taking place with the Association of Chief Police Officers about the relationship between MOD police and Home Department forces. I am glad to say that the Association and the Ministry of Defence police committee have now agreed the terms of guidelines on this matter. These guidelines have been disseminated to chief constables of Home Department forces under cover of circulars issued by the Home Office and the Scottish Home and Health Department. I am arranging for copies of both circulars to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Contracts (Overcharging)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *874*, if he will give a breakdown of the £14·5 million refunded by contractors in 1984 following a post-costing review of contract prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: No; such information is subject to commercial confidentiality.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dry Sow and Tether Stalls

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce regulations to phase out the use of dry sow and tether stalls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Farm Animal Welfare Council is currently carrying out a review of pig production systems including the dry sow and tether stall. I expect to receive the council's conclusions around the end of this year. I have no plans at present to phase out dry sow and tether stalls.

Pate de Foie Gras

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will support action (i) to end the production of pate de foie gras in the European Community or (ii) to ban its import into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I cannot support either action. My Department has no plans to impose a ban on the import of pate de foie gras, as I am advised that such a step would contravene the Treaty of Rome. In any case it is for individuals to decide whether or not to buy or consume foie gras.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *889*, if he will give details of *(a)* the intervention cost, *(b)* the storage cost, and *(c)* the sale price of the 278,612 tonnes of skimmed milk powder sold for manufacture into animal feed between 1982 and 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is not available in the form requested. However, details of buying-in prices and average incidental costs for all purchases of SMP, together with average sale prices of SMP destined for animal feed over the period in question are as follows:

£ per tonne

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Buying-in prices	819·41 (until 19 May)	904·66 (until 22 May)	925·76 (until 2 April)	1,026·23 (until 26 May)	1,076·71 (until 11 May)
	904·66 (after 19 May)	925·76 (after 22 May)	1,026·23 (after 2 April)	1,076·71 (after 26 May)	1,106·24 (after 21 May)
Average incidental costs[1]	n/a	21·11	18·40	22·08	20·43
Average sale prices for animal feed	198·50	146·90	150·44	152·12	139·43

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Amounts sold (tonnes)	4,310	60,927	145,444	34,561	33,370

[1] Includes transport, storage and handling costs.

Food (Radioactive Contamination)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to establish from the EEC Commission whether the radioactive skimmed milk powder which was sent from West Germany to Ghana under the EEC food relief programme was imported to West Germany from East Europe under the inner German trade agreement; if, in the light of the restrictions on the movement of radioactive food from Czechoslovakia announced on 8 May 1986, he will further inquire if the skimmed milk powder which was also sent from Czechoslovakia was transported through the EEC and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans to do so, although if the hon. Gentleman has evidence that Community rules may have been infringed I will arrange for it to be passed to the Commission.

Storm Damage

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the financial problems facing farmers whose farm buildings were uninsured and damaged in the recent hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I made it clear when replying to my Hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on 22 October that I saw no reason to depart from the principle that farmers normally bear the cost of bad weather and that the Government should not compensate them for such losses—against which the majority would normally be insured. It would not be equitable for the Government to take action to make good insurable losses.

Religious Slaughter

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will announce the Government's response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on religious slaughter.

Mr. MacGregor: With my ministerial colleagues responsible for agriculture in Great Britain I have considered carefully the report by the Farm Animal Welfare Council on religious slaughter of animals. We have also studied the many comments on the report which have been made by interested organisations and individuals.

Fifteen of the Council's recommendations were directed to improving the methods and procedures for religious slaughter. We are determined that religious slaughter must be performed humanely and we share the council's view that it must be subject to proper legislative control. We believe that the council's recommendations will provide substantial safeguards for animal welfare, and we shall therefore implement all 15 of these recommendations.

In particular we shall ban the use of the casting pen for cattle. This will be an important new welfare advance. Inversion in a casting pen imposes discomfort and stress on cattle and the prohibition of this procedure will be widely welcomed. The ban will take effect two years after the necessary legislation has been made. In addition, in line with the council's 15 recommendations, there will be new statutory rules for the handling of animals prior to and after slaughter and for the equipment used. We shall extend the existing requirements for the licensing of premises and slaughtermen to ensure that the new standards can be properly enforced.

A paper containing our detailed proposals for implementation of the FAWC recommendations is being issued to interested organisations today; a copy will be placed in the Library of the House. The interested organisations will be consulted on the draft statutory instrument required to give effect to these decisions; it will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible thereafter.

The abolition of casting cattle is a substantial change in established Jewish practice and was not easy for the Jewish authorities to accept under their religious law. My right hon. Friends and I appreciate their readiness to overcome the difficulties they found and so to accept the change.

In addition, we have considered carefully the exemption which the legislation provides for the Jewish and Muslim communities from the requirement to stun animals before slaughter. The arguments for and against this exemption are those of religious belief and of animal welfare, both issues of great importance to those who have expressed views to us.

From their studies the Council concluded that the Jewish and Muslim communities should be required to develop alternative arrangements for slaughter, in order that the exemption from stunning could be repealed. In response to this recommendation, we have explored in detail with leaders of the Jewish and Muslim communities their slaughter requirements and arranged for them to consider very carefully the scope for removal of the exemption from stunning. They have co-operated fully in these discussions.

The religious communities have made clear that elements of their slaughter requirements are fundamental obligations, forming part of their religious law which it is not open to them to alter. They have also rejected the council's assessment of the welfare implications of religious slaughter.

I can well understand why the council should recommend that the interest of the animals would best be safeguarded by ensuring efficient stunning prior to slaughter, including slaughter by decapitation. However the Government has to recognise the serious implications for the religious communities if they were no longer allowed to prepare meat as their faiths require. We do not believe that we would be justified in imposing such a burden on these communities. We do not therefore propose to ask Parliament to reverse the attitude which it has taken to this issue in the past.

We have also considered carefully the recommendation that cuts of meat from religiously slaughtered animals should be labelled down to the point of retail sale. We have concluded that a statutory requirement for labelling is not a practical proposition. There would be serious difficulties in administration and enforcement. Moreover, our freedom unilaterally to introduce additional mandatory labelling requirements is severely constrained by EC food labelling law. I am however writing to the religious communities to ask them to take note of the concern expressed by many on this subject, and am asking them to take all steps open to them to minimise the amount of meat produced by religious methods which is diverted from the religious market.

I wish to record the appreciation of my colleagues and myself of the work undertaken by the Farm Animal Welfare Council on this complex subject. Our decisions were particularly difficult. The fact that over the years we have accepted so many of the recommendations in the wide range of reports which the council has made indicates the value we place on its advice.

Health and Safety

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm visits have been made by Health and Safety Executive inspectors in total this year to date, and in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The total number of farm visits made by the Health and Safety Executive Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate for the past five yeas is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	29,591
1983–84	27,255
1984–85	29,468
1985–86	30,562
1986–87	30,605

Figures for this year so far are not yet available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of public funding devoted to monitoring and enforcing safety legislation in agriculture by the Health and Safety Executive; what proportion is devoted separately to monitoring and enforcing legislation regarding pesticides use; and if he will give the relevant information for each of the last five years and the projection for 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The salary budget for the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate for each of the last five years is as follows:

Financial Year	*Salary Budget £*
1983–84	2,835,000
1984–85	2,972,000
1985–86	3,092,000
1986–87	3,322,000
1987–88	3,472,000

The budget for 1988–89 is not yet available.

The monitoring and enforcement of pesticides legislation is undertaken as part of the agricultural inspecorate's overall work programme and no separate budget allocation is made.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Health and Safety Executive inspectors are presently engaged in monitoring and enforcing existing legislation with regard to the use of pesticides; how many farm visits have been made this year to date; and how does this information compare with 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

On 1 October 1987 the Health and Safety Executive employed 142 agricultural inspectors and 528 factory inspectors in the field. Their duties include responsibility for pesticide safety. Figures for the number of farm visits made since 1 April 1987 to date are not yet available. On 1 October 1986, 156 agricultural inspectors and 543 factory inspectors were employed in the field. Agricultural inspectors made 30,605 visits to farms during 1986-87. A recruitment competition for factory and agricultural inspectors has just started.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Christmas Bonus

88. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase the annual Christmas bonus paid to pensioners from £10 to £20 in the current year.

Mr. Scott: An order setting the 1987 Christmas bonus at £10 was approved by affirmative resolution of both Houses in July.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many community psychiatric nurses there have been in each health region in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: The figures relating to all NHS staff in community mental illness nursing are shown in the table:

NHS Community Psychiatric Nursing Staff (Mental Illness)

Whole-time equivalent

Region	*30 September 1982*	*30 September 1983*	*30 September 1984*	*30 September 1985*	*30 September 1986*
Northern	70	72	95	121	158
Yorkshire	73	90	132	167	199
Trent	112	124	175	215	260
East Anglian	47	52	88	101	106
North West Thames	99	108	123	163	168
North East Thames	111	108	132	140	137
South East Thames	50	80	147	163	208
South West Thames	137	134	165	207	209

Region	*30 September 1982*	*30 September 1983*	*30 September 1984*	*30 September 1985*	*30 September 1986*
Wessex	105	113	137	166	176
Oxford	72	76	86	114	122
South Western	103	115	127	143	147
West Midlands	66	92	155	239	255
Mersey	95	116	124	148	156
North Western	94	148	195	220	228
London PG SHAs	5	5	2	3	2
England	1,237	1,432	1,882	2,309	2,532

Source: DHSS (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
Note: All figures independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funds have been specifically earmarked for the care of the mentally ill following the closure of mental hospitals in each health region in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks as it is not centrally collected. My hon. Friend may like to seek information from any individual regional health authority in whose area there has been such a closure.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the provisions of community care for patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis discharged from National Health Service mental illness hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We receive representations from time to time about the quality of community care for those people discharged from hospital following treatment for schizophrenia.

The effectiveness of modern treatment means that patients are usually well enough, and prefer, to leave after a short stay in hospital, and to receive further treatment on an out-patient or day-patient basis. We are very conscious that the patient when at home needs good quality support. Studies have shown that in many places the quality of support is patchy and we will not be satisfied until we see evidence of a high level of support everywhere. We emphasise the importance of the professional team agreeing an individual care plan with the patient and carers at the time of discharge.

Community care services to mentally ill people are still in the process of development, as my hon. Friend will see from the rapid expansion of the community psychiatric nursing service. Health authorities have been asked to make the needs of this group a priority. More needs to be done both in terms of the range, quality and distribution of facilities and in the co-ordination between the statutory, voluntary and private sectors which collectively provide the services. Sir Roy Griffiths is conducting a review on community care and will report around the end of the year on how it can be made more effective.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people discharged from hospital following a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis and subsequently taken by the police under section to hospital have been refused admission in each health region in each of the last five years;

(2) how many people discharged from mental illness hospitals, after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis, having been proved vulnerable boarders, subsequently became voluntary boarders in each of the last five years in each health region.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks, as it is not collected centrally.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department gives to mental illness hospitals on the retention of patients whose condition is unlikely to improve; and what is the current policy in each health region.

Mrs. Currie: In our policy paper on mental illness services (Cmnd. 9674) we advised health authorities that every district will require long-stay accommodation for those patients whose psychiatrists find that discharge would not be in the patient's interest. The paper says:

> "Patients who would be better off outside hospital should have a planned discharge to suitable care even if no closure is foreseen; patients who are better off in in-patient care should continue to receive such care, by a transfer if necessary, even if a closure is planned."

I believe all regional health authorities' policies are in line with this guidance.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions on non-resident women in the latest year for which figures are available were performed under ground 2 of the Abortion Act.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Percentage of abortions performed on non-resident women under Ground 2 of the 1967 Abortion Act, England and Wales 1986

Total notification of abortions to non-resident women (a)	*Mentions of Ground 2 (b)*	*Percentage (b) of (a)*
24,667	24,633	99·9

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the numbers of abortions carried out at 18 weeks and over on non-resident and resident women together with the numbers and percentages of such women aged under 18 years, 18 to 40 years and over 40 years, for the last year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will list the numbers of abortions carried out below 18 weeks on non-resident and resident women, together with the numbers and percentages of such women aged under 18 years, 18 to 40 years and over 40 years, for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table:

Notifications of Abortions performed in England and Wales on resident and non-resident Women by age of Mother and gestation weeks, 1986

		Age of Mother (Years)			
	Total	*0-17*	*18-40*	*41 and over*	*Unknown*
GESTATION WEEKS					
Residents					
All weeks number	147,619	18,378	125,886	3,333	22
Percentage	100	12·4	85·3	2·3	0·01
0-17 weeks					
Number	143,025	17,440	122,322	3,241	—
Percentage	100	12·2	85·5	2·3	—
18 weeks and over					
Number	4,594	938	3,564	92	—
Percentage	100	20·4	77·6	2	—
Non-residents					
All weeks number	24,667	1,638	22,228	801	—
Percentage	100	6·6	90·1	3·3	—
0-17 weeks					
Number	20,979	1,129	19,144	706	—
Percentage	100	5·4	91·3	3·4	—
18 weeks and over					
Number	3,688	509	3,084	95	—
Percentage	100	13·8	83·6	2·6	

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has plans to seek to amend abortion legislation in the light of the report of the fourth conference of the International Right To Life Federation in Zagreb, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Emergency Alarm Systems

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much of the current expenditure by his Department on housing benefit is accounted for by charges for emergency alarm systems, and what was this figure in 1986, 1985 and 1984;

(2) how many people are estimated to use emergency alarm systems; and how many emergency alarm systems are fitted in dwellings that are not classified as sheltered.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested on charges is not available, nor do we have a reliable basis for an estimate of the number of people who use emergency alarm systems.

Elderly, Sick and Disabled Persons (Accommodation)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the accommodation referred to in deposited paper 3042, page 111, as specifically intended for and occupied by elderly, sick or disabled persons includes (i) property that is owned by elderly, sick or disabled persons, (ii) accommodation that is not officially recognised as sheltered accommodation and (iii) accommodation that has not been physically altered specifically for elderly, sick or disabled persons.

Mr. Portillo: The intention of the draft housing benefits regulations published in May 1987, to which the hon. Member refers, is that the costs of an emergency alarm system which a tenant has no choice but to meet should be eligible for housing benefit where the system is provided either in accommodation, such as sheltered housing, which has been specially designed or adapted for elderly, sick or disabled people, or in accommodation that is particularly suitable for such people. The local authority associations are currently being consulted on amendments to the draft regulations for the reformed housing benefit scheme which, among other things, will make this intention clear. Help for owner-occupiers with the costs of emergency alarm systems will be available under the income support scheme, using the same criteria.

Nursing Homes (NHS Staff)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what regulations have been issued regarding serving National Health Service staff becoming involved in private nursing homes to which patients, originally under their care, are transferred.

Mrs. Currie: None. This is a matter for health authorities to determine locally in the light of individual circumstances. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind he may like to consult the health authority concerned.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the health risks and other possible damage to people and food production which further deterioration in the ozone layer would bring about.

Mrs. Currie: Any reduction in the ozone layer would allow a greater amount of ultra-violet light to penetrate to ground level. However, other factors, such as latitude and degree of cloud cover, are normally the major determinants of ultra-violet light levels in a given area. The implcation for health of increased exposure to ultra-violet light is of an increase in the risk of skin cancer on exposed parts of the body. The extent of deliberate exposure of untanned and unprotected skin directly to sunlight is believed to be the most important factor determining the risk of skin cancer to an individual in any given area.

Food production is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Speech Therapy

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of speech therapists employed in England and Scotland for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The figures for England are shown in the table. Figures for Scotland are matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

NHS Speech therapists as at 30 September: England

Year	*Whole-time equivalent*
1982	1,900
1983	1,970
1984	2,150
1985	2,340
1986	2,510

Note: All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalent.
Source: DHSS Annual census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

These figures reflect a 32 per cent. increase in whole-time equivalent staff employed in the years in question.

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve the provision of speech therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities to determine the appropriate level of provision of their speech therapy services, having regard to local circumstances, competing priorities and available resources. The numbers of speech therapists employed has risen by nearly 50 per cent. since 1979 and the expenditure on speech therapy services has also increased at a much faster rate than the general increase in National Health Service expenditure.

Family Income Supplement

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the proposed changes in the family income supplement rules from 1 April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Family income supplement will be replaced by the new family credit scheme in April 1988. The change has been widely welcomed as a major improvement in the help available to low income working families with children, and has been extensively debated both in Parliament and more widely.

Benefits

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding the level of support, following their disentitlement to supplementary benefit, for the dependants of unemployed heads of households who take up full-time training.

Mr. Portillo: Unemployment or supplementary benefit for both a claimant and his dependents is payable only if an unemployed person can demonstrate that he or she is available for employment. It follows that the Government's general policy towards unemployed persons who embark on a course of training or study is that their financial support should be the responsibility of the employer, local education authority or other organisation concerned. This policy continues that applied during previous administrations.

There is one exception to the availability rule for unemployed people in that a supplementary benefit claimant who is receiving a Government training allowance — usually from the Manpower Services Commission — is exempt from the requirement to be available for work. This enables the training allowance to be topped up by supplementary benefit if the allowance is insufficient for the trainee's requirements. Trainees who cease to be entitled to supplementary benefit are still able to claim other income-related benefits (such as refunds, exemption from prescription charges, housing benefit, welfare foods) in respect of themselves and their dependants and, of course, child benefit, depending on their individual circumstances.

Maternity Care

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current provision of maternity care in each of the health authorities in the north-west.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available information held centrally on provision for maternity care in districts in the North Western regional health authority is contained in the table.

North Western regional health authority, average daily available beds in the maternity[1] sector by district health authority, 1986

District health authority	*Available beds*	*Occupied beds*	*Percentage occupancy*
Lancaster	47·6	33·6	70·6
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	90·0	67·3	74·8
Preston	93·9	64·8	69·0
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	123·0	71·5	58·1
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	80·3	58·6	73·0
West Lancashire	34·0	35·8	75·9
Chorley and South Ribble	25·9	9·6	37·1
Bolton	108·0	73·0	67·6
Bury	72·4	41·2	56·9
North Manchester	66·4	48·7	73·3
Central Manchester	125·0	87·5	70·0
South Manchester	151·8	84·5	55·7
Oldham	86·5	56·7	65·5
Rochdale	51·4	29·3	57·0
Salford	92·6	63·4	68·5
Stockport	93·7	66·8	71·3
Teeside and Glossop	82·2	59·2	72·0
Trafford	41·1	28·8	70·1
Wigan	106·2	63·4	59·7
Total	1,572·0	1,033·7	65·8

[1] Obstetrics and GP maternity specialties.

If the hon. Member seeks more recent information, or has more detailed local enquiries, he may wish to approach the chairman of the North Western regional health authority.

North-Western Health Authorities

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities in the north-west are proposing to reduce clinical services or close facilities in 1987-88 or 1988-89 to provide a balanced budget.

Mrs. Currie: Revenue expenditure by north-western regional health authority on hospital and community health services has increased in real terms by some 24 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1986-87. This has enabled substantial increases between 1978 and 1986 in the numbers of patients treated in the region: 22 per cent. more in-patients, 16 per cent. more out-patients and 85 per cent. more day cases. The key to maintaining and building on this success is sound resource management by district health authorities, within balanced budgets. The hon. Member may wish to address his detailed inquiries, about how this is achieved, to the chairman of the north-western regional health authority, which is responsible for ensuring north-western district health authorities balance their budgets.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the projected year-end situation for each of the health authorities in the north-west on an income/expenditure basis.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not collected on an in-year basis and the annual accounts of health authorities for 1987-88 are not due for submission to our department until the end of June 1988.

The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the north-west regional health authority, who may be able to assist with the information he seeks.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cost of the 1987-88 pay awards to date of the north-west health authorities; and how this cost compares with the funding allocated by his Department.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available centrally on the cost of pay awards by district health authority. The hon. Member may wish to ask the chairman of the north-western regional health authority for this information.

North-western RHA's share of the additional resources allocated following this year's pay review body awards to nurses, doctors and allied professions was £22·9 million. It was for the regional health authority to determine how those funds should be distributed amongst its districts.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cumulative cost of pay award underfunding over the past three years in each of the health authorities in the north-west.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not available. Health authorities operate within the cash planning system which means that they are expected to met all pay and price increases and develop services from within the total resources available to them. Between 1983-84 and 1986-87 north-western regional health authority's gross revenue expenditure increased by 5·1 per cent. in real terms. In 1987-88 the region has received a further real terms increase of 3·7 per cent.

Regional Health Authorities (Creditors)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department issues to regional health authorities about the acceptable level of creditors for a health authority to have in terms of *(a)* the number of weeks of creditors and *(b)* the percentage of trade creditors to allocation; and what were those levels for the past three years and projections for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has issued no specific guidance on an acceptable level of creditors, but health authorities are expected to keep these within the bounds of financial prudence.

The Department does not collect in-year information on creditor balances and any attempt at estimates for 1987-88 or 1988-89 would be purely speculative.

Following are figures for the past three years derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities in England:

Regional and District Health Authorities[1]

	Column (a) Total creditors as at 31 March related to total expenditure for the year Weeks	*Column (b) "Other" revenue creditors as at 31 March related to total revenue allocation for the year per cent.*
1984–85	2·5	3·2
1985–86	2·6	3·3
1986–87	2·8	3·7

[1] Includes the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Notes:

1. the figures for 1986-87 are based on provisional (that is, as yet unaudited) information.
2. The figures in column *(a)* cover revenue and capital creditor balances and expenditure.
3. "Other" revenue creditors includes mainly trade creditors which are not separately identified in the annual accounts of health authorities.

Peto Institute, Budapest

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's assessment of the work being undertaken in the Peto Institute, Budapest; and if he will indicate the level of research resources being made available for parallel treatment in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware of the favourable reports on the work being undertaken at the Peto Institute and the claims made for the success of the treatment. However as yet no proper evaluation of the benefits of conductive education has been undertaken either here or abroad. The Department of Education and Science has agreed to make available over a period of five years £326,000 in support of the evaluation of the conductive education project being established in Birmingham by the National Foundation for Conductive Education.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's policy on the condition popularly known as ME; if he will estimate the number of sufferers; what are the current totals of research expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) is a distressing complaint for which there is at present no agreed medical treatment. Data on incidence are not held centrally. The Department does not currently fund research in this field. Research is taking place at St. Mary's, Paddington. Seriological surveillance studies supported by the Scottish Home and Health Department at the Regional Virus Laboratory, Ruchill hospital, Glasgow, may also throw light on this condition. I understand that good progress on causation has been made by a combined team from the Royal Free and St. Thomas's hospitals.

Other current research into antiviral agents, allergies and immunological mechanisms may also improve knowledge of ME. The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical and biological research. Information about total expenditure on research in this field is not held centrally.

Immunisation Officers

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which district health authorities have appointed an officer to be accountable for immunisation performance in that district.

Mrs. Currie: I am pleased to record that all except two authorities, which are making arrangements to do so, have made such appointments.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in the Clydesdale constituency for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation in East Lothian in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally. The numbers of Scottish Special Housing Association dwellings in the area of East Lothian district council are set out below.

At 31 March	*Number of dwellings*
1979	1,231
1980	1,275
1981	1,287
1982	1,275
1983	1,256
1984	1,225
1985	1,148
1986	1,156

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Rifkind: A fee of £10 per registry entry has been set for access under section 21 of the Data Protection Act 1984; there are at present 72 register entries for the Scottish Office; the total cost to a data subject for access to all register entries would therefore be £720.

Health Care

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet reached a decision as to whether to accept the conclusion of the Sharpen report on health care spending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 28 October 1987.

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Sharpen report on health care spending will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October 1987.

National Health Service

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in East Lothian and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Aberdeen, South constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Cunninghame, North constituency since 1978.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department is doing to reduce waiting times for ear, nose and throat surgery in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regard reduction of the length of time patients have to wait for in-patient treatment or consultations as one of the most urgent tasks facing the Health Service. I have therefore established a working group within my Department, which is currently studying various methods of reducing waiting lists and waiting times and I have impressed on health boards the importance of the task.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many of the Clydesdale patients on 1984, 1985 and 1986 waiting lists for more than three months were over 60 years of age;

(2) how many patients in Clydesdale in need of operations have been asked to wait due to lack of medical and hospital facilities for more than three months for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Hospital Patients (Early Discharge)

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department is doing to encourage early discharge from hospital following surgical procedures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Explicit advice on detailed aspects of clinical practice is not normally given by the Department but by the royal colleges and other sources within the profession itself. More general advice is given in, for example, reports from the National Medical Consultative Committee which are published through the Scottish Health Service Planning Council and the Department. The recently published report on the management of orthopaedic services in Scotland is an example of this.

The appropriate use of clinical resources of all kinds including acute post-operative care is a central aspect of the work of the clinical resource use group set up recently under the chairmanship of the chief medical officer with members drawn from a number of professional medical fields.

Medical Staffing

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the Shaw report on medical staffing in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that the report "Staffing the Service — The Next Decade" will be presented to the Scottish Home and Health Department and to the Scottish joint consultants committee and published around the middle of December.

North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to retaining the social remit of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board after privatisation.

Mr. Lang: I am giving this matter close consideration.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Crown Estate Commissioners charge rent for pipes leading into the sea emanating from and owned by Dounreay, Windscale and Hunterston nuclear power stations.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the Crown Estate Commissioners that they have received or are receiving payments in respect of pipelines and associated works on the seabed at Dounreay, Sellafield (formerly Windscale) and Hunterston nuclear establishments.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Western Isles by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure approved by the Highlands and Islands Development Board on businesses and projects in the Western Isles is as follows:

	(a) Cash terms		*(b) 1987 prices*	
	£000s	*per cent. change*	*£000s*	*per cent. change*
1979	2,045	—	3,681	—
1980	1,719	−15·9	2,623	−28·8
1981	3,763	+118·9	5,132	+95·7
1982	3,316	−11·9	4,164	−18·9
1983	4,500	+35·7	5,402	+29·8
1984	4,254	−5·5	4,865	−10·0
1985	7,159	+68·3	7,717	+58·6
1986	3,564	−50·2	3,715	−51·9

Hospital Beds

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Western Isles and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a working party to co-ordinate all the appropriate statutory bodies and local authorities involved in the development of a suitable tourist stopping place on the A1 trunk route where it crosses the English/Scottish border at Dumbarton toll in Berwickshire; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

A1 (Cockburghton)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will sanction the use of double white lines to prohibit overtaking throughout the length of Cockburghton at the A1 as a temporary safety measure pending the realignment of the main road; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have reviewed the earlier decision that the white lines near the Cockburnspath junction should not be extended and, although the usual criteria are not met, I have decided that the continuous double white lines down the centre of the road should be continued past the village and just beyond the brow of the hill on the north side.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to announce a date for the public inquiry into the proposed route for the A1 realignment at Cockburghton in Berwickshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Preparations are being made for an inquiry to consider objections to the A1 Tower to Dunglass diversion orders. I expect this to be held in early 1988.

Local Councillors (Allowances and Expenses)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now authorise a full scale review of members allowances and expenses for serving councillors in local government in Scotland, with particular reference to the particular expenses involved in travelling to rural areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The level of travel and subsistence allowances for councillors is reviewed each year as a matter of routine. The views of the local authority associations, as expressed from time to time, are taken into account in these reviews. The Government are at present considering the Widdicombe committee's recommendations on councillors' remuneration.

Forestry

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he has any plans to change the consultation procedures undertaken by the Forestry Commission prior to approving planting applications under the forestry grant scheme;

(2) if he will make a statement on the revised composition of regional advisory committees involved in the Forestry Commission process of consultation in approving planting grants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The consultation procedures are refined from time to time to meet changing circumstances.

My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position soon to make a statement to the House on the composition and procedures of the regional advisory committees.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider setting up a system of planting licences to replace the existing forestry grant scheme administered by the Forestry Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is not persuaded that this is necessary or desirable.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all those voluntary bodies that may be consulted by the statutory authorities involved in the existing consultation procedures in the forestry grant scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The statutory authorities may consult with voluntary bodies as they see fit. There is no prescribed list of bodies to be consulted.

Passenger Ferries

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications of suggested alterations to stability criteria for passenger ferries following the Zeebrugge disaster for vessels operated by Caledonian MacBrayne and P and O from and between Scottish ports; and what funds are available for him to support the replacement and modification of ferries serving the Scottish islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for marine safety and for consideration of the recommendations of the Zeebrugge inquiry report rest with the Secretary of State for Transport. He is at present consulting all ferry operators, including Caledonian MacBrayne and P and O, on these recommendations, including those involving stability. It will not be clear what the implications are for ferry operators until the results of the consultations have been considered.

A1 (Gladsmuir)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to initiate any improvements to the A1 road at Gladsmuir following the meeting between the acting Under-Secretary and the hon. Member for East Lothian on 8 October.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At the meeting on 8 October I proposed that a scheme of hatching and right-hand turning lanes be provided at Gladsmuir on the A1. Arrangements will be set in hand if this is the wish of local people.

Housing

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of people on housing waiting lists, *(b)* the number of new public sector houses built, *(c)* the number of new private sector houses built, *(d)* the number of new lets and re-lets from waiting lists and *(e)* the number of people housed under the homeless persons legislation in each district and islands area in 1978-79 and in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consistent reliable information on the number of people on housing waiting lists and the number of lets and re-lets from waiting lists is not available. The table below shows the numbers of new public and private sector dwellings completed in the years 1978-79 and 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available, together with the numbers of applicants housed in permanent or temporary accommodation under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 in those years.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list actions taken by the Government to improve the choice of rented accommodation for people in Scotland since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's commitment to extending choice for those who wish to rent is reflected by action taken to stimulate housing provision in both the public and private sectors. Total gross investment in Scottish public sector housing has risen by 14 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Within this total, capital allocations to local authorities have risen by 82 per cent., or £181 million, over the last three years. Substantially increased resources have been made available to the housing association movement for which over £100 million has been provided in each of the last six years, and where 30,000 new tenancies have been created. Other action taken by the Government includes the introduction of short tenancies, under part IV of the Tenants' Rights Etc (Scotland) Act 1980, to stimulate the supply of accommodation to rent in the private sector. The Local Government Bill at present before Parliament includes provisions to give Scottish local authorities new powers to give financial assistance to private landlords, including housing associations, to encourage the provision of housing for rent.

New dwellings completed and applicants housed under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, 1978-79 and 1985-86—Scotland

Numbers

	New dwellings completed				*Applicants housed*	
	1978-79		*1985-86*			
	Public sector	*Private sector*	*Public sector*	*Private sector*	*1978-79*	*1985-86*
Berwickshire	16	12	12	26	18	4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	114	31	0	62	23	11
Roxburgh	26	22	8	31	24	17
Tweeddale	39	13	0	56	22	..
Clackmannan	32	111	30	53	167	273
Falkirk	158	496	45	428	202	1,474
Stirling	91	324	39	179	266	..
Annandale and Eskdale	233	61	34	60	22	32
Nithsdale	71	216	128	221	117	136
Stewartry	49	78	52	47	30	62
Wigtown	34	103	109	67	67	43
Dunfermline	132	367	167	274	317	383
Kirkcaldy	484	295	149	336	227	385
North East Fife	107	211	68	205	120	301
Aberdeen	1,070	658	250	858	268	908
Banff and Buchan	488	242	95	181	51	29
Gordon	159	690	138	307	20	44
Kincardine and Deeside	57	266	187	409	16	18
Moray	48	252	97	206	54	158
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	36	0	63	16	..
Caithness	126	39	36	57	22	2
Inverness	310	442	194	374	63	129
Lochaber	47	43	28	17	20	25
Nairn	26	67	20	19	21	16
Ross and Cromarty	127	170	45	189	27	14
Skye and Lochalsh	0	42	52	17	14	..
Sutherland	26	19	50	25	2	0
East Lothian	110	153	123	347	154	389
Edinburgh	574	1,685	67	1,710	386	926
Midlothian	2	174	64	64	56	65
West Lothian	477	601	91	556	277	169
Argyll and Bute	145	124	43	128	155	144
Bearsden and Milngavie	66	207	0	93	5	40
Clydebank	21	42	28	110	114	214
Clydesdale	31	303	30	136	76	38
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	398	292	6	199	101	198
Cumnock and Doon Valley	92	35	23	60	41	35
Cunninghame	524	326	72	411	277	268
Dumbarton	4	240	14	187	236	282
East Kilbride	29	78	19	406	199	247
Eastwood	0	213	54	412	5	7
Glasgow	1,448	304	302	1,697	1,931	2,148
Hamilton	147	235	12	281	305	313
Inverclyde	217	95	74	205	176	214
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	175	247	30	261	48	149
Kyle and Carrick	75	636	58	178	188	230
Monklands	93	315	0	205	366	144
Motherwell	160	231	55	310	494	539
Renfrew	455	427	28	642	696	1,041
Strathkelvin	242	557	6	148	155	145
Angus	123	292	132	90	148	131
Dundee	166	240	78	196	264	601
Perth and Kinross	102	445	0	456	185	342
Orkney Islands	30	59	8	35	4	11
Shetland Islands	90	96	30	112	37	79
Western Isles	222	160	70	106	54	25

.. Not available.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households are overcrowded in each district and islands area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on overcrowding under part VII of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 is not available centrally. Limited information on number of persons per room is available from the census 1981 Scotland housing and household report, table 33 "Small area statistics".

New dwellings completed and applicants housed under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, 1978-79 and 1985-86—Scotland

Numbers

	New dwellings completed				*Applicants housed*	
	1978-79		*1985-86*		*1978-79*	*1985-86*
	Public sector	*Private sector*	*Public sector*	*Private sector*		
Berwickshire	16	12	12	26	18	4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	114	31	0	62	23	11
Roxburgh	26	22	8	31	24	17
Tweeddale	39	13	0	56	22	n.a.
Clackmannan	32	111	30	53	167	273
Falkirk	158	496	45	428	202	1,474
Stirling	91	324	39	179	266	n.a.
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Nithsdale	71	216	128	221	117	136
Stewartry	49	78	52	47	30	62
Wigtown	34	103	109	67	67	43
Dunfermline	132	367	167	274	317	383
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Moray	48	252	97	206	54	158
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	36	0	63	16	n.a.
Caithness	126	39	36	57	22	2
Inverness	310	442	194	374	63	129
Lochaber	47	43	28	17	20	25
Nairn	26	67	20	19	21	16
Ross and Cromarty	127	170	45	189	27	14
Skye and Lochalsh	0	42	52	17	14	n.a.
Sutherland	26	19	50	25	2	0
East Lothian	110	153	123	347	154	389
Edinburgh	574	1,685	67	1,710	386	926
Midlothian	2	174	64	64	56	65
West Lothian	477	601	91	556	277	169
Argyll and Bute	145	124	43	128	155	144
Bearsden and Milngavie	66	207	0	93	5	40
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Motherwell	160	231	55	310	494	539
Renfrew	455	427	28	642	696	1,041
Strathkelvin	242	557	6	148	155	145
Angus	123	292	132	90	148	131
Dundee	166	240	78	196	264	401
Perth and Kinross	102	445	9	456	185	342
Orkney Islands	30	59	8	35	4	11
Shetland Islands	30	96	30	112	37	19
Western Isles	222	160	70	106	54	25

n.a.—Not available.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission a comprehensive national house condition survey in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no immediate plans to do so but am considering representations from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and others on this subject at the present time.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest numbers for houses in need of urgent repair in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people are on housing waiting lists in Glasgow Provan, and in the whole of the Greater Glasgow area, respectively;

(2) what is the number of people on housing waiting lists in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reliable and consistent information on waiting list figures is not available centrally.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what urgent steps he is taking in order substantially to reduce the number of young unemployed in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: We shall continue with our successful policies of keeping inflation down, stimulating enterprise, sustaining competitiveness in industry and strengthening the private sector, which are the key to creating a stronger economy and reducing unemployment. The guarantee of a YTS place means that no one under 18 need be unemployed. The new job training scheme aimed primarily at 18 to 25-year-olds together with the expansion of places available under the enterprise allowance scheme (to 9,500 places in Scotland in 1987-88) and the assistance to employers through the new workers scheme will all help young people into employment. While unemployment among young people remains too high the number of unemployed claimants under 25 in Scotland has fallen substantially since the beginning of the year.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what urgent steps he is taking substantially to reduce the total number of unemployed people in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: We shall continue with our successful policies of keeping inflation down, stimulating enterprise, sustaining competitiveness in industry and strengthening the private sector, which are the key to creating a stronger economy and reducing unemployment. The wide range of the Manpower Services Commission's training programmes will provide over 50,000 adult training opportunities in Scotland this year to enable many people to retrain in the skills needed today. In addition some 30,000 people in Scotland are currently gaining useful work experience in the community programme and 9,500 people will have the opportunity this year to join the enterprise allowance scheme for unemployed people setting up their own businesses. Since January 1987 unemployment in Scotland has fallen by almost 48,000.

Local Authority Facilities

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new funds he is making available to Scottish local authorities in order to tackle the problems of street lighting and home safety, in particular for elderly people, lack of entertaining and sporting facilities, and other similar deficiencies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 23 July my right hon. Friend announced provision for local authority current expenditure in 1988-89. This is £3,640 million, 4 per cent. above local authorities' budgets in 1987-88. There is ample scope within this generous figure for authorities to choose their own priorities for expenditure, including the services mentioned by the hon. Member.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the most recent statistics for people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Scotland paid for by public funds;

(2) how many people are at present in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid by public funds in Glasgow, Provan and in the whole of the Greater Glasgow area, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no overall figures for the number of persons in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid out of public funds. However, it is estimated that the number of households placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation under The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 at 30 June 1987 for Scotland was approximately 400. The comparable Glasgow district figure was 124.

Information held centrally does not identify areas other than at district council level or their aggregates.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest assessment of the impact on voter registration of the implementation of the poll tax in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such assessment. The implementation of the community charge system is a quite separate process from electoral registration and should have no adverse impact on it.

Hospital Staff

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the number of full-time nurses serving in hospitals in the Clydesdale area for each year since 1974;

(2) what was the number of full-time doctors serving in hospitals in the Clydesdale area for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many elderly people have been in National Health Service residential homes in Clydesdale since 1974;

(2) how many elderly people have been in National Health Service residential homes in Scotland for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no National Health Service residential homes for the elderly.

Retirement

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated number of people coming into retirement in the whole of Scotland in 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Registrar General estimates that the number of people reaching pensionable age in Scotland in each of the years specified will be in the range 51,000 to 52,000.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated number of people coming into retirement in the Clydesdale area in 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Registrar General estimates that the number of people reaching pensionable age in Clydesdale in each of the years specified will be about 550.

Forestry Rangers

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of forestry rangers employed by the Forestry Commission at each grade in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the following table:

Year (as at 1 April)	*Senior Ranger (Grade 1)*	*Senior Ranger (Grade 2)*	*Ranger (Grade 1)*	*Ranger (Grade 2)*	*Trainee Ranger*	*Totals*
1983	102	37	15	9	3	166
1984	105	31	18	5	3	162
1985	109	30	12	3	2	156
1986	115	26	3	4	3	151
1987	116	24	1	3	1	145

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the pay scales of forestry rangers working for the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton Following a recent review of the terms and conditions of all forestry workers, including rangers, the Forestry Commission will shortly be seeking to negotiate a revised pay structure with the trade unions concerned.

Red Deer Stalkers

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of red deer stalkers employed by the Forestry Commission at each grade, in Scotland, for each of the last five years, and the pay scale for each grade.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton The Commission does not employ persons to act solely as deer stalkers. Some forestry rangers carry out deer stalking as part of their duties.

Andrew Marshall

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to appeal against the findings of Sheriff James R. Smith in the case of the Procurator Fiscal *v.* Andrew Marshall; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question of an appeal against the decision of a sheriff in a criminal case is not one for the Secretary of State for Scotland. The procurator fiscal in whose name the proceedings were raised has, however, marked an appeal against the sheriff's decision and the matter will, accordingly, come before the High Court of Justiciary shortly. In the circumstances any further statement would be quite inappropriate.

Macaulay Land Use Research Institute

Mr. Buchanan-Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in establishing the new Macaulay land use research institute in Aberdeen, particularly with regard to its physical location on one site in Aberdeen.

Mr. Rifkind: The new research institute came into being on 1 April 1987. A board of governors under the chairmanship of Professor Ian Cunningham CBE has been established, and a director, Professor T J Maxwell appointed. The board has given further consideration to the question of where in Aberdeen the new institute should be located, and have decided, following consultation with my Department, that location at Craigiebuckler, rather than at Bucksburn, would be preferable, and that further detailed planning on the feasibility of this should be pursued. It also considers that development at this site should be accompanied by further developments at Glensaugh and Hartwood research stations. I have agreed that the board should proceed to develop its plans on the basis it has outlined.

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many current occupants of Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses;

(2) how many people were admitted to Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland who had previously been discharged from mental illness hospitals and units after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses in each of the last five years; and how many were recidivists.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not readily available in the form requested. The number of inmates in Scottish penal establishments diagnosed as suffering from psychoses in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	88
1983	32
1984	56
1985	62
1986	63

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community psychiatric nurses there have been in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not at present collected centrally. Arrangements are being made to do so as part of a more general development of manpower and personnel information systems in health boards.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give a detailed list of hospital wards serving the Clydesdale area since 1974 which have closed due to shortage of funds;

(2) how many hospital wards serving the Clydesdale area were closed for each year since 1974;

(3) if he will give a detailed list of hospital wards in Scotland which closed due to shortage of equipment, for each year since 1974;

(4) if he will give a detailed list of hospital wards serving the Clydesdale area since 1974, and the detailed reasons for closure in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 October to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray).

ENVIRONMENT

Ozone Layer

89. **Mr. Wray** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the list of the scientific organisations and individual scientists he has consulted or is consulting with regard to the problems posed by the damage inflicted to the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has established, jointly with the Meteorological Office, the stratospheric ozone review group, to advise on the effect of man-made pollutants on the ozone layer. Its members are:

Dr. J. Pyle (University of Cambridge)—Chair
Dr. R. Jones, Dr. A. O'Neill (Meteorological Office)
Dr. J. Farman (British Antarctic Survey)
Dr. H. Roscoe (University of Oxford)
Dr. L. Gray (Rutherford Appleton Laboratory)
Dr. S. Penkett (University of East Anglia)
Dr. R. Cox (Harwell Laboratory)
Dr. G. Jenkins (Department of the Environment)

Their first report — "Stratospheric Ozone", Her Majesty's Stationery Office — was published in August this year and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he or his colleagues in the European Community or other European countries have held consultations aimed at a joint response to the problems which certain industrial and chemical activities cause to the ozone layer;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government are preparing a joint governmental response to the serious problems caused by damage to the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom, the European Community and seven other member states have signed the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. The remaining member states expect to sign by the end of the year. We are already consulting producing and using industries on how to put the provisions of the protocol into practice. In due course the Environment Council will consider those aspects which have to be implemented at Community level. At a meeting of European Environment Ministers on 25 October my noble Friend Lord Belstead suggested wider consultations between the Community and EFTA countries, and in particular closer cooperation on the protocol's provisions for regular scientific review.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what scientific advice he has received about delays in the adoption of the measures needed in order to avoid further destruction of the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: The assessments in the report of the stratospheric ozone review group show that, according to our current knowledge, the stringency and timetable of the measures agreed in the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer will be adequate to avoid any significant depletion of the global ozone layer. We are keeping in close touch with scientific developments and, as provided in the protocol, will keep the adequacy of the measures under review.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is giving to British industries which produce aerosol and other similar chemicals about the damage inflicted to the ozone layer of our planet by such products.

Mr. Moynihan: Concern about the ozone layer is well known to industries in the United Kingdom producing and using chlorofluorocarbons — (CFCs) — and halons, chemicals which have the potential to damage the ozone layer. My Department kept in close touch with them during negotiation of the recently agreed Montreal protocol and we are now consulting them on its implementation. ICI is represented as an observer on the stratospheric ozone research group which will be watching developments closely with a view to producing a second report next year. Discussions were also held at a recent seminar organised by the Chemical Manufacturers Association in Edinburgh to review the subject of the antarctic ozone hole and related matters.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the outcome of the meeting recently held in Canada about the problems created by the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: It is the Government's view that the agreement at the diplomatic conference in Montreal on 16 September of a protocol to control production and consumption of ozone layer depleting substances is a significant environmental achievement.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had talks regarding extra funding to research departments of universities on matters related to aerosols and similar products and about their impact on the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department is funding a programme of research into stratospheric ozone, including the effects of aerosols propellants at the following establishments:

Harwell Laboratory (laboratory Kinetics)
University of Cambridge (Computer Modelling)
University of Oxford (Balloon Measurements)
British Antartic Survey (Antarctic Ozone)
National Physical Laboratory (Instrument Development)
Inscon (Monitoring Chlorofluorocarbons)

In addition, there are substantial research programmes run by the Meteorological Office and Science and Engineering Research Council, with which we keep in close touch.

Rate Support Grant Settlement

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the date for making the announcement of details in respect of the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend issued a consultation paper on 27 October setting out details of his proposals for the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement in England.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Ridley: I propose to charge a fee of £10 for subject access by members of the public. There is no current intention to charge the Department's own staff seeking access to personal data held about them as employees.

My Department — including PSA and the Crown Suppliers—has 13 register entries, each of which covers several separate systems. In the unlikely event of a data subject requesting access to all entries, the total cost would be £130.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new companies opened up in enterprise zones throughout the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of incoming firms to the enterprise zones in the United Kingdom and, among those, the numbers of new start-ups are contained in the table[1]:

	All incoming firms	*New start-ups*
June 1981–May 1982	295	165
June 1982–May 1983	474	281
June 1983–September 1984	45	[2]—
October 1984–December 1985[3]	506	[2]—

[1] The information from 1981 to May 1983 has been derived from the publication "Monitoring Enterprise Zones, Year Three Report" by Roger Tym and Partners 1984. From June 1983 the data was collected from the publications "Enterprise Zone Information 1983-84" and "Enterprise Zone Information 1984-85", both by the Department of the Environment. There were differences between the methods used. Thus the changes between 1981-83 and 1983-85 may be due in part to differences in definition.

[2] Data not available.

[3] The data for Belfast and Londonderry Enterprise Zones extends to September 1985.

Figures for later years will be available shortly with the publication of "An Evaluation of the Enterprise Zone Experiment" and "Enterprise Zone Information 1985-86".

Rating Reform

Mr. John Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further consideration he has given to the implementation of the proposed poll tax.

Mr. Howard: I have given, and continue to give, a high priority to this issue.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of the effect on the rate of electoral registration of his proposal for a poll tax.

Mr. Howard: The basis for compiling the electoral register in England and Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I understand that he has no proposals for changing the date for electoral registration.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report,* column *866,* he will set out the information he has about the number of domestic properties in each local authority in the rateable value bands listed in the answer.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed the available information in the Library.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the studies leading to the Green Paper Cmnd. 9714 "Paying for Local Government" which are referred to in the final paragraph of the ministerial foreword.

Mr. Howard: No. The conclusions arising out of the studies are contained in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government"—Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total cost to date of government initiatives to promote the community charge; and if he will also supply specific figures for the cost of *(a)* the tours by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) and by the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe, (Mr. Howard) respectively, *(b)* the production of the booklet entitled "Paying for Local Government" and *(c)* the production of a video by the same name.

Mr. Howard: Since the publication of our Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" in January 1986, successive Ministers have taken the usual steps to ensure that Parliament, the media and all those affected, including local businessmen and the general public, are informed about the detail of the three-part package of reforms. It is not possible to put specific figures to the costs involved.

The three particular information exercises mentioned by the hon. Member all address the detail of the Government's proposals for local government finance as a whole, rather than focusing on the community charge.

(a) The total cost of the regional visits made by my hon. Friend and myself, when we held discussions with leaders and officers of 20 local authorities as well as 11 meetings with local businessmen, was some £9,200, which includes the cost of back-ground panels explaining the three-part package. Some of the visits took place in association with other Government business.

(b) Production and printing 100,000 copies of the booklet cost £16,200.

(c) Fifty copies of the video were produced at a cost of £15,000.

Sand and Gravel

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against refusal to allow sand and gravel extraction operations have been made over the past eight years; and how many of those appeals have been allowed by him and his predecessors.

Mr. Trippier: Information is available only in respect of cases decided by the Secretary of State. Of the 63 sand and gravel appeals determined between 1 October 1980 and 30 September 1987, 25 were allowed.

Falconry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of falconry licences issued during each of the last five years, giving the categories and numbers of prey species involved; and whether details are collected by his Department of the numbers of prey finally taken.

Mr. Moynihan: Details of the number of falconry licences issued in the past five years and of the prey species involved are set out in the table. All licensees are required to submit returns of numbers of prey taken.

England and Wales

Year	*Licences issued*	*Prey species involved*	*Number authorised*	*Birds actually taken*
1983	66	Blackbird	1,080	319
		Skylark	200	37
		Meadow Pipit	65	21
		Moorhen	112	14
		Song Thrush	75	11
		Partridge	55	7
		Coot	46	5
		Pheasant	40	0
1984	68	Blackbird	917	198
		Skylark	437	120
		Meadow Pipit	100	17
		Song Thrush	60	6
1985	68	Blackbird	978	246
		Skylark	620	179
		Meadow Pipit	110	12
		Moorhen	10	3
		Song Thrush	120	15
		Blackheaded Gull	68	17
		Lapwing	15	1
1986	69	Blackbird	921	222
		Skylark	600	163
		Meadow Pipit	95	26
		Song Thrush	155	7
		Moorhen	10	0
		Blackheaded Gull	150	60
		Fieldfare	10	0
		Redwing	10	0
1987	61	Blackbird	858	
		Skylark	695	[1]60
		Meadow Pipit	70	
		Song Thrush	90	
		Blackheaded Gull	50	
		Fieldfare	15	
		Redwing	10	

[1] Only report received to date.

Scotland

Year	*Licences issued*	*Prey species involved*	*Number authorised*	*Birds actually taken*
1983	5	Blackbird	4	2
		Skylark	10	10
		Thrush	10	0
1984	6	Blackbird	80	14
		Thrush	20	0
1985	3	Blackbird	70	0
		Skylark	90	43
		Meadow Pipit	20	5
		Thrush	5	0
1986	3	Skylark	70	35
		Meadow Pipit	20	0
1987	5	Blackbird	75	[1]
		Skylark	65	

[1] None reported.

Sewage

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will detail resources needed to bring up to the required standards the sewage systems in the whole of the United Kingdom;

(2) what plans he has to tackle the crisis in British sewage systems in the event of privatisation of water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The regional water authorities are spending enough on the renewal and replacement of their sewerage and other assets to maintain the integrity of these systems and to improve the performance and quality of their services. In 1986-87 their capital expenditure on sewerage and sewage treatment and disposal was £465 million, 25 per cent. more than in 1980-81 in volume terms.

Water services in other parts of the United Kingdom are a matter for the Secretaries of State concerned.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take urgent steps in order to make urban development corporations accountable to the local communities and their elected local authorities in matters related to green areas, shopping, transport and educational facilities and to environmental requirements.

Mr. Trippier: No. The UDCs are appointed by the Secretary of State and are accountable through him to Parliament. They seek to work closely with local authorities and are required to consult local authorities about the exercise of UDC powers.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are in his view needed in order to avoid speculation in the housing sector, in the event of the creation of further urban development corporations.

Mr. Trippier: None.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many of the occupants of the homes built by the London Docklands development corporation were previously residents in that area;

(2) how many families previously resident in the London docklands and with an annual income of £9,000

or less have been able to acquire new homes made available by the London Docklands development corporation;

(3) how many new homes have been built by the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: A total of 6,928 new homes were completed within the LDDC's area between July 1981 and 31 March 1987. None was built by or for the corporation itself. Of 4,210 homes built on corporation-owned land, 3,263 were for owner occupation. Of these 1,490—46 per cent.—were sold to individuals previously resident in one of the three docklands boroughs.

No information is available about the previous residence of tenants of homes provided on LDDC land or of owners of homes built on non-LDDC sites. No income data is available relating to occupants of new homes in docklands.

Rents

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimates for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 of the increased cost of housing benefits which will result from his proposals to end the present protection on rent prices in the private sector.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our deregulation proposals will apply only to tenancies granted after the legislation comes into effect. The rights of existing tenants in respect of both rent and security, will not be affected.

Any estimate of the effects of the proposals on housing benefit payments would at this stage be purely speculative.

Low-cost Houses

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many low-cost houses are at present needed in order to extend private home ownership to low income families.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not all low-income families would wish to try to buy a house on mortgage and many would have insufficient means to do so, even on low-cost home ownership terms. There is, therefore, no point in attempting to estimate how many low-cost houses are needed to enable all low-income families to buy.

Water (Privatisation)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the European countries where the national water resources have been privatised.

Mr. Moynihan: A number of countries involve private companies in water supply services either directly or through franchise arrangements. In France 62 per cent. of the population receives water from private companies.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific steps he is taking for the protection of the health of British people in the event of privatisation of water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The legislation giving effect to our proposals for the restructuring and privatisation of the water authorities in England and Wales will clarify and strengthen the legal basis for drinking water quality standards. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and local authorities will continue to have monitoring roles in this area. The National Rivers Authority will be responsible for granting consents for discharges to rivers, estuaries and coastal waters, including the discharge of effluent from the sewage treatment works of the privatised utilities.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give a detailed response to the European Community report which found that drinking water in Britain is not up to the standards required.

Mr. Moynihan: The European Commission has queried some aspects of the implementation of the EC drinking water directive in the United Kingdom. The Government are examining the queries and will be replying to the Commission shortly.

Development Corporations

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what relative priority is accorded to *(a)* the commercial interests of development, and *(b)* the needs of the local community in deciding the policies of a development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: It is for the UDCs to decide how to regenerate their areas. In doing so, they will have in mind the need to strike a balance between commercial interests and the needs of the local community.

Housing (Consultations)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in tackling the housing crisis in Britain, he will make it his policy to consult fully and regularly with local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is already my practice to do so.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest statistics for people in bed and breakfast accommodation in the United Kingdom, paid by public funds.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no overall figures of the number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation paid for by public funds. However, there were an estimated 11,300 households in Great Britain, who were being accommodated in bed and breakfast at the end of June 1987 by local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts. In almost all of these cases at least part of the costs will have been met from public funds.

National Coal Board (Tenants)

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what protection he will give to the tenants of National Coal Board houses once such houses are sold to private owners.

Mr. Waldegrave: Tenants of British Coal who are transferred to private landlords will continue to have the full protection of rent, landlord and tenant and housing legislation. They will enjoy the same security of tenure, the right to a registered rent, and continue to have protection against the harassment and illegal eviction. New landlords will have repairing obligations under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Existing tenants will continue to enjoy protection in respect of rents and security when our proposals for reform of the rent legislation are implemented.

Storm Damage

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are to give assistance to private householders to remove fallen trees following the recent hurricane.

Mr. Moynihan: Removal of fallen trees is financially a matter for the owners of those trees. My right hon. Friend has already issued advice to householders on tree removal and the case of damaged trees. The Task Force, Trees, of the Countryside Commission will be considering what further advice to offer.

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest available estimate as to the cost to local authorities of making good storm damage consequent upon the gales of 15 and 16 October; what amount of grant will be lost to local authorities as a result of their paying up to a penny rate on repair; and how this sum breaks down between the individual affected authorities.

Mr. Chope: The Department has asked local authorities to give initial estimates of the costs of dealing with the storm damage by Friday 30 October.

Prudent local authorities will have budgeted for their likely level of grant after taking account of contingencies. They therefore should not suffer additional grant losses as a result of having to meet emergency-related costs up to the threshold of the Bellwin scheme.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what grounds he disagreed with the inspectors view that the advantage of retaining the main building of County Hall for local government activities was an overriding consideration.

Mr. Chope: The grounds are set out in the decision letter issued on 20 October, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigation are being pursued by his Department on the listed building implications for the development of County Hall as a hotel.

Mr. Chope: None. These are matters for the London residuary body, as the owners of County Hall.

London City Airport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any inquiries have been made in his Department for the use of London City airport by any aircraft other than the Dash-7.

Mr. Chope: No.

Parkinson and Woolaway Houses

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of Parkinson and Woolaway houses in private ownership he now expects to be repurchased by local authorities on the grounds that the cost of repair would exceed the value of the repaired house.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities have reported some 800 Woolaway and 1,000 Parkinson dwellings in private ownership. It is not possible to forecast reliably the proportion likely to be repurchased by authorities under the housing defects legislation, but we would expect the majority to be repaired. We are currently considering whether the Act's rules concerning repurchase as against repair can be made more flexible.

Brixham Harbour (Development)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he chose not to call in the recent planning application for a housing development and marina at Brixham harbour, Devon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Because I considered that it did not meet the criteria for doing so, which are set out in my Department's circular 2/81.

Peterborough Development Corporation

Mr. Quentin Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the date on which Peterborough development corporation is to be wound up.

Mrs. Roe: On 11 June 1986 my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) announced that 30 September 1988 had been set as the target wind up date for the corporation. Consultations under section 41 of the New Towns Act 1981 with Cambridgeshire county and Peterborough city councils have been undertaken, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have considered the responses received. Having taken these into account, my right hon. Friend confirms his intention to wind up Peterborough development corporation on 30 September 1988. The necessary order will be made next year.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the latest information returned by London boroughs and metropolitan districts under section 56 of the Local Government Act 1985 shows.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has today placed the information relating to September 1986, December 1986 and March 1987 in the Library of the House. The remaining information for June 1987, March 1988 and March 1989 will be placed in the Library when it becomes available.

I announced in February that some 6,300 posts had been saved immediately on abolition. The residuary bodies employed nearly 4,500 staff in June 1986. They are making good progress towards the early completion of these tasks and their staff had fallen by 600 by March 1987.

The information returned under section 56 shows that the number of staff engaged on functions inherited from the abolished councils rose by nearly 1,200 between June 1986 and March 1987.

The estimates include all staff reported as taken on by successor councils to discharge their inherited functions, whether as an immediate consequence of abolition or subsequently. It is evident that some successor councils have not taken full advantage of the opportunity created by abolition for the streamlining of services and the elimination of duplication. Such councils remain accountable to their electorates for failing to pass on to ratepayers the real benefits in cash savings and improved services which abolition has achieved.

Barnacle Geese

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the removal of barnacle geese from the EEC protected birds list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have not received any representations to remove the barnacle goose from the species listed on annex 1 to the Council directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday, 30 October 1987

ENERGY

Elderly Persons (Home Heating)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Energy what advice his Department makes available to elderly people to try to ensure cost-effective heating of their homes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department's energy efficiency office produces a range of publications which provide information to householders, including the elderly, on the cost-effective energy efficiency measures which they can take to improve their homes. Advice is also available to the public on the free Monergy hotline telephone service number 0800-234-800. In addition, the office supports the community insulation projects which provide a free or low-cost insulation service and advice for elderly and other householders on low incomes.

BNF Sellafield

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each occasion since April 1986 on which a Minister in his Department had made a statement encouraging members of the public to visit British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield nuclear complex.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 24 July 1987 at column *519*.

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply on 24 July, *Official Report*, column *517*, on how many occasions and for what length of time Euratom inspectors have been present at British Nuclear Fuels plc Sellafield nuclear site since March 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to my reply of 24 July, at column *517*.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, (Mr. Mullin) *Official Report*, 24 July, column *517*, whether plutonium from Calder Hall and Chapel Cross Military Magnox reactors is kept segregated from safeguarded plutonium stocks in a separate building.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 24 July at column *517*.

Mr. Riddick asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is now in a position to publish further information on plutonium in line with recommendation 13(b) of the Sizewell report.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In the light of discussions between my Department, the AEA, BNFL and the generating boards, I have decided to publish information concerning the production of plutonium from United Kingdom civil reactors on an annual basis from 1986-87 onwards. Work on collating the information is in hand and we will publish it as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he will take to the conference next month of Environmental Ministers from all North sea states to (i) limit industrial discharges into the marine environment, (ii) stop all sea dumping and incineration, (iii) phase out the discharging through pipelines of heavy metals, radio-nuclides organochlorines and other chemicals known to affect the food chain and (iv) test for more chemicals than Her Majesty's Government presently do; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am giving detailed consideration to the issues that will be considered in London later this month at the second international conference on the protection of the North sea, including some of those mentioned by the hon. Member. I cannot prejudge the United Kingdom's final negotiating position at the conference nor predict what the outcome will be.

Rating Reform

Mr. Mans asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what transition arrangements will be made when the community charge is introduced in 1990.

Mr. Howard: The Government are considering their proposals for transitional arrangements in the light of recent representations.

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the charitable status of manses will be maintained under his proposed community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: When the community charge is fully in force, no domestic property will pay rates. The question of charitable status will not therefore arise.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply of 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*, he will give a source for the sample survey data on which the projections in the answers on regional gainers and losers in respect of the poll tax are based.

Mr. Howard: The information is taken from the family expenditure surveys for 1981 to 1984 inclusive.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the titles of papers on the sea disposal of nuclear wastes submitted by his Department to the London dumping convention in October 1987; and if he will place copies of all such reports in the Library.

Mr. Moynihan: In common with other contracting parties to the London dumping convention, the United Kingdom submitted to the October 1987 meeting a response to a questionnaire on nuclear matters framed at the 1986 convention meeting. A copy of this questionnaire and the United Kingdom response have been placed in the Library. The response refers to a number of documents, including the "Report of the Independent Review of Disposal of Radioactive Waste in the North East Atlantic" (the Holliday report, 1984), and the "Assessment of Best Practicable Environmental Options (BPEOs) for Management of Low and Intermediate Level Solid Radioactive Waste" (DOE, 1986). Both of these documents are already in the Library.

Water Authorities

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Environment if he will list the water authorities engaging senior management staff on performance related contracts in the financial year 1986-87; what was the number of personnel involved; and what was the average bonus paid out in each water authority area for the financial year 1986-87.

Mr Moynihan: This information is not held centrally.

British Coal Houses

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Housing Corporation regarding the purchase of British Coal houses.

Mrs. Roe: On 30 September my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning met representatives of British Coal and the Housing Corporation to discuss the progress of negotiations between British Coal and the housing associations interested in purchasing certain blocks of British Coal houses in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. I understand that these negotiations are continuing.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make additional finance available to enable housing associations to purchase British Coal houses.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Storm Damage

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what categories of buildings owned by county councils and district councils are not eligible for financial assistance for their repair following the recent hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Buildings suffering damage which is insurable under normal building insurance policies would not qualify under the scheme of special financial assistance to local authorities announced by my right hon. Friend on 21 October.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Policy

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for overseas development policy of the decisions taken at the latest meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Chris Patten: Britain's aid policy, particularly on major issues such as developing-coutry debt and structural adjustment, is entirely consistent with decisions taken at recent IMF-IBRD meeting.

Third World

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has for supporting education, specifically for women, in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: About £140 million a year is provided from the aid programme for supporting education. A substantial poportion is spent on education within developing countries and benefits both sexes.

Some £50 million of the total is currently spent on training in Britain. We are exploring the reasons for the low number of nominations of women or training awards and are making a major effort to increase the number receiving awards for the 1988-89 academic year and beyond. We also support less formal education specifically for women. Examples include aid for Pakistan's Open University, which is particularly helpful to women who cannot leave home for education, and recruitment of women for training as agricultural extension workers in Nepal.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what response he has received from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation to the consultation paper on the proposals for a national curriculum; and what consideration he proposes to give to it;

(2) what response he has received from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation to the consultation paper on the proposals for grant-maintained schools, admission of pupils to maintained schools and financial delegation; and what consideration he proposes to give to it.

Mrs. Rumbold: Copies of these responses, along with all responses received other than those from individuals, have been placed in the Library. We are giving very careful consideration to the points which the Royal Association has made.

Inspectors' Reports (Publication Dates)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date in each of the last six years his Department published Her Majesty's inspectors' report on local education authority provision and the quality of education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The annual expenditure report by Her Majesty's inspectors has been published on the following dates in the last six years:

5 April 1982; 20 July 1983; 6 June 1984;
23 May 1985; 21 May 1986 and 21 July 1987.

WALES

Conductive Education

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a grant to the University of Wales for a five-year evaluation by a research team to assess the effectiveness of conductive education and to monitor how well it transposes from Hungary to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The University of Birmingham will be carrying out research aimed at assessing the effectiveness of conductive education and monitoring how well it transposes from Hungary to the United Kingdom and I see no purpose in a second such project. Both my right hon. Friend and I will be taking an interest in the research and will consider particularly its relevance to children in Wales

Nursing Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of state For Wales if he will provide a detailed breakdown of publicly-funded subsidies to private residential establishments and nursing homes by local authority in Wales for each of the last five years, together with the estimates for 1987.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 26 October 1987, at columns *25-27*. I have also written to him today.

Cash Limits

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to his Department's cash limits in the current year.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. The cash limit on class XVII, vote 2 is being increased by £11,251,000 to £66,214,000. This increase relates to the grant-in-aid for the Welsh Development Agency and is necessary to cover the cost to the agency of taking on the residual industrial assets of the Cwmbran development corporation. As a consequence, there will be a corresponding reduction to the cash limit for WO/LA 1 of £11,251,000 to £353,747,000.

The cash limit on class XVII, vote 9 is being increased by £85,000 to £38,785,000. This increase covers the additional cost to the Department arising from the transfer of NHS audit staff from the DHSS. There is a corresponding reduction in the cash limit for class XV, vote 5.

The cash limit on class XVII, vote 10 is being increased by £22,675,000 to £953,289,000. This increase takes account of additional block grant payable in respect of teachers' pay, together with payments and abatements in grant in respect of previous years in the light of out-turn expenditure information. The adjustments to block grant will be subject to the approval of the requisite supplementary rate support grant reports by the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"The Times"

Mr. Warren asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute *The Times* newspaper for publishing, on Friday 23 October, details of the Royal Navy nuclear deterrent base facilities in Scotland: and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. I understand that the release of the material contained in the article in *The Times* on 23 October was authorised.

PRIME MINISTER

Commonwealth Conference

Mr. Ronnie Campbell asked the Prime Minister what cost to public funds arose as a result of her return from Vancouver to the United Kingdom at the end of the Commonwealth conference.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) on 22 October, at column *847*.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government propose to implement those sections of the Disabled Persons (Representation Services and Consultation) Act 1986 which offer some assistance for mentally handicapped school leavers, their parents, and carers.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Disabled hopes to make an announcement shortly about the implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Act.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Armed Robberies

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the percentage of armed robberies for the years 1979 to 1986 which involved unregistered guns;

(2) if he will make a statement on the number of armed robberies for the years 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information for England and Wales relates to the number of offences of robbery recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used and is published annually in table 3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", the latest issue of which, Cm. 233, for 1986, was published on 29 October 1987. In 1986, 2,651 such robberies were recorded, compared with 1,038 in 1979; however, the proportion of all robberies in which firearms were used remained at about 9 per cent. during this period. The police do not record the number of firearms recovered which were shown to have been used in crime, nor the proportion of these which were subsequently found to have been illegally held.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to transfer Irish prisoners in gaols in England, Scotland and Wales to prisons nearer their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to extend his policy which enables prisoners in England and Wales to serve sentences in a prison near their family and relatives so that Northern Ireland prisoners on the mainland can be transferred to Northern Ireland prisons to complete their sentences.

Mr. John Patten: Under the Criminal Justice Act 1961 sentences inmates may be transferred at their own application between United Kingdom jurisdictions. In dealing with requests from inmates in England and Wales for transfers to Northern Ireland, the Department, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Office, considers each case on its merits, applying publicly stated criteria covering such matters as the length of the sentence remaining to be served, the inmate's current behaviour, and his or her history and background.

Transfers of sentenced prisoners to the Republic of Ireland will not be possible unless and until the Republic takes powers to hold prisoners sentenced in another jurisdiction.

Applications for transfers from inmates held in Scottish prisons fall to be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Exclusion Orders

Mr. Mullin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those who were the subject of exclusion orders between November 1974 and the present day, giving the date on which the order was made.

Mr. Hurd: No. Statistics on exclusion orders made under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974, 1976 and 1984 are published quaterly in statistical bulletins published by the Home Office. I do not consider it right or fair to the individuals concerned for me to publicise their names without their permission.

Grants

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many section 11 grants he has approved in each of the last five years; how many applications he has refused; and how many are awaiting decision, categorised by *(a)* Waltham Forest, *(b)* London and *(c)* nationally and sub-categorised by whether they relate to (i) social services, (ii) education and (iii) other purposes.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is as follows. It is expressed in terms of numbers of posts applied for.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Posts approved	1,188	856	898	786	124
Posts refused	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	723	428

[1] 1 January—23 October

[2] Information not available.

Applications currently under consideration are:

Area	*Education*	*Social Services*	*Other*	*Total*
Waltham Forest	[1]6	22	2	30
London (including Waltham Forest)	[1]76	60	28	164
England and Wales (including London)	[1]631	223	124	978

[1] An application for posts for part-time staff covering 4,000 hours a year is also under consideration.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he accepts that provision for second generation immigrants with similar problems to first generation immigrants is eligible for section 11 grant approval, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Applications for section 11 grant are considered in accordance with the criteria set out in Home Office circular No. 72/1986. This makes clear that the scheme covers not only those born in another country of the Commonwealth, however long they have resided in the United Kingdom, but also their immediate descendants.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria for refusing entry at British ports to individuals who have obtained valid entry clearance visas; how many have been refused entry on arrival since the introduction of the current system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 13 of the "Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules" (HC 169), laid before Parliament on 9 February 1983.

Since visa requirements are extended to citizens of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria, the number of such citizens who have been refused entry at Heathrow, Gatwick and Dover while in possession of a valid entry clearance (up to 24 October) is as follows:

	Numbers
India	36
Pakistan	93
Bangladesh	49
Ghana	69
Nigeria	79
Total	326

Civil Defence

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the cost of current proposals for nuclear civil defence (i) London and (ii) nationally, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Civil defence planning under the Civil Defence Act 1948 relates to measures to mitigate the effect of any hostile attack by a foreign power, whatever form it may take. Separate costings for nuclear aspects are not made.

In London, the principal responsibility for civil defence planning rests with the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, whose preliminary estimate for civil defence expenditure as a whole for 1987-88 was £1·5 million. Total programmed expenditure on civil defence in the United Kingdom during 1987-88 is £105 million.

Fire Risk Categorisation Reviews

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he gives in respect of fire risk categorisation reviews.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Home Office fire service circular No. 4/1985, of which a copy is in the Library, commended to fire authorities the report on fire cover standards of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council. The report recommended that fire authorities should review the categorisation of fire risk in their area and provided guidance on how the fire risk of areas should be assessed. Fire authorities were advised that Her Majesty's inspectors of fire services would be ready to offer advice on application of the guidance, and such advice has been given.

DNA Tests

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is proposed that DNA tests will be available for all seeking right of entry to Britain on the Indian subcontinent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: DNA tests have been commercially available since 1 June from Cellmark Diagnostics. It is open to any person who commissions such as test to submit the results in support of his immigration application, if he so chooses. In addition, the Government are carrying out a trial using the technique in a small sample of cases, so that the general acceptability and feasibility of its use in immigration work can be assessed. The trial is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Hacking

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to make hacking — unauthorised entry into a computer or communications system—a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Law Commission is examining the adequacy of the existing criminal law to cover misuse of computers. We will consider whether legislation is needed in the light of its advice.

Nationality

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been refused naturalisation under the British Nationality Act 1981 on the basis of either unsound mind or not being of good character.

Mr. Renton: Between July 1986 and September 1987, three applications for naturalisation as British citizens have been recorded as refused on the ground that the applicant was of unsound mind. Earlier figures are not readily available.

Between January 1983 and September 1987, 1,244 applications for naturalisation as British citizens have been recorded as refused on the ground that the applicant was not of good character.

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the steps being taken to inform people who are currently in prison, long-stay hospitals and homes for the disabled of their rights to register as British citizens under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981 before the deadline of 31 December.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 21 October at column *779*.

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women are eligible for registration as British citizens on grounds of marriage under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981;

(2) how many people living in Britain are eligible to register as British citizens by 31 December under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981;

(3) how many people have registered to date as British citizens under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981; and what proportion of the total number eligible this represents;

(4) how many people living in the London borough of Lewisham are eligible to register as British citizens by 31 December under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Renton: The number of people entitled to apply before 31 December 1987 for registration under sections 7 and 8 of the British Nationality Act 1981 cannot be accurately estimated.

From 1983 to 1986 inclusive, some 112,000 adults have been registered as entitled on grounds of marriage to a British citizen or of long residence in the United Kingdom. Provisional figures for 1987 show there to have been some 24,000 registrations on this basis up to the end of September.

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases have people been refused registration as a British citizen under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981; and on what grounds.

Mr. Renton: Figures relating to the refusal of British citizenship alone are not readily available but between January 1983 and September 1987, 7,485 registration applications for British citizenship, British Overseas citizenship and British subject status were refused on the grounds either that the Secretary of State was not satisfied that the applicants had met the statutory requirements or that he did not think it appropriate to exercise his discretion to register them.

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to ensure that people who are eligible to register as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981 are fully informed of this right in time to make their application by the deadline of 31 December.

Mr. Renton: A free information leaflet "Your Right to British Citizenship", was published in 1986. It is available in seven languages. At the same time, a poster drawing attention to the leaflet was published and has been widely distributed to advisory and community organisations. We followed this up this year by publicising the leaflet in selected local and ethnic minority newspapers in March and September in an advertisement drawing attention to the 31 December 1987 deadline.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those religions and religious occasions which he proposes will be exempt from his proposed changes in the law relating to the carrying of offensive weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We propose in the Criminal Justice Bill to make it an offence for a person to have a bladed or sharply pointed article in a public place without good reason or lawful authority. It will be a defence for a person charged with the offence to prove that he has such an article with him for religious reasons.

Schools-Police (Relations)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the report from the working party of teachers and police representatives on ways of improving relations between schools and the police; what response he has made; and if he will make it his policy that the working party's recommendations should be made available to local police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of the report, which we regard as a welcome demonstration of co-operation between teachers and the police over police involvement in schools. We are still considering a response to the report together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Prison Kitchens

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the number of random hygiene inspections of prison kitchens made by Government environmental health officers in each of the last five years, indicating the percentage of total prison kitchens which each figure represents;

(2) if he will list the number of occasions in each of the last five years when, as a result of random hygiene inspections, kitchen standards were found to be below the standard elsewhere applied through the Food Hygiene (General) Regulation 1970; and which prisons were involved.

Mr. John Patten: The arrangement for environmental health officers from the Department of Health and Social Security to conduct random hygiene inspections of prison kitchens was introduced only last year. A five-year profile cannot yet be provided.

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Government will take steps to secure the removal of Crown immunity of prison kitchens from inspection by local authority environmental health officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The prison service has its own internal arrangements for inspecting prison kitchens and there are no plans to make far-reaching changes. Inspections are considered to be of a standard equivalent to those that would otherwise be carried out by local authority environmental health officers. The arrangements do not preclude calling on local authority environmental health officers for advice, if necessary.

Life Sentences

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently serving life sentences in England for offences other than murder; and how many of these are of Irish nationality.

Mr. John Patten: The recording of nationality on the records held centrally for citizens of the Republic of Ireland is not completely reliable because it depends upon the information provided by the prisoner. On 31 August, 520 prisoners were serving life sentences for offences other than murder in prison department establishments in England and Wales, of whom about 15 were recorded as citizens of or born in the Republic of Ireland.

Trial Statistics

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide statistics showing the respective proportions of black, Asian and white defendants acquitted during 1985 and 1986 by courts in England and Wales following remands in custody until trial.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the following table. However, the figures are to an unknown extent too low because for a substantial proportion of the untried prisoners the outcome of the court proceeding was not known—10 per cent. for the 1985 data and 19 per cent. for the 1986 data. Further analysis by ethnic origin of remand prisoners was published in "The ethnic origins of prisoners: the prison population on 30 June 1985 and persons received, July 1984-March 1985." (Table 16 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 17/86.)

Proportion of persons initially received into Prison Department establishments in England and Wales as untried prisoners in 1985 and 1986 who were known to have been found not guilty or not proceeded against: by ethnic origin

Percentage

Year of receptions	*White*	*Ethnic origin*				*All persons*
		West Indian Guyanese African	*Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi*	*Chinese Arab Mixed origin*	*Other, not recorded (including refusals)*	
1985	3·6	7·4	6·3	4·8	5·8	4·1
1986[1]	3·9	7·5	7·2	6·8	4·2	4·4

[1] Provisional.

Young Persons (Analgesics)

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the incidence of young people, from Scotland in particular, providing false information to doctors in order to obtain analgesics for non-medical purposes; what action the police take in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that it is not possible to assess how many young Scots are obtaining prescriptions in this way. The Metropolitan Police are working closely with their colleagues in other forces and with the Drugs Inspectorate on this problem; and they will take appropriate action when circumstances allow. The situation is being carefully monitored.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy that all future disclosures of personal data from his Department's computer in Newcastle to the security services be covered by a certificate signed by him under section 27 of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

I can confirm that the requirements of section 27 of the Data Protection Act will be followed in respect of any request for personal data for the purpose of safeguarding national security.

CIVIL SERVICE

Public Bodies (Women's Representation)

Miss Emma Nicholson asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many women are member of public bodies, the members of which are appointed by Ministers; and what proportion these women represent of the total membership of those bodies.

Mr. Luce: Figures for appointments by Ministers to public bodies as of 1 April 1986 are to be found in "Public Bodies 1986" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Some 8,923 of these appointments were women, representing 19 per cent. of the total. Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Exports)

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the growth in British exports to the EEC compares with the growth of British trade over the past 10 years.

Mr. Butcher: In the 12 months ended September 1987, the value of United Kingdom exports to the other countries of the European Community was three and a quarter times that in the same period in 1976-77; United Kingdom exports worldwide were two and a half times their value 10 years ago.

Spirituous Beverages

Mr. Sims asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further action he has taken to secure the removal of discrimination in rates of value added tax levied on spirituous beverages in Greece since 1 January.

Mr. Maude: Following strong representations by the Government about the discriminatory VAT rates in Greece, the European Commission has commenced infraction proceedings against the Greek Government in the European Court.

Mr. Sims asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps have been taken to seek the removal of discrimination in rates of alcohol tax and value-added tax, as well as in alcohol tax deferment provision, applicable to spirituous beverages in Portugal since 1 January 1986.

Mr. Maude: We have made several representations to Portugal and to the European Commission about the elements in the Portuguese tax regime which discriminate againt imported products. As a result, significant improvements have been made in the Portuguese legislation, which removed the main tax discrimination against imported spirits. We are continuing to press the European Commission for further action.

Trade Marks

Mr. Mills asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many trade mark registrations were filed in 1979, 1983 and 1987.

Mr. Maude: The number of applications for the registration of trade marks filed in the years mentioned were as follows:

	Number
1979	19,328
1983	22,100
1987	25,778

The figure for 1987 relates to the period to the end of September and includes applications for the registration of service marks.

Patents

Mr. Mills asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many patent registrations were filed in 1979, 1983 and 1987.

Mr. Maude: The number of patent applications filed at the United Kingdom Patent Office in the years mentioned were as follows:

	Number
1979	44,666
1983	34,691
1987	23,014

In addition, applications designating the United Kingdom were filed at the European Patent Office as follows:

	Number
1979	10,402
1983	28,602
1987	28,014

The figures for 1987 relate to the period to the end of September.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the reasons for the delay in announcing the successor programme to the Alvey programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The report's recommendations are being considered as part of our review of the priorities, in the field of research and development, for the Department of Trade and Industry. I will make a statement as soon as possible.

Rover Group

Mr. Anthony Coombs asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Rover Group's plans to dispose of its interests in Ashok Leyland and Ennore Foundries.

Mr. Hind asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Rover Group's plans to dispose of its interest in Ashok Leyland and Ennore Foundries.

Mr. Atkins: The Rover Group announced on 26 October that it had agreed to sell Land Rover Leyland

International Holdings, the holding company for its Indian interests, to the Hinduja/Iveco Group. These interests comprise 39·04 per cent. of the commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland Ltd. and 59·09 per cent. of Ennore Foundries Ltd.

Following the completion of the sale of Land Rover Leyland International Holdings the Government will accept no further responsibility for ensuring that the obligations of Land Rover Leyland International Holdings, Ashok Leyland and Ennore Foundries are met.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the marginal cost of paying child benefit to all those families who currently pay income tax but whose income tax paid is less than the amount of child benefit received; and what is the outgoing on child benefit which is paid to families not liable for income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For 1987-88 it is estimated that the difference between child benefit received and income tax paid by those families who pay income tax and whose income tax is less than the amount of child benefit they receive is about £200 million. Families who are not liable to income tax are estimated to receive about £1,200 million in child benefit in 1987-88.

Women Employees

Miss Emma Nicholson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many women now occupy posts in *(a)* the administrative grade of the Civil Service and *(b)* the executive grade of the Civil Service; and what proportions these represent of the total number of civil servants employed in those higher grades.

Mr. Brooke: The information as at 1 January 1987 is as follows:

Grade level[1]	*Number of women*	*Percentage*
Open Structure	1,800	8
Executive	55,300	27
Administrative[2]	182,900	66

[1] Broadly equivalent grades based on a comparison of salary scales.

[2] Formerly known as Clerical grades.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. John Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate in how many cases mortgage tax relief is given to more than one individual in respect of the same mortgage.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assume that my hon. Friend is interested in the number of unmarried sharers who receive mortgage interest relief on a shared loan. Although firm information is not available, it is tentatively estimated that about 500,000 single people are involved in multiple borrower mortgages in respect of around 250,000 properties.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the average mortgage interest tax relief per person in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year from 1977 to 1987, repriced for inflation;

(2) if he will give the average motgage interest tax relief per person in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates for the years 1977-78 to 1982-83 have been derived from the result of the survey of personal incomes and are given in the table.

Following the introduction of MIRAS in April 1983, estimates of the average value of mortgage interest tax relief in Scotland cannot be extracted from Inland Revenue records. Estimates of the amounts attributable to Scotland can be derived from the family expenditure survey (FES) but, as the sample size for the FES is relatively small, it is not possible to derive a robust estimate of the trend in the average amount received by mortgagors in Scotland after 1982-83. For 1983-84 onwards, the table therefore shows figures only for mortgagors in the whole of the United Kingdom.

FES data for 1983 to 1985 suggest that average mortgage interest tax relief per mortgagor in Scotland was about 15 per cent. higher than the average for the United Kingdom.

Average mortgage interest tax relief per mortgagor

	Scotland		*United Kingdom*	
	Outturn prices £	[1]*1987-88 prices £*	*Outturn prices £*	[1]*1987-88 prices £*
1977-78	200	440	190	415
1978-79	220	440	200	400
1979-80	270	470	245	425
1980-81	370	550	335	500
1981-82	385	515	350	470
1982-83	390	485	350	440
1983-84	n/a	n/a	365	440
1984-85	n/a	n/a	450	515
1985-86[2]	n/a	n/a	565	605
1986-87[2]	n/a	n/a	550	570
1987-88[3]	n/a	n/a	565	565

[1] Revalued with respect to the Retail Prices Index.

[2] Provisional.

[3] Forecast.

n/a Not available.

Personal Income

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage increase in real personal disposable income during the years 1957 to 1964, 1964 to 1970, 1970 to 1974, 1974 to 1979, 1979 to 1983, and 1983 to 1987; and what was the average annual percentage increase for each of these periods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1987 are not yet available so the growth in real personal disposable income for the period 1983-86 is given instead.

	Growth in real personal disposable income per cent.	*Average annual growth rate per cent.*
1957-1964	30·5	3·9
1964-1970	13·0	2·1

	Growth in real personal disposable income per cent.	*Average annual growth rate per cent.*
1970-1974	16·0	3·8
1974-1979	11·2	2·1
1979-1983	2·1	0·5
1983-1986	10·0	3·2

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Figures for annual average growth rates for real personal disposable income over time periods from 1948 to 1986 are published in table 15.13 of the 1987 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the CSO Blue Book).

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will meet representatives of Leeds city council to discuss the council's managing agency for the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I shall be happy to consider a meeting once I am informed of any points of concern about the managing agency which the Leeds city council may have.

Training Commission Managing Agencies

Mr. Alex Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a list of the names and addresses of Training Commission managing agencies.

Mr. Cope: A list of managing agents for the new job training scheme is available in the Library. National lists of managing agents for YTS and the community programme are not currently available. Such lists are being prepared and copies will be placed in the Library in due course.

Manufacturing Industry (Barnsley)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manufacturing industries in the Barnsley, East constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Cope: The available employee estimates for constituencies are from the September 1981 and 1984 censuses of employment. An industry breakdown is not available for the earlier year, but the latest estimates indicate that there were 3,500 employees employed in manufacturing industries in the Barnsley, East constituency at September 1984. The figure excludes the self-employed.

Note: The constituency is defined in terms of ward boundaries as at 1981.

Coal Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and nature of major injuries in the mining industry for each of the last five years.

Mr. Cope: The number of major accidents reported to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines and Quarries occurring in the mining industry is as follows:

Year	*All Coal Mines*	*Mines Other than Coal*
1982	865	17
1983	824	31
1984-85[1]	378	29
1985-86	732	32
1986-87	982	23

[1] Covers a 15-month period (January 1984 to March 1985) during which time there was a major industrial dispute. It is not comparable with previous calendar year data.

The introduction of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations on 1 April 1986 widened the coverage of the major injury category. Major injury accident figures from 1986-87 are therefore not directly comparable with those for earlier years.

It is not possible to list the nature of these injuries without incurring disproportionate cost.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many participants there are on the job training scheme;

(2) how many participants have successfully completed a job training scheme course; and what qualifications they received.

Mr. Cope: By 25 September 1987, 22,111 people were receiving training on the new job training scheme.

As the scheme was launched nationally only last April, information on the number of participants who have successfully completed a job training scheme course and what qualifications they received is not yet available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress to date of the Government's safety review of pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since the early 1960s the Advisory Committee on Pesticides has carried out major reviews of pesticides or classes of pesticides. Some of these are described in the 1984 and 1985 reports of the committee, copies of which are in the Library of the House. This work continues and will be summarised in the committee's further annual reports.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what staff and financial resources are presently devoted to the Government's safety review of pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not possible to give accurate figures without disproportionate cost. Some 50 scientists are currently employed by my Department and the Health and Safety Executive on the evaluation of pesticides including those under review. In addition, members of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and its scientific sub-committee also contribute to reviews.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the saving in a full year due to the fact that family credit and housing benefit will be means-tested rather than income tested; whether this figure will represent a real reduction in the total value of privately owned capital of the same amount; and how many persons will be affected.

Mr. Portillo: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the introduction of a capital cut-off of £6,000, and a notional tariff income for those with capital of between £3,000 and £6,000, into the family credit and reformed housing benefit schemes next April. We estimate that approximately £80 million will be saved, almost entirely from housing benefit as a result of treating capital in this way rather than taking into account the actual income it generates as happens at present.

What effect the changes have on the total value of privately owned capital will depend on the individual behaviour of those affected. On the basis of information about income from capital in recent family expenditure surveys, which may not be wholly reliable, we estimate that some 2 million households will be affected in some way by the changes. This figure, which again mainly represents housing benefit recipients, includes those with smaller amounts of capital which will, of course, be treated more favourably under the new rules.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the change in the number of families with children that would be entitled to family credit and to housing benefit in 1988-89 if child benefit *(a)* is increased in line with current earnings, *(b)* is increased in line with the Lawson-Rooker-Wise formula, or *(c)* remains at its present figure.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that *(a)* about 10,000 more families with children would be entitled to family credit than would have been the case if child benefit was increased in line with the movement in the retail prices index in the year ending September 1987, and *(b)* over 15,000 more families with children would be entitled to family credit than would have been the case if child benefit was increased in line with the increase in earnings over the same period.

In housing benefit, it is estimated that very few more families with children would be entitled to housing benefit than if child benefit was increased under either of the other two formulae.

Income Support

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last had discussions with disabled people's organisations about the likely effects upon disabled people of the proposed income support scheme; which organisations were involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I discussed the income support scheme with representatives of the disability organisations on 30 September and have subsequently replied to their alternative proposals. I have placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the total annual cost of income support *(a)* in total and *(b)* minus the addition covering the 20 per cent. allocation for rates.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of the rates announced to the House by my right hon. Friend in his statement on 27 October at columns 179-81, the estimated cost of income support in 1988-89 would be £8,570 million. Excluding the 20 per cent. contribution to rates, the figure would be £8,290 million.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the total cost of the increases in income support to compensate for the exclusion of 20 per cent. of rates from housing benefit on the figures in his statement of 27 October.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of the rates announced in my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 27 October at columns 179-81, the total cost (including the cost of additional payments of income support, housing benefit and family credit) would be £372 million.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* the calculation by which he estimated that £1·30 and £1 represent the average new liability to rates of claimants of income support; and what is his estimate of how many claimants face a liability *(a)* above that average and *(b)* below that average.

Mr. Scott: The figures are based on statistical samples of the rates liability of existing claimants of supplementary benefit uprated to reflect the expected liability of income support claimants in 1988-89. We estimate that slightly under half of income support claimants will face a liability above their relevant average and slightly more than half will face a liability below that average.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what compensation through income support to single mothers under 18 years he has provided for the exclusion of 20 per cent. of rates from housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: The proposed rates of benefit for all claimants under the age of 18 contain no element to compensate them for their 20 per cent. contribution to rates in recognition of the fact that the vast majority of this age group on income support have no rates liability. However, under the transitional protection arrangements, all supplementary benefit claimants receiving a rate rebate in respect of week commencing 4 April 1988 will, for the purpose of any benefit income to be protected, have included in that income, for transitional protection purposes from 11 April 1988, either £1, if a single claimant under age 25, or £1·30 in other cases (including single mothers under 18).

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table for rates of income support showing *(a)* the illustrative figures in the annex to the 1985 White Paper, *(b)* the illustrative figures uprated by the retail prices index since then, *(c)* the illustrative figures uprated by the Rossi index, *(d)* the amount by client group provided to compensate for the exclusion of 20 per cent. of rates from housing benefit and *(e)* the provisional figures for income support in his statement of 27 October.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

Income Support	*Technical Annex to the 1985 White Paper*	*Uprated by* *RPI*	*Rossi*	*Compensation for 20 per cent. rates contribution*	*Proposed Rate*
Personal Allowances					
16-17 single	18.20	19.57	19.38	—	19.40
18-24 single	24.00	25.81	25.56	1.00	26.05
25+ single	30.60	32.91	32.59	1.30	33.40
couple	48.00	51.63	51.12	1.30	51.45
Premiums					
Family	5.75	6.18	6.13	—	6.15
Lone Parent	3.45	3.71	3.67	—	3.70
Pensioner—single	10.00	10.76	10.65	—	10.65
Pensioner—couple	15.25	16.40	16.24	—	16.25
Over 80—single	12.25	13.18	13.05	—	13.05
Over 80—couple	17.45	18.77	18.58	—	18.60
Sick/disabled single	12.25	13.18	13.05	—	13.05
Sick/disabled couple	17.45	18.77	18.58	—	18.60
Children					
Age under 11	10.10	10.86	10.76	—	10.75
Age 11-15	15.10	16.24	16.08	—	16.10

Privatisation

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he has any plans to put further National Health Service services out to tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We encourage health authorities to give careful consideration to any possibility of securing greater cost-effectiveness in the provision of National Health Service services, noting that competitive tendering has already generated annual savings of over £100 million for redeployment within the service.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the patient-orientated tasks being considered for privatisation and which were referred to in documents considered at a meeting of district general managers at the North-West regional health authority on 24 September.

Mr. Newton: I understand the occasion was a routine private meeting of North Western health authority general managers at which, among other items, the scope for developing the region's successful competitive tendering programme was discussed. The existing programme has already released some £8·5 million for direct patient services. The hon. Member may wish to pursue his detailed inquiries with the chairman of the North Western regional health authority.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the department equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act and *(f)* what action has been taken to facilitate job share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Portillo: The departmental equal opportunities officer (DEOO) is the focal point for equal opportunities awareness within the Department. Central guidance is routed through him and all personnel are made aware of the importance of equal opportunities policy and practice through departmental circulars and instructions.

(a) It is not possible accurately to measure the amount of time spent by the DEOO on equal opportunities work. However, the DEOO has a full-time deputy and support staff.

(b) Other duties carried out by the DEOO are personnel and administration and these often overlap with equal opportunities work.

(c) There is no specific budget for equal opportunities work. However, a budget of approximately £8,000 was set aside for the current financial year to cover travel, subsistence and printing. In addition, those responsible for implementing equal opportunities work, for example personnel and training officers, make provision for this in their budgets.

(d) Meetings of DEOOs are held at least once a year. In addition, ad hoc meetings, seminars and working groups are held throughout the year on particular subjects.

(e) No specific guidance is issued. A programme of action for women, "Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service", has been agreed with trade unions and has led to running a course, "Women in Management".

(f) Job share and part-time working are encouraged and publicised in departmental circulars and leaflets. Maternity leave of up to one year is routinely allowed and paternity leave is currently under consideration by Treasury. Sympathetic consideration is also given to the provision of special leave to cope with domestic difficulties such as sickness and school holidays, and this facility is publicised to staff in manuals and instructions.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement outlining the details of the scheme in the current year to govern the payment of severe weather allowances.

Mr. Scott: The current scheme for exceptionally cold weather payments is set out in the Supplementary Benefits (Single Payments) Amendment Regulations 1986 [SI 1986 No. 1961].

For this winter we plan to make it easier for claimants to get help during repeat periods of exceptionally cold weather. We intend to provide that, where a successful claim is made in respect of one period of exceptionally cold weather, that claim will remain valid in respect of subsequent periods of cold weather during the winter. At the same time we will be correcting a number of technical errors in the description of areas covered by particular weather stations. This will not change the links between local offices and weather stations themselves. Regulations to make these changes will be laid before the House shortly.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was spent in each health region in each of the last five years on the care and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia; and what percentage each figure was of total expenditure on *(a)* mental and *(b)* all health services;

(2) what is the current annual cost overall per patient to the National Health Service in each health region of the care and treatment of patients with a main diagnosis of schizophrenia psychoses.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks as it is not collected; health authorities do not analyse mental illness costs by diagnosis.

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will agree to fund phases 2 and 3 of the proposed new development at Whipps Cross hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We gave approval in principle in June of this year to phase 1 of the redevelopment of Whipps Cross hospital including a new out-patient department, operating theatres and wards. The scheme will receive 35 per cent. capital support from the Department under arrangements to assist in the extra cost to health authorities of providing teaching facilities. The Department will consider submissions about future phases of the redevelopment when they are received from the health authorities concerned.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to general practitioners about whom they should refer to Family Planning Clinics for the provision of contraceptive appliances free of charge on prescription, to help restrict the spread of AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The "Handbook of Contraceptive Practice", issued by the Department to all general practitioners and other doctors working in family planning, refers to the value of condoms in reducing the risk of sexually transmitted disease; and to their availability from a range of sources including family planning clinics. The handbook is currently being revised by the Royal Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of General Practitioners to include specific references to AIDS.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services over what period of time the number of known AIDS sufferers in England and Wales is currently doubling.

Mr. Newton: At the present time, the number of cases of AIDS reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre from England and Wales is doubling every 10 months.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department's single payments budget is underspent proportionally in the current finance year in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Portillo: There is no budget for expenditure on single payments which are determined in accordance with regulations.

Data Access (Fees)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Portillo: There is no charge for information held on social security records or for information held on health and personal social services records. In respect of health and personal social services information held by regional and district health authorities (boards in Scotland) and social services' departments of local authorities, it has been left to each authority to determine whether or not to charge for access. The policy for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is to give subject access free of charge. The Department has 33 registered entries and the OPCS 42.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the capital limits for supplementary pensions for each year since 1980, in cash terms and in real terms, using 1980 as a base year and the change in the retail price index over that period.

Mr. Portillo: The information is provided in the following tables.

Supplementary Benefit Capital Limit

Date[1]	£
November 1980	2,000
November 1981	2,000
November 1982	2,500
November 1983	3,000
November 1984	3,000
November 1985	3,000
July 1986	3,000
April 1987	3,000

[1] Dates of uprating of benefits.

£2,000 limit in November 1980 expressed in real terms[1 2]

Period	£
November 1980 to November 1981	2,239
November 1980 to November 1982	2,379
November 1980 to November 1983	2,494
November 1980 to November 1984	2,618
November 1980 to November 1985	2,761
November 1980 to November 1986	2,807
November 1980 to November 1987	2,930

[1] Based on the movement in the retail price index (all items) between dates shown.

[2] Increase in retail price index (all items) for period November 1980 to April 1987=46·5 per cent.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently receiving retirement pension payments by means of automatic credit transfer to a bank or building society account.

Mr. Portillo: About 1·25 million. About 31 per cent. of newly retiring pensioners choose this method of payment.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1973 the value of the basic state pension *(a)* at 1987 prices and *(b)* as a percentage of average male earnings.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table. Column *(c)* shows the basic retirement pension for a couple as a percentage of average net earnings for a married male manual worker without children.

Basic retirement pension since October 1973 at April 1987 prices and as a percentage of net average male manual earnings

	(a) *Retirement pension (couple)* £	*(b)* *Value at 1987 prices* £	*(c)* *Percentage of net earnings*
October 1973	12·50	51·93	41·3
July 1974	16·00	58·57	47·3
April 1975	18·50	57·55	46·7
November 1975	21·20	59·04	49·1
November 1976	24·50	59·34	50·6
November 1977	28·00	60·00	50·8
November 1978	31·20	61·88	48·9
November 1979	37·30	63·02	48·4
November 1980	43·45	63·66	49·7
November 1981	47·35	61·96	50·9
November 1982	52·55	64·72	53·1
November 1983[1]	54·50	64·02	51·3
November 1984	57·30	64·14	49·6
November 1985	61·30	65·06	49·9
July 1986	61·95	64·67	47·8
April 1987	63·25	63·25	45·7

[1] There is a small discontinuity between the figures for November 1982 and November 1983 caused by a change in the method of calculation of average earnings.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the rates for the basic state pension and other long-term national insurance benfits at April 1988 if the uprating formula of the 1975 Act had been applied in every year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The Social Security Act 1975 required pensions and other long-term benefits to be increased by the higher of the increase in either prices or earnings, but did not provide a formula for the period over which the increase was to be measured or to take effect, nor any requirement to measure the increase either historically or on a forecast basis. Moreover, the Secretary of State was given freedom to estimate the changes in prices and earnings as he saw fit. In view of the discretion inherent in the original wording of the 1975 Act, which was interpreted in different ways during the 1970s, it is not possible to give an accurate estimate of what pensions would be in April 1988 on this basis.

If retirement pension had however been increased in line with the movement of earnings between November 1978 and September 1986, the end of the uprating period for the April 1987 uprating, a single person's retirement pension would have been £43·70 in April 1987 and a couple's pension £69·90. It is not yet possible to provide comparable figures for April 1988.

Pensioners (Standing Charges)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to assist pensioners with the payment of standing charges on domestic services.

Mr. Portillo: The normal weekly rates of supplementary benefit provide for normal day-to-day living expenses, including standing charges on domestic services. We believe it is right to concentrate available resources on those most in need, through the supplementary benefit scheme.

"The Unkindest Cut of All"

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will be taking any action in regard to the report entitled, "The Unkindest Cut of All", from the disabilities study unit, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for sending me a copy of this report. I have not yet had a chance to study it. When I have done so, I will write to him.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Michael J. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the incidence of doctors prescribing analgesics to drug addicts for non-medical purposes; what steps his Department takes to control such practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department has no information which would enable an assessment to be made of the extent of any such prescribing.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has powers under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to prohibit, by direction, a practitioner whom he finds has been prescribing controlled drugs in an irresponsible manner from prescribing some or all controlled drugs.

Any case of alleged irresponsible prescribing can be referred to the General Medical Council which can take action against a doctor whom it judges to have acted unethically.

The Department's regional medical officers are able to offer advice to general practitioners within the NHS and can alert them if there is evidence that a particular drug is being misused.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost savings arising from the abolition of the existing supplementary benefit scheme, taking account of the effect of the statutory uprating which was due this November.

Mr. Scott: In public expenditure terms, we estimate that expenditure on income support and the social fund (excluding payments for maternity and funeral expenses) will be £290 million higher in 1988-89 than if the existing supplementary benefits scheme had continued with rates increased in the usual way. The statutory date for upratings was fixed at April by the Social Security Act 1986.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the reduction in expenditure in a full year from increasing the rent taper of housing benefit from 60 per cent. to 65 per cent.; and how many claimants will lose entitlement to housing benefit as a result.

Mr. Portillo: The reduction in expenditure in a full year from increasing the housing benefit taper from 60 to 65 per cent. is estimated at £46 million. We now estimate that some 60,000 households will lose all entitlement to rent rebates or allowances as a result of this change.

Child Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what level of child benefit would be necessary at April 1988 to maintain its real value as at April 1979; and what is the reduction in expenditure in a full year achieved by the failure to maintain that value.

Mr. Scott: Until the April 1988 retail prices index is available, the rate of child benefit needed to maintain its April 1979 value will not be known. If its April 1979 value was expressed in April 1987 terms and then uprated by 4·2 per cent. (the latest available RPI movement, between September 1986 and September 1987), the level of child benefit would be £7·80 which would represent a total additional net cost of around £220 million a year.

Kidney Stones (Treatment)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why there are no shock-wave machines for the treatment of patients with kidney stones in the west midlands region.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply,* 21 October 1987, c *808*]: Shock-wave treatment (lithotripsy) for patients with kidney stones is a relatively new technique. We have made it clear that we expect it to develop eventually into a regional service but it is for health authorities to decide whether, and if so when, to install a machine which is likely to cost between £500,000 and £1 million, depending on the equipment chosen. Several are already in operation or will shortly become operational elsewhere in the country and it is open to clinicians in the west midlands to refer patients to centres where the treatment is available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Aged and Disabled People

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Seretary of State for Northern Ireland how many ACE funded posts have been created to assist the aged or disabled in their own homes.

Mr. Viggers: Information is not available in the form requested. However, in 1986-87 1200 ACE workers were employed in projects to assist the elderly, the physically disabled and the mentally ill in institutions, in community provision and in their own homes.

Electricity Disconnections

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many domestic electricity disconnections were carried out in the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 due to indebtedness.

Mr. Viggers: Precise figures of domestic disconnections are not readily available, but the total numbers of disconnections for debt effected during the years concerned were 1148, 1599, 1858 and 2619, respectively. These figures include a very small number of commercial disconnections.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Government are taking to assure the future of shipbuilding operations at Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Viggers: The future of shipbuilding operations at Harland and Wolff is dependent on the company's ability to secure orders on a commercial basis. Government financial support for merchant ship orders is available within the framework of the EC VI directive on aid to shipbuilding.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much was spent by his Department in each of the last five years on the care and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia; and, what percentage each figure was of total expenditure of *(a)* mental and *(b)* all health services;

(2) what is the current annual cost overall per patient to his Department's health and social security budget of the care and treatment of patients with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses.

Mr. Needham: The expenditure of the health and social services boards is not analysed in such a way as would enable the information requested to be separately identified.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each of the last five years in Northern Ireland how many people discharged from mental illness hospitals, after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses, having been proved vulnerable boarders, subsequently became voluntary boarders.

Mr. Needham: This information is not available.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance his Department gives to mental illness hospitals on the retention of patients whose condition is unlikely to improve; and what is the current policy of each hospital in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: No guidance is given. The treatment of patients in psychiatric hospitals is a matter of clinical judgment.

Residential Care

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residential homes have been registered and opened in the following areas since 1983 (i) Down unit of management, (ii) Newry and Mourne unit of management (County Down only) and (iii) Banbridge unit of management (in the electoral wards of Bannside, Katesbridge, Dromore South, Dromore North, Quilly, Garran and Croob); what are the capital and running costs of such homes; and how they compare with health board operated accommodation; and how many people are in *(a)* private residential care and *(b)* health board residential care.

Mr. Needham: Since 1983, a total of 14 private residential homes providing 161 places have been newly registered by health and social services boards in the areas specified. The capital and running costs of private residential homes are not known and comparison with similar costs for statutory homes is not therefore possible. Information on the numbers of residents of private homes is not held but it is known that registered private residential homes (including voluntary homes) provide a total of 266 places in these areas. On 31 December 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, 344 people were accommodated in nine statutory residential homes which provide a total of 374 places in the same areas.

MacBride Principles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what has been the cost to public funds to date of briefing lobbyists in the United States of America on Her Majesty's Government's attitude to the campaign on the MacBride principles;

(2) what has been the cost to public funds to date of briefing politicans in the United States of America on Her Majesty's Government's attitude to the campaign on the MacBride principles;

(3) what has been the cost to date to the British embassy in Washington and British consulates in the United States of America of Her Majesty's Government's opposition to the campaign on the MacBride principles in the United States of America;

(4) what has been the cost to date to his Department and Her Majesty's Government's campaign of opposition to the campaign on the MacBride principles in the United Kingdom and the United States of America;

(5) how many officials have been involved to date in work directly related to the campaign on the MacBride principles in the United Kingdom and the United States of America;

(6) what have been the legal costs to date of the Government's opposition to the campaign on the MacBride principles in the United Kingdom and the United States of America;

(7) what has been the cost to date to the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland of the Government's opposition to the campaign on the MacBride principles in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Viggers: The explanation of Government policy and achievements in the field of fair employment in Northern Ireland is one of a range of closely related tasks, shared among the Northern Ireland Office, Northern Ireland Departments and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including diplomatic posts overseas. It would be disproportionately expensive to seek to isolate the costs, and other details, of this one specific aspect of their activities.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many documents have been published in the United States in relation to Her Majesty's Government's campaign on the MacBride principles.

Mr. Viggers: None. However a number of publications reflecting the development of Government policy in relation to fair employment in Northern Ireland are available in the United States, including the following:

Guide to the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Equality of Opportunity in Employment in Northern Ireland: Future Strategy Options: A Consultative Paper
Fair treatment for All
Religious Equality of Opportunity in Employment: Guide to Effective Practice.

Captain Hayward

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Captain Hayward, currently in prison in Sweden, was attached to a Special Air Service unit involved in the murder of three unarmed youths in Strabane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have been asked to reply.

It is not our policy to discuss the activities of special forces or to confirm or deny whether any individual is or was attached to the special forces.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Asia

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's proposals to keep Asia free from outside military presences and make the Indian ocean a zone of peace: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We support in principle the creation of an Indian ocean zone of peace, and regularly participate in meetings of the United Nations ad hoc committee on the Indian ocean in New York. The security situation in the region, for example in the Gulf and Afghanistan, prevents the establishment of such a zone at this stage.

Rarotonga Treaty

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will explain Her Majesty's Government's attitude to the 1985 Rarotonga treaty which aims to restrict the testing, deployment or use of nuclear weapons in the south Pacific; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: As my hon. Friend the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) told my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on 20 March, we give careful consideration to the protocols to the south Pacific nuclear-free zone treaty (the treaty of Rarotonga). Having taken full account of our security interests in the region and more widely, the views of our allies and the regional states themselves, the texts of the treaty and protocols and the announced policy of the Soviet Union, we have concluded that it would not serve our national interest to become party to the protocols to the treaty.

At the same time, we remain ready as a matter of policy to respect the intentions of the regional states as set out in protocol I. In other words, we have no intention of testing, manufacturing or basing nuclear weapons on Pitcairn, the only territory under our jurisdiction within the area covered by the treaty.

Further, with respect to proctocol II, we reaffirm the British undertaking given in 1978 to non-nuclear weapon states which are parties to the NPT or equivalent commitments, not to use nuclear weapons against such states except in the case of an attack upon the United Kingdom, its dependent territories, its armed forces or its allies by such a state in association or alliance with a nuclear weapon state.

Third, in respect of protocol III, we note that we have no intention of conducting nuclear tests in the south Pacific.

Mr. Mordechai Vanunu

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has made to the Israeli Government about the kidnap and trial of Mr. Mordechai Vanunu; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In reply to our representations after Mr. Vanunu's disappearance the Israeli Government gave a formal assurance that Mr. Vanunu left this country of his own volition. We have no reason to doubt this assurance. We have made no representations about the conduct of the trial.

Israel (Nuclear Missiles)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement indicating Her Majesty's Government's view on the development by the Israeli Government of its Jericho II nuclear missiles.

Mr. Mellor: We saw press reports in July of the test-firing of a Jericho II missile by Israel. We are concerned about the introduction of any new long-range missile into the middle east, particularly if it is nuclear capable.

South Africa

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement indicating Her Majesty's Government's view on the production of a nuclear device by the South African Government.

Mr. Mellor: We have no evidence of the production of a nuclear device by the South African Government. We would view the production of such a device by any non-nuclear weapon state with very grave concern. We have consistently urged the South African Government to accede to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We welcome the recent South African statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency that they are now willing to negotiate accession to the treaty. This would oblige them to place all their nuclear facilities and materials under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Deportations (Israel)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has made to the Israeli authorities about that Government's deportation of Arabs and Palestinians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our view that deportation of residents from the Occupied Territories in contrary to international law. On 28 December 1986, the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve issued a statment in protest at the deportation of Mr. Akram Haniyya.

Nuclear Power Station (Daya Bay)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the construction errors in the nuclear power station being built at Daya bay, 30 miles from city centre in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: Construction work on the second layer of the unit 1 reactor raft of the Daya bay plant was suspended in mid-September following the discovery that a number of reinforcement bars for the first and lowest of the five concrete layers (316 out of a planned total of over 14,500) had inadvertently been omitted. The joint venture company responsible for the project is considering remedial action to ensure that the finished construction will still comply with all the safety requirements of the original design. We are satisfied that all the parties involved attach the utmost importance to considerations of safety, and to the need to make certain that these are not compromised.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Eggar: In common with other Government Departments, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including the Overseas Development Administration) does not propose to charge its employees (including successful job applicants and former civil servants) in its capacity as employer for routine and reasonable access to any personal record. In addition, the Overseas Development Administration has decided to extend this subject access to all personal records maintained on current and retired technical co-operation officers, current and retired supplemented staff, overseas pensioners and prospective employees under bilateral and multilateral technical co-operation schemes. There will, however, be a charge of £10 each in respect of all other applications from members of the public. This fee has been set in accordance with Treasury guidelines on recovery of costs.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has eight register entries, and the Overseas Development Administration one register entry.

The cost to any members of the public of a single search on each register entry where they might appear as subjects would be £80.

Heysel Stadium Disturbance (Trial)

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what arrangements have been made to observe the trial of the Heysel stadium defendants in Brussels.

Mr. Eggar: Staff resources permitting, an official from Her Majesty's embassy in Brussels will attend any trial as an observer.

Malta

Mr. David Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has yet met the Maltese Minister for Foreign Affairs; what progress has been made in strengthening United Kingdom economical, commercial, cultural and educational links with Malta; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I held talks with Dr. Tabone, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malta, on 23 October. They covered all aspects of our bilateral relations, including areas mentioned by my hon. Friend. We are considering how best we can strengthen those links.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present eight meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for November.

The Development Council on 9 November will consider draft guidelines on the following subjects: the evaluation of aid; issues relating to women in development; the need to take account of environmental factors in aid; and the Community's aid programme to Asia and Latin America in 1988. The Council will discuss the economic situation in sub-Saharan Africa and will consider a Commission proposal for establishing a special Community programme to assist certain highly indebted, low-income countries in that region. The Council will also consider reports by the Commission on the following subjects: the implementation of the Community's programme to combat AIDS in developing countries; the co-financing by the Community of projects with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and the food aid framework regulation.

The Energy Council will meet on 13 November and will consider the Council's recommendation on new and renewable sources of energy including the possible establishment of a special group on commercial aspects, draft Council conclusions on environmental costs borne by the refining industry, and a proposed directive on the energy efficiency of buildings. Ministers will also consider the outlook for greater efficiency in the use of electricity in the Community.

The Economic and Finance Council meets on 16 November. The Council may discuss Commission proposals on the next stages of capital market liberalisation; the 7th VAT directive on the treatment of second hand goods; the 18th VAT directive which abolishes certain transitional derogations from the provisions of the Community's basic VAT law (the 6th VAT directive); the Commission's package of tax proposals to remove fiscal barriers to trade in the Community and the UCITS collective investment schemes directive.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 16-17 November to discuss agricultural stabilisers, income aids and pre-pensions. Internal market items may also be discussed.

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 23-24 November. Discussions will include European Community-United States trade relations; the possibility of a trade and economic co-operation agreement between the EC and the Gulf Co-operation Council; the future financing of the Community, and GATT article XXIV.6 negotiations with Japan.

The Fisheries Council is expected to meet on 24 November to discuss amendments to market regulations, guide prices and a report on third-country fisheries relations.

The Internal Market Council on 30 November will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Research Council will meet on 30 November. The provisional agenda anticipates the formal adoption of three individual research programmes, namely RACE, (R&D in advanced communications technologies in Europe) (1987-1991), a research and development programme in the field of science and technology for development (1987-1990) and a programme of research and development in the field of medical and public health (1987-1989). It is also expected that the Council will approve a common position on the following research programme proposals: ESPRIT II; the proposed revisions to both the BRITE programme (industrial technologies) and the radiation protection programme. Discussion on the proposals for the next multi-annual programme of the Community's joint research centre (JRC) will also take place and there may be a first discussion on the fusion programme. A proposal for a Council regulation in the health care field of information technology and telecommunications will also be discussed.

Foreign Compensation

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in implementing the Foreign Compensation (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (Distribution) Order.

Mr. Eggar: Excellent progress is being made. Of the 4,582 bond claims submitted to the Foreign Compensation Commission 3,265 (71·3 per cent.) had already been registered by 9 October; 304 claims (6·6 per cent.) had been withdrawn by the claimants; 204 claims (4·5 per cent.) had been refused registration because the claims did not meet the terms of the order and 810 claims (17·7 per cent.) remained to be registered (or rejected). Of the 2,308 property claims, 1,667 claims had been matched against claims on the register of Russian claims; 641 claims are currently unmatched, although some of these could turn out to be valid.

As a result my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has directed that the Foreign Compensation Commission should on 30 October make an interim payment of 10 per cent. of the value assigned to a bond to all persons whose claim in respect of a bond had been registered on 9 October and that a like payment should be made as soon as possible thereafter to those whose claims in respect of bonds were registered after 9 October. This is the most substantial interim payment ever made by the Foreign Compensation Commission.

Evaluation of property claims, where the Commission must exercise its judicial discretion, is more complex. But the Commission is making every effort to expedite the process with the objective of making a final payment to all claimants in 1989.

Bulgaria

Mr. David Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is now the position in respect of bond claims by United Kingdom nationals against the Government of Bulgaria.

Mr. Eggar: The British Government and the Bulgarian Government signed an agreement on 16 September relating to final repurchase of certain bonds of foreign public loans of the Principality of Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Bulgaria held by United Kingdom nationals.

In accordance with the agreement the Bulgarian Government have nominated the National Westminster Bank to repurchase from persons who were United Kingdom nationals on 16 September 1987 the following bonds at the following rates:

Loans	*Nominal value of bond*	*Payment*
(a) Foreign Public Loans		
6 per cent. State Mortgage Loan 1892	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
5 per cent. Bulgarian State Gold Loan 1902	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
5 per cent. Bulgarian State Gold Loan 1904	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
4½ Bulgarian State Gold Loan 1907	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
4½ Bulgarian State Gold Loan 1909	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
6½ Bulgarian State Loan 1923	Franch Francs 500	French Francs 35
7 per cent. Settlement Loan 1926 Sterling issue	Pounds Sterling 100	Pounds Sterling 40
US dollar issue	US dollars 500	US dollars 35
7½ Stabilisation Loan 1928 Sterling issue	Pounds Sterling 100	Pounds Sterling 40
US dollar issue	US dollars 500	US dollars 35
French issue	Poincaré Francs 2,500	French Francs 175
(b) Foreign Public Guaranteed Loans		
5 per cent. Bulgarian Loan 1895	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
5 per cent. Loan Municipality of Sofia 1906	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
5 per cent. Loan Municiipality of Varna 1907	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
4½ Loan Municpality of Sofia 1910	Gold Francs 500	French Francs 35
and so in proportion for bonds of other denominations.		

Copies of the offer and the appropriate form of acceptance may be obtained from the paying agent: National Westminster Bank plc, Stock Office Services, National Westminster House, Station Way, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1JE.

The offer remains open for acceptance until 15 October 1989.

TRANSPORT

Road Schemes (London)

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the increased support for London boroughs for minor road schemes since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Support for minor road schemes in London was not itemised separately before the change to the transport supplementary grant system in 1985-86. Since then support for minor works, including urban traffic control, through the grant has increased from £5 million in that year to £10 million in 1986-87 and £16 million in the current financial year.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all motorway service areas which give direct access on to local roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All 42 motorway service areas in England are accessed by customers direct from the motorway apart from Aust, Exeter, Ferrybridge, Gordano and South Mimms, which are reached from other roads. Those accessed direct from the motorway, apart from Anderton and Washington, also have rear accesses to local roads for authorised users including service, staff and emergency vehicles.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish the 1987 monthly road traffic statistics to date observed on the A259 between St. Leonards on sea and the county border between East Sussex and Kent, indicating the monitoring points;

(2) if he will publish the 1987 monthly road statistics to date on the A21 trunk road indicating the monitoring points.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An analysis and publication of the results of the 1987 census counts on the A259 and A21 cannot be done until the year's census work is completed.

The results of the 1985 census on a map and the 1986 on computer print-out are available on request.

Buses

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the numbers of bus routes operated by *(a)* private bus operations and *(b)* public sector and local authority owned operators running either in whole or in part after 7 pm and which are not subject to any payments from a local authority.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of registered services not receiving any subsidy from local authorities and operating after 8 pm is as follows:

	Number
PTCs owned by District and Regional Councils	476
PTCs owned by metropolitan PTAs	678
NBC and former NBC subsidiaries	1,301
SBG	370
Private sector	561

Information on evening services is available only for services operating after 8 pm rather than 7 pm.

Fares (VAT)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next proposes to meet representatives of the Association of County Councils to discuss the implications for public transport policy of value added tax levels on fares.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to do so.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with British Rail the current options for electrification of the east coast line as between the Wisburyn-Linlithgow-Glasgow line and the Wisburyn-Fauldhouse Shotts-Glasgow line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that British Rail is still assessing whether there is a case for electrifying any possible route from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Meanwhile, it would be inappropriate for me to intervene.

Taxis

Mr. Morley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of bankruptcies of taxi firms since the Transport Act 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have not information on this subject, but I am aware that the number of new entrants to the business of taxi operations vastly exceeds withdrawals and bankruptcies.

Air Crash Inquiries

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to call, via the United Nations and other international agencies, for all countries and airlines to publish official reports of air crash inquiries where there has been loss of life;

(2) what steps he takes to ascertain the cause of a foreign airline accident which has resulted in the death of a British subject where the country concerned does not publish the result of the inquiry findings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The International Civil Aviation Organisation, under the aegis of the United Nations, recommends to contracting states in its "International Standards and Recommended Practices for Aircraft Accident Investigation" that:

> "In the interests of accident prevention, the state conducting the investigation should publish the Final Report as soon as possible".

On those occasions when the United Kingdom has a special interest in a foreign airline accident by virtue of fatalities to British citizens, and where that state does not publish the results of its investigation, the chief inspector of accidents is able to contact the investigating authority of the state in question to facilitate the availability of information.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the London borough of Greenwich about the need to improve the standard of service on the Woolwich ferry; and with what result.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is in regular touch with the London borough of Greenwich about the standard of service during the present dispute. We are expecting improvement to come from the implementation of the review of the operation of the ferry now nearing conclusion.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many days since 1 April the Woolwich ferry has been subject to disruption; and what is the estimated number of crossings lost as a result.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Up to 28 October, there has been disruption on 205 days. About 18,100 crossings have been lost.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he receives the consultants final report on the future of Woolwich ferry; and when he intends to discuss these with the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We received the consultants' final report in July. Officials of the Department and the London borough of Greenwich have discussed the recommendations. I hope to meet councillors in the near future to consider the outcome with them.

East Coast Railway Network

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any request from British Rail for investment in the improvements of the east coast railway network: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The electrification of the east coast main line between London and Edinburgh is progressing well ahead of schedule. I have received no request from British Rail for further investment.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to give grants for noise control to all houses affected by the extension of Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No, this is a matter for the airport operator taking into account the views of the local authorities and communities surrounding the airport.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether preparatory work has been undertaken at sites in Britain whilst discussions with the United States Government and NATO officials about the construction of underground storage facilities for nuclear weapons has been continuing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No preparatory work of that kind has been undertaken.

Trident

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the National Audit Office's report on the Trident programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. A statement would be inappropriate at this time. The appropriate Ministry of Defence accounting officer will shortly be examined by the Public Accounts Committee on this report. The Committee will report in its turn. The Government will respond to this in due course.

AWACS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any recent evidence that the United States AWACS early warning and control system which Her Majesty's Government are purchasing would be vulnerable to missiles which home in on radar systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: While — like any aircraft — the AWACS system is not invulnerable to attack, I am fully satisfied that it will be highly survivable in performing its operational tasks. Considerable work has been done to develop appropriate tactics to reduce the aircraft's vulnerability. Its radar range is such that it can be positioned in protected airspace and still provide airborne early warning and direct friendly fighters.

Radiation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made to monitor radiation levels in areas around where nuclear weapons are kept;

(2) what arrangements have been made to monitor the release of radiation from bases operating microwave radar communications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Routine monitoring of radiation levels is carried out at all locations where nuclear weapons are based and at which microwave communications are operated.

NH-90 Helicopter

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much expenditure Her Majesty's Government incurred in the NH-90 helicopter project, abandoned earlier in the current year.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our commitment to the NH-90 project was limited to a fixed price contract valued at £1·5 million which was the United Kingdom's share of the cost of the feasibility/predefinition study work. The experience and knowledge Westland gained in the study will be of value in other defence programmes.

Merlin Anti-tank Mortar

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department has taken to evaluate the British Aerospace Merlin anti-tank mortar.

Mr. Sainsbury: A limited contract in support of the joint evaluation of the Merlin 81 mm anti-armour mortar bomb was placed with British Aerospace plc (Army weapons division) in July 1987. A series of demonstration firings is planned.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose a nuclear test was conducted jointly with the United States of America on 16 July.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose the purposes of British underground nuclear tests. This test was required to maintain the effectiveness of our nuclear capabilities.

Jet Pilots (Low-flying Training)

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Royal Air Force fast jet pilots are currently qualified to fly at 100 ft above ground level;

(2) what are the weather minimums for low-flying training below 250 ft in the United Kingdom;

(3) what consideration has been given to establishing operational low flying at 100 ft above ground level as part of the regular continuation training programme for pilots on Royal Air Force fast jet squadrons.

Mr. Freeman: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1977 authorisation has been given to foreign air forces to conduct low-flying training over the United Kingdom at less than 250 ft above ground level; and if he will give for each such occasion the nationality, type and numbers of aircraft involved, the dates the training occurred, the location of the training, the number of sorties flown and the purpose of the training.

Mr. Freeman: No foreign air forces are authorised to fly in the United Kingdom low-flying system at less than 250 ft above ground level.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a map showing the areas in which military jet aircraft are permitted to fly at less than 250 ft above ground level.

Mr. Freeman: I have already described in detail to those hon. Members whose constituencies are involved the locations of the areas in which low-flying training below a level of 250 ft is authorised. The Welsh area consists of the south-west portion of Montgomery, north-west quarter of Brecon and Radnor, north-east corner of Carmarthen and eastern part of Ceredigion and Pembroke north.

Jet Aircraft (Low Flying)

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties at less than 250 ft above ground level were authorised in each year since 1974 in each one of the areas of the United Kingdom available for such flying.

Mr. Freeman: Before 1979 low-flying sorties below 250 ft could be authorised anywhere in the low-flying system by appropriately senior officers. Only as part of the revised United Kingdom low-flying system, introduced in 1979, was the decision taken to confine such flights to three specially designated, sparsely populated areas. The information requested is thus available only from 1979 and refers to movements into low-flying areas rather than sorties, which, on average, consist of about 2·5 movements per sortie.

Number of movements authorised for flying below 250 ft

	Number
1979	787
1980	797
1981	660
1982	238
1983	1,922
1984	1,007
1985	1,153
1986	1,200

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974 included authorisation to fly at: *(a)* 200 ft. above ground level and *(b)* 100 ft above ground level.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of low flying training movements carried out below 250 ft., as a proportion of all-low-flying training movements, for each year since 1979 (when the revised United Kingdom low flying system was introduced) are as follows. Such flights may be authorised down to a minimum level of 100 ft. but records do not distinguish between levels within the 250-100 ft. band. Details of the military low flying training carried out below 250 ft. are not available for the period prior to 1979.

	Per cent.
1979	0·37
1980	0·35
1981	0·24
1982	0·08
1983	0·55
1984	0·31
1985	0·36
1986	0·35

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many days in each year since 1974 low flying in the United Kingdom below 250 ft. was authorised.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is no longer available for the period before 1979, when the revised United Kingdom low-flying system was introduced. Nor could it be provided for all subsequent years without disproportionate effort. In 1986 low flying below 250 ft. was authorised on approximately 113 days.

Devonport and Rosyth Dockyards

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Defence what the arrangements are for meeting the redundancy costs arising from the planned reduction in work forces at Devonport and Rosyth dockyards.

Mr. Sainsbury: Approval for expenditure in the current year to fund the redundancy costs paid by dockyard contractors will be sought in a Winter Supplementary Estimate for class 1, vote 5. Pending approval of this Supplementary Estimate by Parliament, urgent expenditure will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

SCOTLAND

Cancer

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of all validated deaths from each form of leukaemia and lymphatic cancer in those aged *(a)* under 21 years and *(b)* 21 years and over for the years 1972 to 1986 inclusive for the areas within a five mile radius of Rosyth, Hunterston and Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

Computerised Patient Administration

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the progress made so far with the development of a computerised patient administration system by health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards, and the Common Services Agency's directorate of health service information systems, have been giving priority to this subject. I hope to be in a position to make a statement very soon.

Immunisation

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to improve the uptake of all childhood immunisation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend recognises the importance of childhood immunisation and has encouraged parents by means of regular advertisements and leaflets to have their children immunised. Immunisation is not compulsory and the level of uptake depends on the interest of parents, general practitioners and health visitors.

Health

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider taking action to ensure that health boards devote an adequate amount of their resources to health promotion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend allocates resources to health boards and it is for them to use these resources in the best interest of patient care within their respective areas having regard to competing demands. We have made it clear that we regard health education and prevention as an important aspect of the work of health boards and of all professional groups who come into contact with patients.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in the Monklands, West constituency and *(b)* the number on National Health Service staff, in real terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Hospitals (Waiting Times)

Dr. Moonie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are waiting for orthopaedic surgery in *(a)* the Victoria hospital, Kirkcaldy and *(b)* Bangour hospital, West Lothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures for 31 March 1987 show that, for in-patient treatment in the speciality of orthopaedics, there were 441 people waiting for admission to the Victoria infirmary, Kirkcaldy, and 106 waiting for admission to Bangour general hospital.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people unemployed in the Western Isles, by sex, who are *(a)* under 25 years, *(b)* between 25 years and 35 years, *(c)* between 35 and 50 years and *(d)* over 50 years.

Mr. Lang: The number of unemployed claimants is as follows.

Western Isles constituency
July 1987

Age group	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
Under 25	307	232	539
25 to 34	262	115	377
35 to 49	450	97	547
50 and over	405	65	470
All ages	1,424	509	1,933

This information is available in the Library.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Aberdeen constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Salmonella (Hospitals)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the origin of the recent outbreaks of salmonella poisoning at Law hospital near Lanark and the royal infirmary, Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Between 23 and 24 August two patients from a geriatric ward at Law hospital presenting symptoms of salmonella poisoning were transferred to Monklands district general hospital infectious diseases unit. Two different types of salmonella were identified. Both patients made a complete recovery. On 24 August 11 geriatric patients from the same ward displayed symptoms which suggested food poisoning. They were tested for infection at Law hospital but salmonella was not identified in any of the patients. They remained at Law hospital and recovered well. The ward and hospital kitchens were examined and samples of all meals (which are retained to enable analysis to be undertaken in the event of infection developing) were tested. Despite intensive investigations the sources of the infections could not be traced.

There have been no cases of salmonella poisoning at the royal infirmary, Edinburgh, within the last year.

Firearms

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many shotguns and handguns have been confiscated by the courts in Scotland from persons convicted of firearms offences in the past 10 years; and how the confiscated firearms were disposed of.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comprehensive information on confiscation and disposal of firearms is not held centrally.

Northern General Hospital (Leith)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the recent fatalities which occurred at Leith's northern general hospital as a result of food poisoning; and if there will be a fatal accident inquiry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board is at present considering the findings of its own investigation into the cause of the outbreak together with the recommendations of a report on the incident prepared by the environmental health department of Edinburgh district council. I shall study both reports and I shall want to be assured that the health board is taking all possible steps to prevent a recurrence. The incident is presently under consideration by the procurator fiscal; a decision whether to hold a fatal accident inquiry rests with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of those convicted of crimes in Scotland in each of the last five years have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much was spent by his Department in each of the last five years on the care and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia; and what percentage each figure was of total expenditure on *(a)* mental and *(b)* all health services;

(2) what is the current annual cost overall and per patient to his Department's health and social security budget of the treatment of patients with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards and local authorities and local authorities are encouraged to give high priority to the provision of services for the mentally ill but it is for these agencies to determine their own spending from their general allocations according to their perception of need. Information about spending on specific forms of mental illness is not available centrally.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much his Department spent on research into schizophrenia in each of the last five years; and what proportion each figure was of expenditure on the health service research programme;

(2) what research projects his Department has landed to test the effectiveness of community care for people suffering from schizophrenic psychosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish home and health department is at present funding two research projects directly related to schizophrenia. Research into schizophrenia is an integral part of more widely based programmes of research into mental disorder and it is not possible to identify separately the total amount of research into schizophrenia alone.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis were discharged from mental illness hospitals in Scotland in each of the last five years; and how many of them were taken into local authority residential care in the same year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the diagnosis of patients discharged from hospitals may be obtained from "Scottish Mental Health In-Patient Statistics", which is available in the library. Statistics are not collected centrally on the number of people suffering from specific mental illnesses who are provided with local authority residential care.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds have been specifically earmarked for the care of the mentally ill following the closure of mental hospitals in Scotland in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No mental illness hospital has been closed in Scotland in the last year.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the provision of community care for patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis discharged from National Health Service mental illness hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend receives representations from time to time on different aspects of providing community care but none of those made recently have related to persons discharged from hospital care provided for specific forms of mental illness. We have consistently made it clear that we are committed to a policy of care in the community for such groups as the mentally ill where such care is appropriate.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people discharged from hospital following a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis and subsequently taken by the police under section to hospitals in Scotland have been refused admission in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will list for each of the last five years in Scotland how many people discharged from mental illness hospitals after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis, having been proved vulnerable, homeless, subsequently became voluntary homeless.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance his Department gives to mental illness hospitals on the retention of patients whose condition is unlikely to improve; and what is the current policy of each hospital in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Decisions about the treatment of patients involve issues of clinical judgment, and central guidance would not be appropriate. Information to answer the second part of the question is not held centrally.

Rating Reform

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in East Lothian in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, (v) 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in East Lothian.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Redundancies

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies which have affected people resident in East Lothian in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Prisons

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the quantity and quality of prison accommodation in Scotland and on the availability of non-custodial sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The design capacity of Scottish penal establishments is currently 5,600 places, a number of which—including some provided at Shotts this year—are at present temporarily out of use as a result of damage by inmates in recent incidents. The total includes some 2,300 places which have access to night sanitation or integral sanitation. Some 1,900 places were provided in the last 20 years.

Community service and probation are the two main non-custodial disposals available to the courts. Both schemes are managed by the local authority social work departments who receive in respect of community service a specific grant from central Government towards the running costs. Probation costs are included in the rate support grant.

During 1985, 2,982 probation and 2,733 community service orders were made. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 reduced the minimum period for which a probation order can be made from 12 to six months and enabled a condition requiring an offender to pay compensation to be included in a probation order.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the population of Scotland is in prison; how that figure compares with that in other European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 20 October the actual population of penal establishments in Scotland was 5,409 (approximately 106 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants in Scotland).

Statistics for average prison population per 100,000 inhabitants for Scotland, England and Wales and European countries which are members of the Council of Europe are given in an article in "Home Office Research and Planning Unit Bulletin No. 23, 1987", a copy of which is available in the Library. This article explains the difficulties of making direct international comparisons because of differences in the legal and administrative systems from which these statistics are derived.

Housing

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses are *(a)* below the tolerable standard, *(b)* require comprehensive modernisation, *(c)* require major repairs and *(d)* are affected by dampness in the public and private sectors, respectively, in each district and islands area; and if he will estimate the cost of carrying out the necessary repairs and improvements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of dwellings below tolerable standard as at 31 March is submitted annually to the Department. However, not all authorities provide information by type of tenure, and not all 1987 returns have been received. The latest figures available are given in table 1.

Information on dwellings requiring comprehensive modernisation, requiring major repairs, and affected by dampness or condensation is only held centrally for local authority stock. The latest figures available, obtained from housing plan checklists, are given in table 2.

It is for individual housing authorities to decide what measures to take to deal with problems they identify, and to programme expenditure accordingly within the resources available to them.

Table 1

Houses below tolerable standard as at 31 March 1987[1]

Areas	*Year*[1]	*Total number of houses BTS*	*of which*	
			Public sector	*Private sector*
Berwickshire	1987	888	0	888
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1987	586	6	580
Roxburgh	1986	400	..	..
Tweeddale	1985	200	..	..
Clackmannan	1987	455	0	455
Falkirk	1987	629	31	598
Stirling	1987	444	9	435
Annandale and Eskdale	1986	251	0	251
Nithsdale	1987	826	0	826
Stewartry	1987	166	0	166
Wigtown	1987	78	..	..
Dunfermline	1986	526	15	511
Kirkcaldy	1987	751	0	751
North East Fife	1987	1,624	39	1,585
Aberdeen[2]	1987	1,988	[2]471	..
Banff and Buchan	1987	1,674	0	1,674
Gordon	1987	424	0	424
Kincardine and Deeside	1987	380	..	..
Moray	1987	1,250	46	1,204
Badenoch and Strathspey	1987	253	0	253
Caithness	1987	296	..	..
Inverness	1987	591	15	576
Lochaber	1987	139	0	139
Nairn	1987	46	0	46

Areas	*Year*[1]	*Total number of houses BTS*	*of which*	
			Public sector	*Private sector*
Ross and Cromarty	1987	2,500	0	2,500
Skye and Lochalsh	1986	650	650	0
Sutherland	1987	521	0	521
East Lothian	1987	871	..	..
Edinburgh	1987	5,321	0	5,321
Midlothian	1987	591	..	..
West Lothian	1987	530	0	530
Argyll and Bute	1987	4,180	0	4,180
Bearsden and Milngavie	1986	75	18	57
Clydebank	1987	32	18	14
Clydesdale	1987	372	2	370
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1987	61	0	61
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1987	192	43	149
Cunninghame	1986	183	0	183
Dumbarton	1986	125	13	112
East Kilbride	1987	109	0	109
Eastwood	1987	34	0	34
Glasgow	1986	11,452	..	..
Hamilton	1987	850	0	850
Inverclyde	1986	355	[2]8	118
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1987	110	8	102
Kyle and Carrick	1987	341	3	338
Monklands	1987	245	0	245
Motherwell	1987	636	183	453
Renfrew	1986	2,000	380	1,620
Strathkelvin	1987	11	0	11
Angus	1987	1,000	7	993
Dundee	1986	1,470	12	1,458
Perth and Kinross	1987	711	0	711
Orkney Islands	1987	1,150	6	1,144
Shetland Islands	1987	952	0	952
Western Isles	1987	1,680	..	..

[1] Where figures relating to 31 March 1987 are not available the most recent year's figures have been shown. Figures for the private sector include owner occupied and private rented houses, while those for the public sector include local authority, new town, SSHA, HA and other.

[2] Local authority only.

.. Not available.

Table 2

Estimated number of Local Authority dwellings at 31 March 1986

Areas	[1]*Requiring comprehensive Modernisation*	[1]*Requiring major repairs*	*Requiring treatment for*			
			(a) Dampness only	*(b) Condensation only*	*(c) Both condensation and dampness*	*(d) = (b) + (c)* [2]*Total Condensation*
Berwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,076	0	0	..	..	60
Roxburgh	191	1,040	0	80	370	450
Tweeddale	50	274	0	196	0	196
Clackmannan	2,669	3,706	200	3,202	800	4,002
Falkirk	7,252	14,702	500	1,000	5,500	6,500
Stirling	5,230	360	150	4,065	0	4,065
Annandale and Eskdale	1,324	0	0	1,224	0	1,224
Nithsdale	5,956	0	0	4,058	41	4,099
Stewartry	769	0	0	116	0	116
Wigtown	2,569	0	30	200	20	220
Dunfermline	2,015	181	15	2,312	0	2,312
Kirkcaldy	8,920	40	0	0	4,150	4,150
North East Fife	1,433	217	200	2,000	20	2020
Aberdeen	12,967	2,091	..	15,000	..	15,000
Banff and Buchan	1,660	1,200	..	..	..	..
Gordon	0	376	0	167	289	376
Kincardine and Deeside	228	0	0	380	488	868
Moray	370	1,372	77	317	0	317
Badenoch and Strathspey	10	0	0	100	0	100
Caithness	1,178	145	0	0	11	11
Inverness	904	380	0	1,000	0	1000
Lochaber	1,195	108	450	962	400	1,360
Nairn	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ross and Cromarty	489	549	0	1,134	122	1,256
Skye and Lochalsh	122	0	0	..	..	354
Sutherland	236	206	0	260	0	260
East Lothian	1,606	1,218	34	215	1,688	1,903
Edinburgh	7,810	5,357	610	15,524	1,120	16,644
Midlothian	122	0	0	840	90	930
West Lothian	6,300	6,200	0	2,490	0	2,490
Argyll and Bute	964	2,000	500	659	0	659
Bearsden and Milngavie	144	0	0	0	0	0
Clydebank	462	4,667	60	0	1,250	1,250
Clydesdale	9,624	8,640	0	..	..	1,030
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,245	102	..	..	..	..
Cumnock and Doon Valley	8,850	1,371	0	0	4,635	4,635
Cunninghame	9,559	17,794	200	1,578	243	1,821
Dumbarton	[3]4,184	3,215	849	1,813	2,574	4,387
East Kilbride	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eastwood	8	66	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	[4]43,736	48,803	16,700	31,500	15,400	46,900

Areas	[1] *Requiring comprehensive Modernisation*	[1] *Requiring major repairs*	*Requiring treatment for*			
			(a) Dampness only	*(b) Condensation only*	*(c) Both condensation and dampness*	*(d) = (b) + (c)* [2] *Total Condensation*
Hamilton	2,912	0	7,509	495	7,761	8,256
Inverclyde	6,572	6,000	0	3,000	3,000	6,000
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	7,577	457	0	0	5,689	5,689
Kyle and Carrick	4,894	75	24	187	577	764
Monklands	2,729	0	450	550	150	700
Motherwell	5,775	4,600	3,500	2,000	2,200	4,200
Renfrew	22,093	1,910	0	0	12,500	12,500
Strathkelvin	2,346	1,119	0	4,277	0	4,277
Angus	1,405	234	0	2,480	20	2,500
Dundee	10,366	11,810	2,900	10,100	2,515	12,615
Perth and Kinross	800	621	500	6,213	1,000	7,213
Orkney Islands	30	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland Islands	925	534	549	159	343	502
Western Isles	675	0	135	860	335	1,195

· · Not available

[1] There is thought to be an element of double counting between these two categories.

[2] Some authorities were unable to provide a breakdown of the condensation total as required in columns (b) and (c).

[3] Includes post-1955 non-traditional dwellings requiring partial modernisation or rewiring.

[4] Includes post-1955 non-traditional dwellings requiring partial modernisation.

Pupils (Statistics)

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-teacher ratio in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in the Aberdeen South constituency for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Aberdeen, South can be obtained from Grampian regional council.

Education Reform

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will be taking to ensure that the new proposals for the opting-out of schools from local authority control will not discriminate against the children of hourly paid parents in Easterhouse and other deprived areas of Glasgow because the parents cannot afford to take time off work to become school governors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have made no proposals to allow schools in Scotland to opt out of local authority control. We have proposed that there should in general be a school board for each school, and that the board would have the opportunity to become fully and closely involved in the running of the school. Parents would form a majority of the members and it is obvious that the boards will have to meet at times convenient to their members.

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many monofilament nets have been seized by geographical area, under the Monofilament Banning Order 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986 came into operation on 31 March 1986 enforcement officers of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have uplifted and retained four monofilament gill nets. Of these two were in the Clyde area, one in the Isle of Jura area and one in Luce bay.

Rothesay Castle

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in respect of the future of Rothesay castle; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has received three representations from one person over the past two years about the condition of Rothesay castle. Work has recently been carried out to deal with water penetration in the great hall, and it is hoped that the consequent improvement in conditions will pave the way for improvements in visitor facilities as circumstances permit.

Common Good Fund (Aberdeen)

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will give a response to representations made by the city of Aberdeen district council at a meeting with him on 17 July about the future of the city's common good fund and related matters.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend wrote in reply to the city of Aberdeen district council on 28 October 1987.

Workers' Education Association

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he or any of his departmental Ministers intend to meet representatives of the Workers' Education Association Scottish Council to discuss the funding of the association.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the complaints affecting patients on the Clydesdale waiting lists of 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information relating to the conditions from which patients on hospital in-patient waiting lists are suffering is not available centrally on a constituency basis. No complaints about waiting lists have been received by the Secretary of State from patients in Clydesdale.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps substantially to reduce waiting lists in Clydesdale.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regard reduction of the length of time patients have to wait for treatment as one of the most urgent tasks facing the Health Service and I am looking urgently at the steps that can be taken to improve the situation. Health boards are already making considerable efforts to achieve reductions; the recommendations made in the recent report on the management of orthopaedic services in Scotland will assist them with their objective.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 2 November 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School-Police Relations

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received the report from a working party of teachers and police representatives on ways of improving relations between schools and the police; what response he has made; and if he will ensure that the working party's recommendations are made available to schools and local education authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of the working party's report. He welcomes the co-operation between teachers and police representatives which has led to the report, and is considering his response to it in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

School Governors

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will be taking to ensure that the new proposals for the opting out of schools from local authority control will not discriminate against the children of hourly-paid parents in the inner cities and other areas because the parents cannot afford to take time off work to become school governors.

Mr. Dunn: All parents at a school will have the opportunity of voting in a secret postal ballot on a proposal to apply for grant-maintained status. The proposal will have to include information about people willing to stand as governors, and any parent could register an interest. Governing bodies are free to arrange their meetings to suit the convenience of their members. Employers can also provide paid leave for such meetings, and a number already do so.

Parents' Meetings

Mr. Fearn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evaluation he has made of the annual parents' meetings held by schools under the Education Act 1986.

Mr. Dunn: None.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the average change in cost to the residents of Camden if the borough of Westminster opts out of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: The earliest date from which boroughs will be able to opt out of the ILEA is 1 April 1990. The Government expect that, within the new system of local government finance which will be introduced from that date, the financial effect on Camden residents of any other borough opting out of the ILEA should be broadly neutral. The precise financial effects will depend on a number of factors, including the extent of movement of pupils and students between boroughs, and the pattern of expenditure by the ILEA and the opted-out boroughs in relation to the needs and populations of their areas.

Universities (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to ensure that universities do not deny access by students to their examination results.

Mr. Jackson: The universities are autonomous institutions. Within the context of their legal obligations it is for them to make known their students' examination results at the time and in the manner they see fit.

Political Indoctrination

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science in view of current trends in under-fives and under-sevens education, what measures he proposes to introduce to ban political indoctrination of the very young in the state education system.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 already prohibits political indoctrination in schools in England and Wales. Sections 44 and 45 of the Act impose duties on local education authorities, governing bodies and head teachers to forbid partisan political activities by junior pupils and the promotion of partisan political views in teaching, and to secure balanced treatment of any political issues. Since these provisions came into force, we have received no complaints about any alleged political indoctrination of pupils aged under seven. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Education Bill

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of each of the consultation documents issued by him in relation to the forthcoming Education Bill, he will publish tables showing the proportion of responses from (i) individuals and (ii) bodies and institutions which are *(a)* broadly in favour, *(b)* broadly against and *(c)* neither in favour or against the principal proposals of each document.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No. Many respondents have commented in considerable detail, and responses could not readily be classified as requested.

GCSE

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a report breaking down by subject the progress which has been made in producing full sample examination papers for each General Certificate of Secondary Education examination, stating in each case the number of questions which have been produced and the date upon which they were made available to the teaching professions for incorporation into their examination preparation work.

Mrs Rumbold: Information about the sample GCSE questions available from the GCSE examining groups is not held centrally. I shall invite the groups to provide this information and write to my hon. Friend when I have their response.

Conductive Education

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any members of his staff have visited the Peto institute in Budapest to study the system called conductive education which is used there; whether any educational authorities have sent teachers there to train as conductors; and what plans he has to fund pilot schemes based on the Hungarian experience in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: No members of my right hon. Friend's staff have visited the Peto institute. Information about visits by teachers is not collected centrally. The Department is providing £326,000 in order to fund Birmingham university's research evaluation of the Foundation for Conductive Education's pilot project in Birmingham; there are no plans to fund any pilot schemes although LEAs are free to organise such schemes if they wish to do so.

O-Level Examinations

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has considered an independent review of the quality and standard of O-level examinations in England and Wales; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all those subjects approved for examination at O-level and the year they were introduced.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a review of O-level examinations, which from summer 1988 will be replaced by general certificate of secondary education examinations. Records of the O-level syllabuses currently available from the eight GCE boards in England and Wales are not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member on this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Timber

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of annual United Kingdom timber consumption by value and quantity, respectively, were imported for the latest available year.

Mr. Maude: Timber imports as a percentage of United Kingdom consumption in 1986 were 81 per cent. measured by value and 65 per cent. measured by volume.

European Space Agency

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to increase the United Kingdom contribution to the European Space Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No. The European Space Agency's draft proposals, likely to be tabled at the forthcoming ministerial council meeting on 9 and 10 November look over-ambitious and very expensive. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be arguing for a fundamental reappraisal of the agency's plans and for an overhaul of its operating methods.

Mr. Roy Gibson

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the resignation of Mr. Roy Gibson as director-general of the British National Space Centre.

Mr. Butcher: No. I regret Mr. Gibson's resignation, but that is essentially a matter for him.

British Space Plan

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the British space plan.

Mr. Butcher: No. The Government have decided not to increase public expenditure on civil space above the current level, which is already running at over £100 million a year.

BR and W Industries

Mr. Dalyell asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his investigation into the alleged illegal export of mines and other arms to Iran by Mr. Ben Banerjee and BR and W Industries.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade in the *Official Report* of 21 October, column *811*, to his similar question. I am not aware of any breach of United Kingdom Government export control regulations by Mr. Ben Banerjee or BR and W Industries and therefore no investigation is taking place.

Blowpipe Missiles

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether there has been any abuse of end-use on the export licence application in respect of Blowpipe missiles from Short Brothers supplied to (i) Afghanistan rebels, (ii) the South Korean Government, (iii) the Contras in Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: It is not the practice to comment on individual defence equipment export matters.

Weapons (Export Licenses)

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will describe the various elements involved in the verification of export licence applications involving weapons.

Mr. Maude: In considering applications for export licences involving weapons, account is taken of the type of equipment, its proposed destination and the use to which it might be put. Applications must be supported by end-user certificates, international import certificates or evidence of the contract or order as appropriate.

A licence is not issued unless the Government are satisfied that the end user is acceptable and the end use will be as stated on the application.

It is not the practice to disclose the nature of the checks made.

Explosives (Iran)

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representation he has received on the use by Iran of United Kingdom-made explosives; whether explosives exported to Sweden are subject to end-user certification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have received no representations on the use by Iran of explosives manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Export licence applications for explosives for all destinations, including Sweden, are considered on their merits and, depending upon the type of explosive, its end use and destination would normally require an end-user certificate or an international import certificate.

Mrs. H. Braisdell

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to the representations made to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshaw, on behalf of Mrs. H. Braisdell of 85 Thorngreen road, Manchester 22, about the allegations that a north-west tour operator showed not only neglect of clients, but also indifference to bereavement; if there is any action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade Industry replied to the right hon. Member's representations on 26 October. He expressed great sadness at the tragedy but commended Mr. and Mrs. Braisdell for their responsible and compassionate attitude. He explained that the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), to which the tour operator concerned belongs, was conducting a thorough investigation into the case. ABTA has told the Department that it has received assurances from the tour operator that, on the basis of a full report on the incident, it is fully satisfied that its representative acted correctly. ABTA has written accordingly to Mrs. Braisdell.

Cement

Mr. Henderson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide figures for *(a)* imports of cement to the United Kingdom in the first, second and third quarter of 1987, by both tonnage and value, *(b)* imports of Greek cement to the United Kingdom in the first, second and third quarter of 1987, by both tonnage and value, *(c)* exports of cement from the United Kingdom in the first, second and third quarter of 1987, by both tonnage and value and *(d)* the estimated total sales of cement, by both tonnage and value, in the first, second and third quarters of 1987.

Mr. Atkins: Information for the third quarter of 1987 and on sales of cement are not available. Details on imports and exports for the first two quarters are given in the following table.

United Kingdom Imports/Exports of Cement 1987

Quantity: metric tonnes
Value: £'000

	Total Imports		*Of which Greece*		*Total Exports*	
	Quantity	*Value*	*Quantity*	*Value*	*Quantity*	*Value*
First Quarter	162·2	7,428	24·8	499	21·2	2,617
Second Quarter	284·1	10,003	38·7	885	23·5	2,887

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

1. Cement defined as Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 2) sub-group 661·2.
2. 1987 figures provisional.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Henderson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what proportion of the European regional development fund the United Kingdom had received by 1 October or the nearest available date in relation to the 1987 total allocation; and if he will provide a breakdown of which regions of the United Kingdom had received what proportion of the United Kingdom allocation at that date;

(2) which projects submitted from the northern region in the United Kingdom had been accepted by the European Commission for European regional development fund assistance; and which projects from those submitted had been rejected by 1 October;

(3) how many applications were submitted per month by local authorities to Her Majesty's Government before 19 May, and of these how many were accepted by the Commission; how many were submitted per month by local authorities to Her Majesty's Government after 19 May; and of these how many were accepted by the Commission.

Mr. Atkins: Following the announcement on 26 October of the fifth round of 1987 European regional development fund allocations, the allocations to the United Kingdom in respect of projects can be summarised as follows:

Region	*Allocation (£)*	*Per cent.*
North	0·75	0·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·03	0·9
South West	8·81	7·7
West Midlands	22·01	19·3
North West	16·06	14·1
Wales	20·18	17·7
Scotland	18·81	16·5
Northern Ireland	26·11	23·0
Total	113·76	100

The allocations in respect of United Kingdom projects represent approximately 5 per cent. of the 1987 European

Community budget for the European regional development fund. To date 53 per cent. of the fund has been allocated on projects, programmes and studies. We have not yet received an analysis of these from the Commission.

Three further allocations in respect of 1987 remain to be announced. A region's position should be judged on the basis of all the allocations in a year. Final decisions rest with the European Commission.

To date, in 1987, six projects to the value of £660,000 in the northern region have been granted European regional development fund support. Eighty-four applications from the northern region have been made to the value of £108 million. Further awards to the region are likely. Seventeen projects from the northern region were rejected or withdrawn.

Information is not collected in such a way as to permit an analysis of local authority projects submitted to Her Majesty's Government before or after 19 May. However, the number of projects submitted to the European Commission so far in 1987 is 352, of which 205 were submitted before 19 May. Of these projects, 15 have so far been approved by the Commission. During the course of 1987 a further 29 projects have been approved which were submitted in 1986 or earlier.

Home Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the consumer safety unit has obtained information from other European countries about the application of circuit breakers in the prevention of accidents in the home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Information obtained on the experience of other countries with residual current circuit breakers has reinforced my view of the value of these devices in preventing accidents. I hope to announce in the new year a collaborative programme with industry aimed at promoting their wider acceptance and use.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people were treated at hospitals in the home accident surveillance system during 1986 as a result of an electrical current accident in the home; what is his estimate for the figures for the whole of the United Kingdom in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The most recent 12 months for which detailed information is available from the home accident surveillance system cover the period November 1985 to November 1986. During this time, this system recorded details of 88 people who were treated at its 20 hospitals in England and Wales as a result of an electric current accident.

This number is too small to make a reliable estimate of the annual number of such accidents for the whole of England and Wales, but the total is probably between 1,500 and 2,000. No figures are available for Scotland and Northern Ireland which will be participating in the home accident surveillance system for the first time from November 1987.

The most recent year for which detailed information is available on fatal home accidents is 1984 when 26 deaths from electric current accidents were recorded in England and Wales.

The above information is based on the tenth annual report of the home accident surveillance system, 1986 data; which is to be published on 11 November 1987. This report includes more information on the electric current accidents referred to, as well as details of many other types of accidents in the home.

Small Factory Units (Southport)

Mr. Fearn asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to give Government support for small factory units in the Southport area.

Mr. Atkins: English Estates is currently discussing with Sefton district council and with a local enterprise agency its possible involvement in a development of small managed units in the Southport area.

Steel Imports

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the amounts of hot-rolled steel imported in the United Kingdom, by cash and by tonnes, for each of the years from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The figures are as follows:

United Kingdom imports of ECSC treaty products[1]

	Value (£ million) c.i.f.	*Quantity (million tonnes)*
[2]1980	988	4·00
1981	655	2·80
1982	848	3·30
1983	791	2·91
1984	883	2·95
1985	1,059	3·21
1986	1,140	3·55

[1] Due to changes in statistical definitions for steel products over the period since 1980, information is only readily available for total imports of ECSC treaty products. The amounts shown mainly cover hot-rolled products but also include cold-rolled sheets and plate.

[2] Affected by steel strike.

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

Aircraft (Imports)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the cost of importing foreign-made *(a)* military and *(b)* civil aircraft, with countries of origin, into the United Kingdom for each of the years from 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Country of origin data are not available. Imports of aircraft, by value, for each year since 1979 are given in the following table.

Imports of Aircraft 1979-1986

£ million

	Military	*Civil*	*Total*
1979	*	*	364·5
1980	*	*	943·7
1981	69·9	226·7	296·5
1982	68·7	244·2	312·8
1983	16·5	398·5	415·0
1984	171·9	478·5	650·4
1985	42·5	885·9	928·4
1986	31·0	352·8	383·8

Source:

Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

1. * Figures not available due to revised coverage of aircraft.
2. Figures for 1986 provisional.
3. The figures include aircraft manufactured jointly by the United Kingdom and foreign companies.

Textiles (Imports)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the cost of importing foreign textiles for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Atkins: Imports of textiles for each year since 1979, by value, are given in the following table.

Imports of Textiles 1979-1986

£ million

Division	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
26	475·5	376·1	376·0	410·0	475·9	596·7	662·8	546·9
65	1691·1	1543·7	1761·6	1927·6	2320·2	2705·4	3032·0	3162·6
Total	2166·6	1919·8	2137·6	2338·4	2796·1	3302·1	3694·8	3709·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

Textiles defined as Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 2):

Division 26—Textile fibres (other than wool tops) and their wastes; and

Division 65—Textile yarn, Fabrics, made-up articles nes and related products.

1986 figures provisional.

BA/B-Cal Merger

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report on the British Airways bid for British Caledonian; whether any time will be given for representations to be made by interested parties on the report before he makes his decision on its recommendations; and what criteria he intends to use in deciding whether to vary the basic recommendations.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is due to report by 5 November. There is scope for my right hon. and noble Friend to take action only if the commission concludes that a merger would operate against the public interest. It would not be appropriate to speculate on what conclusions the commission may reach or what, if any, recommendations it may make. Any representations on the merger should be addressed to the commission.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Michael Delaney

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General if he will explain the reasons for his decision not to prosecute those responsible for the death of Mr. Michael Delaney on 10 January, following the coroner's court verdict of unlawful killing.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service, having studied all the evidence gathered by the police, and the transcript of the inquest into the death of Michael Delaney, concluded that the evidence did not disclose the commission of any criminal offences.

Immigration (DNA Testing)

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General if he will take steps to ensure that legal aid will be available for all poor families seeking to use genetic DNA tests to challenge immigration rulings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Legal aid is not available for proceedings before tribunals in connection with immigration matters, but may be granted in relation to an application to the High Court for judicial review of a decision of an immigration appeal tribunal or in relation to any appeal from the court's decision on such an application. Advice and assistance on immigration matters is available from a solicitor under the green form scheme to any person of small or moderate means.

The cost of genetic DNA tests may be met under the green form scheme where, in any particular case, the normal financial limits for advice and assistance are extended for that purpose, but the decision whether or not to grant such an extension in any case rests with the legal aid administration of the Law Society.

Mr. John Larsen

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute Mr. John Larsen for carrying a forged Ministry of Defence police warrant; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The question of prosecution is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, I am not aware of any evidence that Mr. John Larsen was ever in possession of such a document. When he was arrested, Mr. Frank Larsen produced a document purporting to be a warrant card, but which was not. The question of his prosecution for so doing was considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and he decided that the public interest did not require it.

Treasury Solicitor (Costs)

Mr. Gow asked the Attorney-General what changes he proposed to make in the 1987-88 cash limit for class XX, vote 29 Law Charges, England and Wales (Treasury Solicitor's Department) and to the Treasury Solicitor's running costs limits.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit for the Treasury Solicitor's Department will be increased by £287,000 from £9,813,000 to £10,100,000 reflecting an exceptional volume of work partially offset by a higher level of receipts. This increase is being charged to the reserve and will not add to the planning total of public expenditure. There has also been an increase of £912,000 in the gross running costs limit from £10,935,000 to £11,847,000. £287,000 of this increase is related to the cash limit increase, £517,000 is to cover the transfer of legal staff from the Department of Employment and £58,000 is a transfer from the Ministry of Defence for work arising from the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress being made in the European Court of Justice on the case initiated by the Commission alleging that Her Majesty's Government are in breach of their Community obligations by not levying value added tax on housebuilders, gas, electricity and other items; and when he expects a judgment to be made by the court.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply. The oral hearing of the case to which my hon. Friend refers took place at the European Court of Justice on 15 September.

The Advocate General's opinion is to be delivered on 2 December. This will be followed by the court's judgment, which is expected early in the new year.

PRIME MINISTER

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that Ministers have adequate contact with the data protection registrar during the design stage of major computer projects which process large volumes of personal data.

The Prime Minister: As I told the hon. Gentleman on 29 April at columns *133-34*, under section 38 of the Data Protection Act 1984 each Government Department is treated as separate from any other Government Department. It is accordingly for individual Ministers to decide how much contact they need to make with the data protection registrar at the design stage of major computer projects for their departments. The data protection registrar welcomes close contacts with Departments in these matters at an early stage.

British Nuclear Fuels

Dr. Thomas asked the Prime Minister to which Government Department British Nuclear Fuels is responsible for *(a)* the military operation cycle and *(b)* the civil operation cycle of its reactors at Calder hall and Chapel cross.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 2 July, at column *144*.

Security and Intelligence Services

Mr. Whitney asked the Prime Minister what proposals she has for the appointment of a staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In the debate which followed my announcement of the Government's acceptance of the Security Commission's recommendations in their report on the case of Michael John Bettaney, I undertook to consider a suggestion that there would be advantage in designating someone, not himself a member of the security service, to whom a member of the security service could turn if he or she had anxieties relating to the work of the service.

The House will wish to know that Sir Philip Woodfield, KCB, CBE, has been appointed as a staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services. He will be available to be consulted by any member of the security and intelligence services who has anxieties relating to the work of his or her service which it has not been possible to allay through the ordinary processes of management-staff relations. He will have access to all relevant documents and to any level of management in each service. He will be able to make recommendations to the head of the service concerned. He will also have access to the Secretary of the Cabinet if he wishes and will have the right to make recommendations to him. He will report as appropriate to the heads of the services and will report not less frequently than once a year to me and to my right hon. Friends the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary as appropriate on his activities and on the working of the system.

WALES

New Build Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the new build figures for *(a)* private, *(b)* local authority, *(c)* housing associations and *(d)* others, in each local authority area, in 1978-79, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87, respectively.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not readily available by financial year, but the following table gives new build completions on a calendar year basis:

Welsh Districts	*Local Authorities*	*Housing Associations*	*Private Sector*	*Other (Government Departments)*
1978				
Aberconwy	9	104	90	—
Alyn and Deeside	90	135	244	—
Arfon	31	—	81	—
Blaenau Gwent	97	—	5	—
Brecknock	10	—	105	—
Cardiff	298	91	519	—
Carmarthen	13	—	80	1

Welsh Districts	*Local Authorities*	*Housing Associations*	*Private Sector*	*Other (Government Departments)*
Ceredigion	41	—	215	—
Colwyn	48	18	210	—
Cynon Valley	129	91	21	—
Delyn	41	—	218	—
Dinefwr	36	6	36	1
Dwyfor	3	—	128	—
Glyndwr	54	—	104	—
Islwyn	80	—	104	—
Llanelli	117	—	137	1
Lliw Valley	70	—	147	—
Meirionnydd	14	—	52	—
Merthyr Tydfil	113	70	61	—
Monmouth	59	—	299	—
Montgomeryshire	48	—	160	—
Neath	115	99	174	—
Newport	865	29	276	1
Ogwr	160	38	349	2
Port Talbot/Afan	64	—	71	—
Preseli	140	—	181	—
Radnor	22	25	104	—
Rhondda	80	—	32	1
Rhuddlan	39	—	277	—
Rhymney Valley	209	66	261	1
South Pembrokeshire	51	—	93	1
Swansea	271	59	547	—
Taff-Ely	167	—	446	4
Torfaen	118	81	83	3
Vale of Glamorgan	26	138	580	—
Wrexham Maelor	263	—	270	—
Ynys Môn	120	22	331	—
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	78	—	1	—
Newtown	270	—	23	—
Wales Total (All)	4,459	1,072	7,091	16
1982				
Aberconwy	—	—	81	—
Alyn and Deeside	50	—	151	—
Arfon	46	12	87	—
Blaenau Gwent	67	—	18	—
Brecknock	30	36	80	—
Cardiff	240	180	694	—
Carmarthen	21	—	260	—
Ceredigion	86	10	149	—
Colwyn	—	34	159	—
Cynon Valley	14	46	40	—
Delyn	7	—	134	—
Dinefwr	2	—	39	—
Dwyfor	6	—	64	2
Glyndwr	43	—	101	—
Islwyn	44	12	22	—
Llanelli	26	—	67	—
Lliw Valley	91	—	71	—
Meirionnydd	16	—	55	—
Merthyr Tydfil	12	154	30	—
Monmouth	80	—	211	—
Montgomeryshire	11	—	133	—
Neath	18	—	72	—
Newport	172	6	304	—
Ogwr	79	49	273	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	8	32	—
Preseli	16	—	101	—
Radnor	20	17	43	—
Rhondda	27	—	27	—
Rhuddlan	37	—	115	—
Rhymney Valley	57	21	156	1
South Pembrokeshire	—	—	99	—
Swansea	126	—	136	—
Taff-Ely	62	—	190	—
Torfaen	48	117	142	—
Vale of Glamorgan	49	51	267	—

Welsh Districts	*Local Authorities*	*Housing Associations*	*Private Sector*	*Other (Government Departments)*
Wrexham Maelor	69	41	295	—
Ynys Môn	59	—	261	2
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	89	—	50	—
Newtown	15	—	41	—
Wales Total (All)	1,875	794	5,250	5
1983				
Aberconwy	38	12	67	—
Alyn and Deeside	86	—	178	—
Arfon	4	—	64	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	37	—
Brecknock	24	30	75	—
Cardiff	310	57	686	—
Carmarthen	132	—	290	—
Cerdigion	—	—	134	—
Colwyn	50	2	261	—
Cynon Valley	—	14	112	—
Delyn	—	—	106	—
Dinefwr	22	—	51	—
Dwyfor	5	—	110	—
Glyndwr	23	—	135	—
Islwyn	25	37	75	—
Llanelli	42	—	105	—
Lliw Valley	90	—	153	—
Meirionnydd	33	—	2	—
Merthyr Tydfil	7	80	75	—
Monmouth	71	—	254	—
Montgomeryshire	15	—	144	—
Neath	71	11	58	—
Newport	43	—	184	—
Ogwr	9	58	375	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	—	9	—
Preseli	—	—	104	—
Radnor	—	34	40	—
Rhondda	—	—	9	—
Rhuddlan	40	39	108	—
Rhymney Valley	73	64	109	—
South Pembrokshire	6	6	65	—
Swansea	29	76	278	—
Taff-Ely	85	—	172	—
Torfaen	83	—	25	—
Vale of Glamorgan	24	9	256	—
Wrexham Maelor	62	—	295	—
Ynys Môn	41	—	204	—
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	169	—	89	—
Newtown	26	—	51	—
Wales Total (All)	1,738	529	5545	—
1984				
Aberconwy	—	—	35	—
Alyn and Deeside	39	—	170	—
Arfon	28	—	47	—
Blaenau Gwent	30	—	123	—
Brecknock	14	—	90	—
Cardiff	344	38	695	—
Carmarthen	46	—	403	—
Ceredigion	165	—	189	—
Colwyn	24	15	212	—
Cynon Valley	40	—	102	—
Delyn	—	18	140	—
Dinefwr	55	—	60	—
Dwyfor	—	—	62	—
Glyndwr	4	—	131	—
Islwyn	64	13	43	—
Llanelli	—	—	45	—

Welsh Districts	*Local Authorities*	*Housing Associations*	*Private Sector*	*Other (Government Departments)*
Lliw Valley	111	54	203	—
Meirionnydd	12	—	25	—
Merthyr Tydfil	9	15	68	—
Monmouth	59	39	427	—
Montgomeryshire	41	12	73	—
Neath	76	24	55	—
Newport	169	54	124	—
Ogwr	60	—	359	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	—	15	—
Preseli	—	—	83	—
Radnor	69	13	106	—
Rhondda	—	—	16	—
Rhuddlan	59	—	183	—
Rhymney Valley	79	6	168	—
South Pembrokeshire	1	30	161	—
Swansea	105	118	211	—
Taff-Ely	90	24	178	—
Torfaen	38	—	214	—
Vale of Glamorgan	20	68	448	—
Wrexham Maelor	61	52	484	—
Ynys Môn	84	—	200	—
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	93	—	76	—
Newtown	62	—	19	—
Wales Total (All)	2,151	593	6,443	—
1985				
Aberconwy	20	—	260	—
Alyn and Deeside	30	24	98	—
Arfon	9	1	98	—
Blaenau Gwent	48	33	53	—
Brecknock	12	—	108	—
Cardiff	107	117	1,165	—
Carmarthen	28	8	120	—
Ceredigion	—	—	132	—
Colwyn	—	—	235	—
Cynon Valley	—	—	53	—
Delyn	—	—	106	2
Dinefwr	16	—	88	—
Dwyfor	9	—	66	—
Glyndwr	—	—	183	—
Islwyn	21	8	115	—
Llanelli	67	—	103	—
Lliw Valley	22	—	180	—
Meirionnydd	—	10	54	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	3	113	—
Monmouth	107	—	364	—
Montgomeryshire	—	15	120	—
Neath	16	—	50	—
Newport	67	84	702	—
Ogwr	139	—	351	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	—	12	—
Preseli	—	—	34	—
Radnor	10	—	79	—
Rhondda	—	12	19	—
Rhuddlan	24	10	129	—
Rhymney Valley	30	9	109	—
South Pembrokeshire	20	—	78	—
Swansea	57	88	78	—
Taff-Ely	—	68	286	—
Torfaen	31	58	181	—
Vale of Glamorgan	18	—	159	—
Wrexham Maelor	66	—	207	—
Ynys Môn	18	—	141	—
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	81	59	66	—
Newtown	—	—	45	—
Wales Total (All)	1,073	607	6,540	2

Welsh Districts	*Local Authorities*	*Housing Associations*	*Private Sector*	*Other (Government Departments)*
1986				
Aberconwy	—	—	156	—
Alyn and Deeside	33	19	150	—
Arfon	—	9	83	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	38	12	—
Brecknock	—	—	82	—
Cardiff	—	38	1,219	—
Carmarthen	18	—	145	—
Ceredigion	41	17	171	—
Colwyn	18	—	252	—
Cynon Valley	—	40	52	—
Delyn	—	16	210	—
Dinefwr	34	—	54	—
Dwyfor	4	—	61	—
Glyndwr	—	8	182	—
Islwyn	40	—	88	—
Llanelli	40	—	98	—
Lliw Valley	34	14	130	—
Meirionnydd	—	—	46	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	83	—
Monmouth	74	—	348	—
Montgomeryshire	26	19	167	—
Neath	26	10	90	—
Newport	119	74	527	—
Ogwr	40	—	275	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	39	35	—
Preseli	9	29	70	
Radnor	2	37	74	—
Rhondda	—	12	16	—
Rhuddlan	44	—	143	—
Rhymney Valley	15	27	131	—
South Pembrokeshire	—	—	90	—
Swansea	—	33	313	—
Taff-Ely	12	20	306	—
Torfaen	34	7	134	—
Vale of Glamorgan	36	—	383	—
Wrexham Maelor	11	28	422	—
Ynys Môn	34	—	134	—
Wales Total (LA)				
Cwmbran	88	—	30	—
Newtown	38	—	64	—
Wales Total (All)	870	534	7,026	—

Pembrokeshire Health Authority

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales when it is expected that the Pembrokeshire health authority's funding will reach equalisation with other Welsh authorities at the level recommended by the Yates committee.

Mr. Grist: The pace of revenue equalisation between health authorities in Wales cannot be predicted with certainty. It depends upon annual revisions to the revenue formula (developed by the Resource Allocation Working Group) for demographic and other data changes and the availability of resources for equalisation in the light of competing demands on growth funds. If there are no significant changes in the formula in future years and the scale of provision made available for equalisation in 1987-88 is maintained, all authorities in Wales other than Gwynedd should be within plus or minus 1 per cent. of their formula shares by 1990-91. Given that the formula is intended to be only an indicator of relative resource needs, I would regard such a banding as the achievement of a broad measure of equalisation which represents our current policy objective.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the cost per pupil of teaching staff in each Welsh local education authority in 1978-79, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The cost per pupil of teaching staff in maintained primary and secondary schools is given in the following table. Information in respect of 1987-88 is not yet available.

£'s at outturn prices

	1978-79	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87 provisional*
Primary schools						
Clwyd	254·7	475·8	502·9	520·3	555·9	616·7
Dyfed	286·1	544·8	571·0	589·6	609·9	671·7
Gwent	259·9	478·1	506·5	503·0	528·8	602·8
Gwynedd	280·2	531·0	558·5	584·0	610·5	679·4
Mid Glamorgan	257·4	499·7	531·6	549·6	583·5	636·0
Powys	326·3	575·9	612·6	637·4	672·7	745·0
South Glamorgan	253·2	458·3	473·6	495·0	528·6	583·8
West Glamorgan	281·4	505·5	523·6	538·8	577·5	647·5
Secondary schools						
Clwyd	369·3	651·3	703·4	742·5	814·6	921·4
Dyfed	375·4	676·5	724·6	770·9	832·6	951·6
Gwent	370·1	670·6	720·4	769·2	839·6	960·5
Gwynedd	374·2	667·7	726·4	771·8	844·3	959·6
Mid Glamorgan	365·7	632·8	683·2	730·6	789·0	893·8
Powys	384·4	680·9	731·5	786·1	859·8	974·4
South Glamorgan	367·3	651·6	698·4	746·8	809·8	917·3
West Glamorgan	389·5	721·8	776·2	818·0	899·7	1,035·7

Industrial Support and Development

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the annual expenditure for each year since 1972 on industrial support and development in Wales; how much of it was regional development grant and how much regional selective assistance.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance and regional development grants in Wales for the financial years 1972-73 to 1986-87 is as follows:

	RSA £ million	*RDG £ million*	*Total £ million*
1972-73	—	0·9	0·9
1973-74	4·5	15·3	19·8
1974-75	7·3	32·2	39·5
1975-76	10·3	47·1	57·4
1976-77	6·9	62·4	69·3
1977-78	6·3	70·4	76·7
1978-79	30·3	71·5	101·8
1979-80	18·8	50·7	69·5
1980-81	10·7	103·5	114·2
1981-82	9·2	122·2	131·4
1982-83	15·5	121·5	137·0
1983-84	18·2	72·1	90·3
1984-85	25·1	92·7	117·8
1985-86	28·0	84·4	112·4
1986-87	35·6	88·7	124·3
Total	226·7	1,035·6	1,262·3

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will construct for Wales a table in the same form as figure J7 in Cmnd. 9714 "Paying For Local Government", showing numbers of adults living in each of the households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge;

(2) if he will reproduce for Wales figure J7 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying For Local Government", showing households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge by *(a)* local authority and *(b)* parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Peter Walker: Estimates for Wales of the total numbers of households which would have gained or lost had the replacement of domestic rates by the community charge taken place in 1985-86 are given in the following table. These estimates have been derived from a sub-set of the family expenditure survey of about 1,500 Welsh households. It is not possible to derive reliable estimates for individual household types or for individual local authorities or parliamentary constituencies from a sample of this size.

Households in Wales gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge
All households (thousands)

	Pounds per week
Losers:	
10+	—
5-10	16
2-5	137
1-2	109
0-1	223
Total losers	483
Gainers:	
0-1	266
1-2	109
2-5	160
5-10	17
10+	1
Total gainers	552
	Percentage of net income
Losers:	
10+	—
5-10	—
2-5	54
1-2	127
0-1	302
Total losers	483
Gainers:	
0-1	325
1-2	143
2-5	76

	Pounds per week
5-10	8
10+	—
Total gainers	552
Total households	1,035

Numbers may not add owing to rounding.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an estimate of the numbers of staff that a community charge registration officer for Alyn and Deeside will be required to employ in order to complete registration in the community charge register of all adults in Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. Peter Walker: No estimate has been made but an assessment will be considered in discussion with the Welsh Consultative Council on local government finance.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the date when he expects local authorities in Wales to have community charge registration officers in post.

Mr. Peter Walker: A community charge registration officer will be appointed by each local authority and will be responsible for compiling and maintaining the community charge register in readiness for its introduction in April 1990.

TRANSPORT

A6 Bypass (Great Glen)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to be able to announce a firm timetable in relation to the construction of the A6 bypass at Great Glen, Leicestershire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Initial investigations are now in hand. We hope to put forward proposals for public consultation in autumn 1988 and announce a preferred route in 1989. Subject to the results of further investigations and the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, construction could start late in 1992.

National Bus Company

Mr. Morley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total amount paid out in redundancy payments to staff employed by the National Bus Company in 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand from the chairman of the National Bus Company that in 1986 £13·5 million was spent on redundancies in NBC and its various subsidiaries.

A423 (Road Markings)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to take any action to change the road markings on the A423 trunk road south of Deddington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am considering whether any changes should be made to the road markings in the interest of road safety. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as I can.

Motorways (Coning)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he is making to ensure that motorways are not restricted needlessly by coning off one or more lanes when there is not a worker or piece of plant along the particular stretch of road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's instructions to its agents emphasise the need to minimise coning off and, once lanes have been coned off, to complete the works and remove the cones as soon as possible. There are times when lane closures may seem unnecessary. Cones are needed to separate workmen from traffic and drivers from potential hazards such as excavated areas or setting concrete. Measures taken to reduce periods of closure include mobile lane closures for some routine maintenance activities and lane rental, a contracts regime under which works are being completed about 30 per cent. faster on average than would be the case under conventional contracts.

BREL (Redundancies)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the programme of redundancies recently announced by British Rail Engineering Limited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The redundancies recently announced by BREL are management matters for the company and the railways board. The British Rail chairman has kept us informed of BREL's plans.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Aitken asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals have been put to him for the construction of a high-speed rail link between London and the planned United Kingdom Channel tunnel terminus at Cheriton.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, British Rail is not due to report to me until June 1988 on the outcome of its study into the options for augmenting route, seating and terminal capacity for commuter and international services in Kent. This study, and the need for it, is referred to in the consultation document "Channel Tunnel: A Strategy for Kent" published by the Channel Tunnel Joint Committee impact study team and placed in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament on 17 August.

Rural Transport (Essex)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what payments have been made in Essex from the rural transport development fund; for which routes; and for what purposes.

Mr. David Mitchell: No payments have been made from the rural transport development fund for schemes in Essex. Two applications are being considered at present by the Development Commission, for a community bus serving the Ongar area and a rural taxi-sharing scheme in the Rochford area. A further application is expected for a taxibus service in the Manningtree area. I welcome increasing interest in the assistance available from the £1 million fund of Department of Transport finance managed by the Development Commission.

A1

Mr. Jopling asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the surface of the A1 road is especially bumpy in the sections around Eaton Socon and between Markham Moor roundabout and the river Trent; what assessment he has made of the implications for the road construction and maintenance programme of this; and who were the contractors concerned in constructing these surfaces.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 20km section of A1 between Markham Moor roundabout and the river Trent was constructed in the mid 1960s and the Eaton Socon bypass opened in 1971. They were both built by R. McGregor and Sons, now part of Norwest Holst Civil Engineering Ltd.

The present condition of the carriageways does not require reconstruction or overlay.

A series of small repairs was started in 1984 to the Nottinghamshire section to extend the life of the pavement. They have resulted in some reductions in the riding quality. The repair contracts, which will be completed by 1989, are being carried out by Nottinghamshire county council direct labour organisation, Clugston Construction Ltd., Norwest Holst Civil Engineering Ltd. and Rush and Tompkins Ltd. There are no plans for any substantial maintenance at Eaton Socon.

Mr. Jopling asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many new roundabouts have been interposed on the A1 road in the last 10 years; how many have been improved; and if he will make it his policy that no further new ones will be interposed in the future.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last 10 years, eight new roundabouts have been interposed on the A1 in England, 13 have been removed and we have proposals in the programme to remove a further five.

We have no plans at present to install additional roundabouts on the A1

Traffic flows vary greatly along the length of the A1. In future improvement, it may be concluded that roundabouts are appropriate for particular junctions in the light of traffic volumes and other aspects of the local situation.

A46-A47 Link Road

Mr. Vaz asked the Secretary of State for Transport if in view of the decision of Leicestershire county council to implement proposals for the A46-A47 link road to pass through the eastern part of Leicester, he will initiate a public inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A46-A47 link road is the responsibility of Leicestershire county council as highway authority.

I understand that it intends to hold public consultations on the recently adopted preferred route.

A public inquiry would be held into a published compulsory purchase order if objections are received which are not resolved. Local authority orders are subject to the confirmation of the Secretary of State.

Scheduled Air Service (Manchester-New York)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what applications have been or are being considered for a daily scheduled air service between Manchester and New York; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: British Airways applied for and was granted a licence by the Civil Aviation Authority to operate between Manchester and New York some years ago. It inaugurated its service in 1985. No other applications are currently before the CAA or the Department of Transport.

American Airlines and Pan American World Airways have recently applied to the United States Department of Transportation for permission to operate between New York and Manchester. As stated in the Airports Policy White Paper (Cmnd. 9542), we remain willing to negotiate with the United States Government the basis on which United States airlines should have access to Manchester.

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will clarify his advice to the British Railways Board on the legal restrictions on trading between it and British Rail Engineering Ltd., with a view to allowing British Rail Engineering Ltd. to tender for new locomotive building.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have given no advice to the Railways Board on any of these matters.

Buses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those bus services in the Dyfed county council area which have been put out to tender since October 1986.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have been asked to reply.

Information on individual bus services put out to tender by Dyfed county council, or other local authorities within its area, is not held by the Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Answers

Mr. John Marshall asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the estimated total cost of answering the questions tabled on Wednesday 21 October for written answer.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not possible to calculate the actual cost of answering these specific questions. However, following an inderdepartmental exercise in 1972, an assessment was made of the average cost of answering a written parliamentary question. This average figure is updated regularly and currently stands at £45.

CIVIL SERVICE

Personnel Management Policy

73. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he proposes to introduce any changes to personnel management policy.

Mr. Luce: The Government will continue to develop new policies and adapt existing ones in order further to improve the effectiveness and professionalism of the Civil Service.

Secondments

76. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many secondments were made between the Civil Service and *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* industry and commerce in the last 12 months.

Mr. Luce: In 1986, the last full year for which figures are available, there were 56 secondments between the Civil Service and local authorities and 469 between the Civil Service and industry and commerce. The Government are keen that a higher level of secondments be sustained.

Departmental Costs

Dr. Hampson asked the Minister for the Civil Service if there are any proposals to change the 1987-88 running costs limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the running costs limit for the office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) will be reduced by £803,000 from £29,697,000 to £28,894,000. This decrease will be offset by a corresponding increase in the running costs limit for the Economic and Financial Administration (HM Treasury) vote (class XIX, vote 11) and results from the changes in the distribution of functions between the central Departments announced by the Prime Minister on 7 August 1987.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

6. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the latest time scale for the construction and operation of Sizewell B pressurised water reactor nuclear power station.

Mr. Parkinson: Preliminary work on site started on schedule on 29 June 1987 after consent was given in March. A number of major contracts have now been placed, providing United Kingdom firms with unique opportunities. These totalled nearly £700 million by September. The target construction period to full commissioning is 69 months, and the station is expected to be operational by mid-1994.

24. **Mr. Devlin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what effect the construction of the Sizewell B nuclear power station will have on employment opportunities in the energy industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that Sizewell B will provide an average of 10,000 jobs in the power engineering and construction industry and on site over a seven year period. The peak will be about 15,000 jobs in 1990-91.

Electricity Demand

13. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has for the increase in electricity demand over the next decade.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Estimates of electricity demand are the responsibility of the electricity supply industry. The forecasts for England and Wales adopted by the Electricity Council in October last year show a steady growth of about 1·5 per cent. a year in electricity demand over the nine years ahead.

Nuclear Safety

14. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to conduct a comprehensive review of safety at nuclear power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Safety at new nuclear power stations is under continuous review. The operators of nuclear power stations have a statutory responsibility for the safety of their plant. In addition, they must meet the stringent licence requirements of the NII.

22. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to improve the security and safety of nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Parkinson: The security and safety of nuclear power stations are the responsibility of the operators concerned and these are continually reviewed. The independent Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive ensures that operators satisfy its stringent licence terms and conditions.

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Energy what developments there have been between the nuclear installations inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board on the question of the long-term safety review at Bradwell nuclear power station; and if the Central Electricity Generating Board have satisfied the nuclear installations inspectorate on the submissions it has made to them on the issue of the pressure circuit integrity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 29 October.

Alternative Energy Sources

15. **Mr. Wray** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the projects on the use of alternative energies to oil his Department is sponsoring or funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have supported several studies of processes for producing synthetic liquid fuels as alternatives to oil. However, results have indicated that liquid fuels produced by such processes would be far more expensive than oil or fuels derived from natural feedstocks, such as natural gas.

Coal Output

16. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest forecast for coal output for 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Forecasts of coal output are a matter for the British Coal Corporation. However, coal production by the corporation and its licensees in the 12 months to 10 October 1987 totalled 102 million tonnes. The figure for the calendar year 1987 is not likely to be greatly different.

21. **Mr. Riddick** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of the financial support the Government are planning for the coal industry.

Mr. Parkinson: Over the three years to 1989-90, the Government expect to provide finance of over £2 billion to the coal industry.

Electricity Generation

17. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the cost of electricity provided by the latest nuclear power stations compared with that produced by the most modern coal-fired plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest analysis of comparative generating costs made by the CEGB showed that the average lifetime costs per Kwh, in April 1987 prices, for the most recently commissioned plant at Hinkley Point was 2·82 per Kwh and 3·03 per Kwh for the first stage of the coal fired station at Drax.

20. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what funds his Department is currently providing for research into electricity generation using renewable energy sources.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The current renewables programme includes 94 projects worth over £45 million covering the electricity generating renewable technologies. So far this year 38 projects worth nearly £5 million have been initiated.

Scottish Coalfields

18. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current levels of production and manning in the Scottish coalfields.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the British Coal Corporation that during the four weeks up to 24 October the Scottish area produced 205,450 tonnes of coal, and that on 24 October there were 4,274 men on colliery books.

Electricity Supply

19. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

32. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding his plans for the privatisation of electricity.

Mr. Cecil Parkinson: I have received representations from electricity consumers, unions, other nationalised industries and members of the public and will take these into account when considering the proposals for the privatisation of the industry.

23. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to ensure that, in any future plans for privatisation of the electricity supply industry, the maintenance of a national grid is a statutory requirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: We are developing our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; these do not envisage the breaking up of the national grid.

Electricity (Privatisation)

33. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he proposes to impose any restriction on cross-Channel importation of electricity if the industry is privatised.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The cross-Channel import of electricity will be a commercial matter for the privatised electricity supply industry.

EC Energy Ministers

25. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had, since assuming office, with Energy Ministers from other European Economic Community countries; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend met Mr. Burke, the Irish Energy Minister, on 16 September when they discussed nuclear and gas matters. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State represented the United Kingdom at an informal meeting of Energy Ministers in Denmark on 20 and 21 September. Discussion centred on energy efficiency, new and renewable sources of energy and the interaction between energy and the environment as addressed in the Brundtland report.

Mineworkers (Redundancy Payments)

26. **Mr. Hood** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the state benefits received by a mineworker or his spouse that are deducted from the mineworkers' weekly redundancy payments under the mineworkers' redundancy payments scheme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A former mineworker eligible for weekly payments under the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme (RMPS) may have these payments reduced by deduction of all or part of the following state benefits received by himself:

(a) reduced earnings allowance;
(b) supplementary allowance;
(c) supplementary pension.

No deductions are made from weekly benefits in respect of state benefits received by a beneficiary's spouse. However, where state benefits received by an RMPS beneficiary or his spouse affect the unemployment benefit to which the beneficiary would have been entitled but for exhaustion of entitlement, payments of unemployment benefit equivalent under the RMPS are affected similarly.

Tidal Power

27. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to encourage the development of tide-generated electricity in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tidal power will be encouraged provided it remains economically viable and environmentally acceptable. As a result of present studies, some of which I announced in September, I hope that substantive decisions about the Severn will be taken around the end of next year.

Mining Industry (Flexible Hours)

28. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of British Coal in order to discuss flexible working in the mining industry.

29. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the situation in the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of the British Coal Corporation regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Fawley B Power Station

30. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to receive from the Central Electricity Generating Board a planning application for a proposed new coal-fired power station at Fawley B.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB has informed me that it intends to make an application to my right hon. Friend for consent to construct a coal-fired power station at Fawley B by the end of the year.

Energy Efficiency

31. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for improving the energy efficiency of housing and public buildings.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have recently announced a strategic review of the work of the energy efficiency office of the Department, which will include the programmes designed to promote energy efficiency in housing and public buildings.

Sellafield

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) 24 July, at column *520*, if he has now received the nuclear installations inspectorate's audit progress report on Sellafield's safety improvements; and if he will now make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from the Health and Safety Executive that British Nuclear Fuels plc has made good progress in meeting the improvements required in the HSE's Sellafield audit report which cover four main areas:—

(i) plant: short and medium term improvements have been carried out. Those with a longer timescale which involve design and modification proposals, are being agreed between BNF plc and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.
(ii) safety cases: BNF plc are on target for the preparation of safety cases which are required by the end of the year and priorities for work in subsequent years have also been agreed.
(iii) training: training procedures for all levels of staff have been improved following a thorough review; and
(iv) operating procedures: these have been completely reviewed and in some cases (such as shift handover) new procedures have been reintroduced. Quality assurance systems are being used to reinforce operating procedures.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport West (Mr. Flynn) of 20 July, at column *19*, how many meetings, involving how many staff from his Department, have been held between his Department and the European Commission following the completion of the consultations on Sellafield safeguards to which he made reference.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to my answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 20 July at column *19*.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether in the light of the statements submitted on past Central Electricity Generating Board plutonium use by Lord Marshall, chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, on 15 October, he now has anything to add to the statement made by the then Minister in his Department, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 4 February 1983, at column *206*.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 19 May 1986 at column *31*.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) in what way the plutonium with plutonium-Z40 content less than 15 percent. produced at Trawsfynydd Magnox reactors *(a)* between 1965 and 31st March 1969 and *(b)* between 1st April 1969 and the present, has been disposed of;

(2) whether he has any further information on the uses to which Central Electricity Generating Board plutonium has been put further to the statement made by his right hon. Friend, the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 4 February 1983, at column 206; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 15 and 18 April 1986 at column *330* and *525*, respectively.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish tables of *(a)* the annual amount of spent nuclear fuel dispatched and *(b)* the annual amount of plutonium created, each by date and quantity, in the Trawsfynydd Magnox nuclear plant in the periods 1965 to March 1969 inclusive, April 1969 to April 1979 inclusive, and May 1979 to the present date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 12 March 1987 column *278*.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 10 July, at column 289, on the publication of information on civil plutonium production, whether he is now able to make an announcement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 30 October 1987 to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether there have been any recent requests from the United States government concerning the availability of British plutonium for export to the United States of America for *(a)* civil and *(b)* military uses.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Exports of plutonium to the United States for civil purposes take place from time to time. The destinations and quantities are commercially confidential.

On part *(b)* of his question, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 15 April 1986 at column *330*.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now make it his policy to publish a weekly input/output table, backdated to 1 January, of spent Magnox fuel arising from civil Magnox reactors, together with the arisings of resulting depleted uranium and plutonium stocks for the throughput at the Windscale B205 reprocessor plant at British Nuclear Fuels Limited plc Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department is considering any requests for permission to sell nuclear waste management technology to the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No formal request has been made.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received any recent request for permission to sell nuclear reprocessing technology to Japan.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. As a result the Government have exchanged notes with the Japanese Government under which we have received assurances as to the use to which this should be put, in line with the policy laid down by the then Foreign Secretary in a parliamentary answer on 31 March 1976 at columns *514-16*.

Windscale Piles

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 10 July, at column *289*, if he has any further information available on the decommissioning of the Windscale piles by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Plans for carrying out decommissioning work on the Windscale piles were announced by the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on 5 October. A copy of his statement has been placed in the Library.

Privatisation

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about proposals for privatisation of services within his Department's responsibility.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department currently uses the private sector for a number of services. Some others are being actively considered for possible contracting out and we are searching for more opportunities.

Coal Imports

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the cost and tonnage of importing coal into the United Kingdom, with country of origin, for each of the years from 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tonnages of coal imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 are shown, by country of origin, in the following table. The total and average costs of the coal imported in each year, as at the United Kingdom port of entry, are shown at the foot of the same table.

United Kingdom coal imports

'000 tonnes from:	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Australia	2,164	2,847	1,791	1,143	1,987	1,859	5,390	3,822
United States of America	1,031	3,653	1,954	2,053	1,142	3,344	3,145	3,560
Poland	658	446	142	320	509	1,359	1,387	1,217
Canada	—	—	—	—	—	117	399	449
Federal Republic of Germany	229	80	132	334	482	959	746	439
South Africa	38	66	80	67	58	257	725	312
Netherlands	22	23	8	43	86	304	306	218
Belgium	22	14	7	34	63	232	167	169
Bulgaria	—	—	—	—	—	—	81	144
Colombia	—	—	—	—	—	—	89	56
USSR	65	46	34	12	23	11	23	48
China	58	66	—	5	8	22	34	26
German Democratic Republic	—	—	—	—	—	74	37	23
France	—	—	1	14	7	229	28	21
Irish Republic	55	41	5	3	4	17	12	11
Others	33	52	136	34	87	110	66	39
TOTAL	4,375	7,334	4,290	4,062	4,456	8,894	12,635	10,554
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Value of imports	138	214	158	182	215	493	674	443
	£	*£*	*£*	*£*	*£*	*£*	*£*	*£*
Average per tonne	31·45	29·23	36·75	44·86	48·20	55·44	53·34	41·95

EMPLOYMENT

Mining Accidents

78. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he next meets the chairman of British Coal whether he will raise with him the number of accidents underground and what the chairman aims to do to bring about a reduction.

Mr. Cope: I have no immediate plans to meet the chairman of British Coal but the reduction of underground accidents is the subject of continual dialogue between the industry and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines and Quarries, which investigates fatal and major injury accidents in mines.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Employment if an inspector of the Health and Safety Commission will prosecute Townsend Thoresen Ltd., under sections 2(1), (2)*(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)*, *(d)*, *(e)*, 3(1) and 37 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 arising out of the operation of the ship Herald of Free Enterprise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Health and safety matters on board ship are a matter for the Department of Transport. In the wake of the findings of the coroner's inquest, the papers have been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions who is considering whether or not to instigate proceedings.

Closed Shop

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" were in favour of the proposal that immunity should be removed from all industrial action designed to create or maintain a closed shop; how many were against the proposal; and how many did not express an opinion.

Mr. Nicholls: Responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" and comments on particular proposals have been treated in confidence by my Department. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that a substantial majority of those who commented on this proposal expressed approval.

YTS

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the current providers of training places on youth training schemes in Coventry; and how many places each are providing.

Mr. Cope: Information is not currently available in the form requested. A national list of YTS managing agents who have the status of approved training organisation is being compiled and will be published in 1988. The list will contain details of the number of places made available by each approved training organisation alongside other information.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people, by sex, work full-time and part-time in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area for the latest available date; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many people in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area are employed in the service industries on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(3) how many people in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area are employed in manufacturing industry on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. John Lee [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: This information is available only for dates when censuses of employment are taken. The available information from the September 1984 and the previous September 1981 census of employment is set out. For parliamentary constituencies, a breakdown of employees by industry and by full and part-time status is not available for the earlier year.

Employees in employment[1]

	September 1981	*September 1984*
Dundee East Constituency[2]		
All industries and services	20,700	20,200
Males		
full-time	n.a.	12,500
part-time	n.a.	700
all	13,700	13,100
Females		
full-time	n.a.	3,900
part-time	n.a.	3,100
all	7,000	7,000
Service industries	n.a.	10,200
Manufacturing industries	n.a.	7,600
Dundee Travel-to-work area[3]		
All industries and services	83,600	80,300
Males		
full-time	42,000	40,000
part-time	2,600	2,400
all	44,600	42,400
Females		
full-time	23,600	21,300
part-time	15,500	16,600
all	39,000	37,900
Service industries	54,000	55,600
Manufacturing industries	22,300	18,400

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's Forces.

[2] To facilitate comparisons over time, the figures for the constituency are aggregates of frozen wards (ie, ward boundaries as at 1981).

[3] Travel-to-work area defined in terms of frozen wards.

n.a.—not available.

Community Programme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed by environmental and conservation groups in the United Kingdom under the community programme at the latest available date; what was the number in 1986; and if he is able to forecast numbers for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Lee [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: On 14 October 1987, there were 62,868 authorised places on the community programme, primarily on environmental and landscaping projects. On 20 November 1986, the nearest comparable date, there were 81,256 such places; it is not possible to forecast the corresponding number of places for 1988. Other places often include an element of environmental and landscape improvement.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the proposed changes in eligibility for employment under the community programme on recruitment by conservation and environmental groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: The changes in community programme eligibility will focus the programme more closely on long-term unemployed people, a group most in need of the opportunities the programme provides. There are unlikely to be any major effects on recruitment, with over 1 million people eligible for a place under the new eligibility rules.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. Illsley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to a requirement that all firearms licence holders hold membership of an approved shooting club throughout the full duration of their licence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Applicants who apply for firearm certificates for target shooting are already required to establish membership of a rifle or pistol club and this is normally checked on renewal every three years. We are not persuaded that more frequent checks on club membership, which would be costly, would significantly improve the present control.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in making his proposals for a reform of firearms law, he will include proposals to *(a)* subject shotguns to the same control as firearms and *(b)* ban the sale by mail order of all firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has already announced his intention to bring self loading and pump action shotguns under the same controls as rifles and handguns. We also intend to impose a statutory obligation on shotgun certificate holders to store their weapons securely when they are not being used. As he announced in the debate on firearms in the House on 26 October, columns 28 to 69, we are considering suggestions in respect of a number of related issues and hope to announce comprehensive proposals by the end of November.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether in his proposed legislation on firearms he will take power to ban gun shops from displaying for sale hoods and masks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Prisons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison inmates were reported as (i) using needles or syringes for the injection of drugs and (ii) involved in sexual activity in contravention of prison rules, *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* in the current year to date.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. The best evidence available by which to assess the level of any form of drug misuse in prison department establishments is the number of finds of substances or implements. In 1986, there were some 2,300 reports of such finds, the great majority of which were of cannabis or of implements for smoking cannabis. Finds of 27 needles and 41 syringes were reported. Some of the finds of needles and syringes were associated. In the first eight months of the current year, 929 reports were received, of which the great majority again concerned finds of cannabis and related implements. During the same period, nine needles and 13 syringes were reported to have been found. Again, some of the finds of needles and syringes were associated.

There is no disciplinary offence under the rules which relate specifically to sexual activity and it is not possible to identify separately charges in relation to such activity.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses there have been to each of the indexes of the Police National Computer over the last year; and how many of these retrieved data from more than one index.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The total number of accesses to each of the indices of the police national computer in the year to October 1987 was as follows:

Index	*Number of accesses*
1 Stolen and suspect vehicles 2 Vehicle owners	19,397,984
3 Chassis/engine numbers	645,624
4 Fingerprints	217,953
5 Fingerprints—Scenes of crime	13,697
6 Criminal names	[1]0
7 Wanted/missing persons	1,691,799
8 Disqualified drivers	716,259
9 Convictions	357,406
10 Major investigations	134,365
11 Crime pattern analysis	147,906

There have also been the following joint accesses:

	Number
To indices 6, 7 and 9	1,616,713
To indices 6, 7, 8 and 9	6,024,344
To indices 4, 6 and 9	524,680
To indices 6 and 9	1,135,707

[1] All accesses to the criminal names index are now shown as joint accesses in the above table, as requests for criminal names information will in addition automatically generate information from the convictions application.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the implications for Her Majesty's Government's eventual ratification of the European convention covering automated data processing of the universities' code of practice on subject access.

Mr. Renton: None.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy to publish the number of certificates signed under section 27 of the Data Protection Act.

(2) if he will seek powers under the Data Protection Act to enable him to oblige universities to permit subject access to examination marks.

Mr. Renton: No.

Nationality

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will accept as valid all application forms under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981 received by his Department by 31 December, thus permitting corrections to be made after the deadline.

Mr. Renton: We will normally be prepared to treat applications received on or before 31 December 1987 as if they had been valid even though the application form was not correctly completed, provided the applicant makes good the defect within a reasonable time of being requested to do so.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are being held in police cells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Nine hundred and ten on 2 November.

The lifting of industrial action in certain prisons in south east England last week was welcome. The police and prison services are now working hard to clear prisoners from police cells. That involves moving a large number of prisoners around the country and will take about a fortnight to complete.

It is now operationally sensible to hand back Rollestone camp on Salisbury plain for military use. The use of the camp, which was among the package of measures I announced on 16 July, provided a measure of relief until the greater effects of the change in the remission rules were felt in late August. It has made a useful contribution to that end, accommodating more than 400 prisoners since it opened, of which the overwhelming majority were category C sentenced prisoners.

Later industrial action taken by the Prison Officers' Association at certain prisons in the south east created a different situation. It resulted in a rapid build up of remand prisoners in police cells although space existed within the prisons concerned. Although a number of carefully selected prisoners awaiting trial have been accommodated in Rollestone camp it is not suitable for use wholly as a remand establishment. It is a long way from the courts and the dormitory accommodation is not right from the security point of view for most prisoners who have been refused bail and are normally put in category B. Rollestone has had to be staffed entirely by the prison service and the staff concerned could be better deployed elsewhere.

With the suspension of industrial action and with many establishments changing to "fresh start" working, the staff at Rollestone can now play a more effective part by returning to the permanent prison system. It was always the intention that the camp should be returned to military use at about this time. The possibility will remain to re-opening it if the need arises.

This assessment of operational need is not affected by the proposed ballot of POA members.

Forensic Science Tests

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has now taken to develop forensic science testing; and what study he has given to proposals to make available independent forensic science tests to defendants.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Defendants are already able to engage forensic scientists from the private sector if they wish, and we see no need for Government action on this matter.

We will continue to support the work of the forensic science service central research establishment at Aldermaston in developing forensic science techniques.

Life-sentence Prisoners

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to Her Majesty's Government of maintaining those serving life sentences in prisons in 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible to distinguish the costs of keeping different types of prisoner in prison. The average net operating cost of keeping an inmate in custody during the financial years quoted below was:

	£
1979-80	7,072
1983-84	12,168
1985-86	12,792
1986-87	[1]—

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[1] Not yet available.

Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has on the operation of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The main provisions of the Act have been in force since 12 January 1987. Information about the numbers and value of confiscation orders made under section 1 is being collected centrally, and will be published in the criminal statistics for 1987. In addition, I understand that the High Court, by 27 October, had made 122 restraint or charging orders under sections 8 and 9 of the Act. The precise value of property affected by restraint and charging orders cannot readily be identified: a restraint order may affect the whole of a person's property, and the value of the property may not have been determined at that stage.

Dangerous Weapons

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take further measures to protect the public from people who use dangerous weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend indicated in the debate on firearms in the House on 26 October (columns 35-41), the Government intend to introduce a new Firearms Bill before Christmas to strengthen existing controls. As for other potentially offensive weapons, provisions have been added to the Criminal Justice Bill, currently in another place, which will enable the manufacture, sale and importation of specified weapons (other than firearms and crossbows) to be prohibited and which broadly will make it an offence to carry a bladed or sharply pointed article in public without good reason.

Television Licences

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in Northern Ireland have been prosecuted for non-payment of television licences in Northern Ireland in each year since 1980.

Mr. Renton: The information available relates to the following financial years:

Year	*Prosecutions*
1979-80	139
1980-81	8
1981-82	133
1982-83	341
1983-84	575
1984-85	645
1985-86	782
1986-87	838
1987 to date	435

Extradition

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for the extradition of persons from England and Wales to the Republic of Ireland have been received in each of the last five years; and how many of these requests have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. John Patten: The return of fugitives to and from the Republic of Ireland takes place on the basis of individual warrants of arrest. The table below provides figures for the number of persons who were the subject of such warrants from the Republic for the years 1982 to 1986.

Requests received in England and Wales from the Republic of Ireland for return of persons under the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965

	Requests received	*Requests granted*	[1]*Requests refused*	[2]*Requests not acted on for other reasons*
1982	9	7	—	2
1983	15	11	—	4
1984	31	24	—	7
1985	29	18	—	11
1986	15	5	3	7

[1] In these cases the warrant was held by a court to be defective.

[2] eg. because the fugitive was at the time serving a prison sentence in this country or could not be traced.

Knives

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether in his legislation to exert greater control over the use of knives in public he will ban the display for sale in gun shops of knives.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do so. Our proposals to ban the sale of offensive weapons for which there is no legitimate use may bear indirectly on the display of a very limited number of knives.

Fire Services

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give national figures, brigade by brigade, on reductions in establishments, for the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, for the British fire service; and how many of these reductions apply to *(a)* whole-time posts, *(b)* part-time posts and *(c)* non-operational posts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information sought can be derived from the annual reports of HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services for England and Wales and for Scotland for the relevant years, copies of which are in the Library.

Citizenship

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have registered for British citizenship under the British Nationality Act 1981, for each week in September and October in *(a)* Leeds, West, *(b)* Leeds metropolitan district council area and *(c)* England.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available.

Prisoners

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in line with the Swedish model, he will provide facilities for the broadcasting media to phone up convicted prisoners to seek their views on the legitimacy of their convictions and to elicit comment on the state of comfort in which they are being detained.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests have been made by prisoners serving sentences in Britain for transfers to prisons in Northern Ireland since 1968; and how many transfer have been made as a result of these requests.

Mr. John Patten: The information readily available extends back to 1973 and relates to inmates serving sentences in England and Wales. Since the beginning of that year there have been 238 requests from inmates for permanent transfer to establishments in Northern Ireland, and 25 transfers. A number of prisoners made more than one request.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any new appointment has been made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Hurd: Air Vice-Marshal David Clark, CBE, who is at present the military deputy to the head of defence export services at the Ministry of Defence, has accepted my invitation to serve as a member of the authority. He will take up his post on 10 November.

Appeals

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take the protect the public from appeals for funds supposedly destined for treatment by unproven medical techniques.

Mr. John Patten: Generally speaking, it is open to anyone to appeal to the public for funds.

Central Government responsibility for medical treatment is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheepmeat

Mr. Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that variable premiums will be retained in any reforms of the European Economic Community sheepmeat regime accepted by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I attach considerable importance to the system for paying variable premium to sheep farmers in Great Britain: it generates confidence; encourages orderly marketing and the presentation of good quality lambs; and helps producers' cash flow. In the forthcoming negotiations I shall be stressing these points.

Free Butter

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he received on the 1986 scheme to distribute free European Economic Community butter; and whether he will consult the retail trade and charitable organisations on the administration of any similar scheme in 1987 prior to proposals being finalised.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I received a large number of representations from hon. Members, members of the European Parliament, charitable and other organisations, trade bodies and members of the public on the free food arrangements operated in the United Kingdom in January-March 1987. The European Commission has recently proposed to the Council of Ministers a permanent free food scheme providing for distribution of products held in intervention stores to the most needy. The Council has not yet taken a decision. I am reflecting on what scope there would be for distributions of butter and beef from intervention stores in the United Kingdom under the Commission's proposals if adopted. I am in close touch with the charitable organisations on this point, and will conduct appropriate wider consultations as and when necessary.

Horticulture (Storm Damage)

Mr. Nelson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will provide assistance in addition to existing grant schemes for glass-house growers who have suffered storm damage during the night of 15 and 16 October.

Mr. MacGregor [*holding answer, 29 October 1987*]: While I sympathise with growers whose glass-houses have suffered storm damage, these are insurable structures. Many growers will have insured and, as the Prime Minister has already said, there is no way we can make equal those who are not insured with those who are.

Forestry Schemes (Consultation Procedures)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all grant-aided and non grant-aided forestry schemes operating in the United Kingdom at present, indicating where applicable the nature of consultation procedures involved prior to planting.

Mr. MacGregor [*holding answer, 26 October 1987*]: Grant aid for forestry in Great Britain is provided under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme. The consultation procedures are set out in the Forestry Commission booklet "Consultation Procedures", a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House. Similar grant schemes operate in Northern Ireland, but these are not subject to formal consultation procedures.

I am not aware of any non grant-aided forestry schemes.

Food and Environment Act 1986

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the operation and effectiveness of the terms of the Food and Environment Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*holding answer, 26 October 1987*]: Yes. The Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 has now been brought into effect. Part I has been useful in controlling the movement and slaughter of sheep from upland areas contaminated by radioactivity resulting from the Chernobyl accident. Part II has introduced improved controls over the disposal of waste at sea. For the Government's progress in implementing the powers in part III I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), on 15 July (col. *535*).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the progress of his diplomatic exchanges with the Foreign Ministry of Spain regarding investigations within Spain by British police relating to the unlawful killing of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy, in Sabinillas over Christmas 1983; and what further initiative he intends to take in this matter.

Mr. Eggar: The Spanish authorities have recently given permission for investigations to be undertaken within Spain by British police in connection with the death of Petty Officer Black.

I shall await the outcome of these investigations before deciding what, if any, further initiative is possible.

Under-Secretaries of State

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom-based under-secretaries of state there are in his Department; of what age and length of service; and if he will list their responsibilities.

Mrs. Chalker: In the diplomatic wing, in addition to the permanent under-secretary and deputy permanent under-secretary, there are 19 United Kingdom-based under-secretaries currently working in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Their responsibilities, age and length of service are as follows:

Responsibilities	*Age*	*Length of Service*
Deputy Under Secretaries		
The Americas, Caribbean and Far East	53	17
The Commonwealth, Africa and the Middle East	52	27
Defence, Arms Control, Nuclear matters, Security, Ireland	51	25
Trade, Energy, Science, Transport, European Community	55	32
Chief Clerk (Administration of the Diplomatic Service)	58	33
Assistant Under Secretaries of State (AUSS)		
Africa and Commonwealth Coordination	49	22
Europe	53	32
Far East, South Asia, Pacific	53	29
Latin America, Caribbean and Atlantic	53	26
Middle East, North Africa	50	26
Defence, Arms Control, Nuclear (non-proliferation)	49	25
Energy Science, Transport, United Nations, Narcotics Control	53	28
European Community	45	21
Public Departments (Consular Visa, Nationality etc)	54	32
Trade Relations	53	28
Deputy Chief Clerk and Chief Inspector	49	24
Finance, Audit, Office Services, Overseas Estate	50	27
Protocol, Vice Marshall of the Diplomatic Corps	53	29
Communications	56	34

In the aid wing, in addition to the permanent secretary and deputy secretary, there are seven United Kingdom-based under-secretaries of state as follows:

Responsibilities	*Age*	*Length of Service*
Africa	50	24
Asia	54	20
Economist	57	21
Establishments and Overseas Manpower	44	22
Finance	43	20
Internal Division	57	35
Natural Resources	45	7

British Council

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new resources he has given to the British Council following the recommendations of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member will appreciate that I cannot anticipate the decisions of the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Persian Gulf

Mr. Grocott asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply on 21 October to the hon. Member for The Wrekin, *Official Report*, column 730, he will list the fundamental differences between British and United States foreign policy in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: We share with the Americans a determination to uphold freedom of navigation in the Gulf as part of a policy of bringing the wasteful and destabilising Iran-Iraq conflict to a negotiated end. We each have naval forces in the Gulf for this purpose, but their tasks and methods of operation are fundamentally different. The Armilla patrol exists to provide reassurance to British ships, and to accompany their passage to the best of its limited resources. It provides no guarantee of protection and does not convoy or escort. Nor does it operate beyond the Strait of Hormuz and the southern Gulf.

Arms Control

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of his departmental staff are currently employed on arms control and disarmament verification research.

Mr. Mellor: Fourteen people in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office work either full or part-time on aspects of our arms control and disarmament policy which includes verification research.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any discussions with his counterparts in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America about the arrangements for intrusive verification by Soviet nationals at the cruise missile bases at Greenham common and Molesworth as part of the current arms control and disarmament negotiations between the Soviet and the United States Governments on intermediate range nuclear forces.

Mr. Mellor: The details of the INF verification regime are still being discussed. The INF talks are bilateral between the United States and Soviet Governments, but there has been a continual dialogue between the United States and British Governments about all aspects of the negotiations, including the inspection arrangements. Any provision in the treaty relating to access by inspectors to the territory of the United Kingdom will have been agreed in advance by us.

SWAPO

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a representative of Her Majesty's Government last met Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the South-West Africa People's Organisation; and whether any future discussions are planned.

Mrs. Chalker: I met Mr. Nujoma on 26 October. No future discussions are planned.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the last meeting between a representative of her Majesty's Government and Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of South-West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: Details of such exchanges must remain confidential. But the points which I put to Mr. Nujoma included our concern at alleged human rights abuses by SWAPO and condemnation of violence from whatever quarter, as well as our support for United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made representations to the South-West Africa People's Organisation concerning the detention without trial or legal representation of 100 Namibians by the South-West Africa People's Organisation in camps in Angola and Zambia; and whether he has any further information about these detainees.

Mrs. Chalker: When I saw Mr. Nujoma on 26 October I again expressed our concern at alleged human rights abuses in SWAPO refugee camps in Angola and Zambia. We have no independent information on conditions in the camps.

Hong Kong Financial Futures Exchange

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Hong Kong Government have provided HK$ 1 billion to guarantee the completion of transactions on the Hong Kong financial futures exchange; and if there will be an official inquiry into the operation of the Hong Kong financial futures exchange.

Mr. Mellor: The Hong Kong Government considered that, in the light of the turbulent conditions affecting stock and foreign exchange markets around the world, and the effect this was having on the financial futures exchange in Hong Kong, use of the exchange fund to provide support to the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation, in conjunction with matching support from local financial institutions, was fully justified under the terms of the Hong Kong exchange fund ordinance. The Financial Secretary has said in the Legislative Council that the Hong Kong Government will be undertaking a thorough review of the stock and financial futures markets and of the Government's regulatory position. Details of this review and its terms of reference will be announced shortly.

WEU (Ministerial Meeting)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent Western European Union ministerial meeting in The Hague.

Mr. Mellor: The meeting in The Hague marked a step forward in the renaissance of WEU and in the development of a more coherent and effective input by Europeans into their own security and that of the Atlantic Alliance as a whole. A platform on European security interests was agreed that will guide WEU's development for the foreseeable future, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. Ministers also discussed East-West relations; noted with satisfaction the practical co-operation between the naval forces of WEU members in the Gulf; and encouraged the continuing rationalisation and reorganisation of WEU's agencies. I am pleased that following the meeting on 28 October President Reagan publicly welcomed the willingness of the European allies to seek a larger, more closely-co-ordinated role for Western Europe in providing its own defence.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets with equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate jobshare, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Eggar [*pursuant to his reply,* 28 October 1987, c. *269*]: There are two equal opportunity officers in the diplomatic wing and one in the aid wing. The proportion of their time allocated to equal opportunity work is 15, 10 and 10 per cent., respectively. They combine their equal opportunity duties with personnel management, policy and training responsibilities as assistant heads of departments.

There is no budget specifically allocated to equal opportunity work. Costs are borne on many budgets and could be calculated only at disproportionate effort and expense.

The equal opportunity officers meet their counterparts from other departments formally once a year. In addition, they or their representatives meet other departments' representatives regularly to discuss specific equal opportunity matters and participate in seminars and briefings.

Guidance is issued to equal opportunity officers and training officers on all aspects of equal opportunities, including the Sex Discrimination Act.

Following consultation with the trade union side, departmental procedures have been amended to facilitate jobsharing, part-time working and parental leave. A booklet was recently issued to staff explaining these and other equal opportunity initiatives. The aid wing is discussing with the trade union side a formal agreement on jobsharing and part-time working.

SCOTLAND

Prisons

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of prisoners held in Scottish prisons in each of the last 10 years under the following categories: remand prisoners, fine defaulters, other short term prisoners and long term prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures are as follows:

Average daily prison population 1977-86

Type of inmate	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Remand	706	728	691	705	746	844	863	942	1,092	1,017
Defaulter	*286*	*309*	*293*	*386*	*231*	*234*	*228*	*259*	*309*	*330*
Other short term	2,282	2,271	1,855	2,050	1,863	2,121	2,268	1,938	1,965	1,951
Long term	1,597	1,754	1,746	1,719	1,678	1,692	1,692	1,614	1,907	2,289
Total	4,871	5,062	4,585	4,860	4,518	4,891	5,052	4,753	5,273	5,588

Notes:

(1) The figures are for all inmates in Scottish penal establishments including under-21's.

(2) "Defaulter" includes fine and compensation order defaulters.

(3) "Short term" includes those serving sentences of less than 18 months, together with those serving borstal sentences.

(4) "Long term" includes those serving fixed sentences of 18 months or longer and indeterminate sentences.

(5) Sub-totals may not add to totals due to rounding.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the objectives of the prison system in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following statement, which remains valid, was issued on 30 October 1985 to all staff in the Scottish prison service.

"The task of the Scottish Prison Service is:—

(i) to keep in custody untried or unsentenced prisoners, and to ensure that they are available to be presented to court for trial or sentence;

(ii) to keep in custody, with such degree of security as is appropriate, having regard to the nature of the individual prisoner and his offence, sentenced prisoners for the duration of their sentence or for such shorter time as the Secretary of State may determine in cases where he has discretion;

(iii) to provide for prisoners as full a life as is consistent with the facts of custody, in particular making available the physical necessities of life; care for physical and mental health; advice and help with personal problems; work, education, skill training, physical exercise and recreation; and opportunity to practice their religion;

(iv) to promote and preserve the self-respect of prisoners;

(v) to enable prisoners to retain links with family and community; and

(vi) to encourage them to respond and contribute positively to society on discharge."

Housing

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing changes in the provision of Government financial support, including tax incentives, to public and private sector housing, respectively, since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information required to produce a table in the form requested is not available within the Scottish Development Department.

Community Charge

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what additional advice is to be given to community charge registration officers as to the sale of names and addresses of people contained in the community charge register, when the sale of the names and addresses takes place without the consent or knowledge of the data subject;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 7 July at column 99, whether he will consult the Data Protection Registrar before he issues orders under section 20(11) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Act which involve the access or disclosure of the personal data from the community charge register.

Mr. Lang: Draft regulations on the registration procedures for the community charge system have recently been issued for consultation and a copy has been sent to the Data Protection Registrar. The draft regulations propose that the copies of the community charges register which are to be sent to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland under section 20(10) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 should be made available for public inspection after 30 years from the end of the year in which they are sent to him. The draft regulations also provide for the fees to be charged when copies of the parts of the register which are available for public inspection are made available for sale under section 20(4) of the Act. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering whether any amendment to section 20(4) of the Act is required to provide for any restriction on the parts of the public register which may be made available for sale.

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to officials responsible for enforcing the ban on the carriage of monofilament nets following the decision of the Stranraer sheriff court that the relevant order is invalid; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As the procurator fiscal has marked an appeal against the sheriff's decision it is not necessary to issue further instructions to enforcement officers. They will continue to apply the terms of the relevant order pending the matter coming before the High Court of Justiciary. In the circumstances it would not be appropriate to make a statement.

Fokker Aircraft (Delivery)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how late was the delivery of the Fokker aircraft to his Department's protection service, compared with the stipulations in the tender documents; and if any financial penalty has been imposed upon the supplying company.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The tender specification issued by the Department sought delivery by 31 July 1987 at the latest and the supply contract for the Fokker laid down delivery for June 1987. However during the process of acquisition it was agreed that extra fuel tanks originally scheduled for later installation would be more economically installed before delivery. The extra work resulted in the acceptance of the aircraft on 5 August 1987 and as this later date reflected a decision to avoid subsequent downtime no financial penalty was appropriate.

School Management

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the formal requests made by parent-teacher organisations and the schools councils for spokesmen to attend meetings to explain the background to the school management consultation proposals; how many of these requests were met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Requests have reached me by a variety of means both formal and informal. No comprehensive record exists but as I have already told the hon. Member in correspondence I have received over 100 requests in total, and have accepted those which my diary allowed and successfully arranged for alternative speakers in but a few cases. It would not be appropriate for Scottish Education Department officials to attend such meetings.

School Boards (Strathclyde)

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school boards would be created under his proposals contained in the consultative paper "School Management and the Rôle of the Parents" in the whole of the Strathclyde regional council area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's proposal is that there should be one board for each primary and secondary school, but that schools with 100 pupils or less might be grouped under single boards. Any grouping arrangements would be for local decision.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Strathclyde regional council representatives would be required in order to take part in the meetings of the school boards proposed by his consultative paper "School Management and the Rôle of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forysyth: We have proposed that the education authority should appoint one representative to each school board. It would be for the education authority itself to decide who should be its representatives.

Sexual Assault

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what responses he has received to his report on prosecuting sexual assault; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on 26 November 1987 at column *144*.

Coniferious Trees

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy for encouraging the planting of coniferous trees.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The planting of coniferious trees is encouraged under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme.

Extradition (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests for the extradition of persons from Scotland to the Republic of Ireland have been received in each of the last five years, and how many of these requests have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost. It is likely however that requests for the extradition of persons resident in Scotland from the Republic of Ireland have averaged two or three per annum and that all such requests have been granted.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will construct for Scotland a table in the same form as figure J7 in Cmnd. 9714, "Paying For Local Government," showing numbers of adults living in each of the households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge;

(2) if he will reproduce for Scotland figure J7 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying For Local Government," showing households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by *(a)* local authority and *(b)* parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Lang: The estimated number of households in Scotland gaining and losing from the community charge is given below. The figures are based on 1985-86 data and are derived from a sample survey of approximately 1,800 Scottish households. The actual level of community charge in each area will depend on the spending of the local authority and decisions on grant distribution which are still to be taken. A further disaggregation of these figures by household type, local authority and parliamentary constituency cannot be given because of the size of the sample.

Households in Scotland gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge 1985-86
Approximate numbers of gainers and losers

Pounds per week	*Thousands of households*
Losers	
10+	4
5-10	80
2-5	238
1-2	223
0-1	434
Total losers	979
Gainers	
0-1	449
1-2	143
2-5	238
5-10	84
10+	19
Total gainers	934
Percentage of Net Income	
Losers	
10+	—
5-10	4
2-5	137
1-2	260
0-1	578

Pounds per week	*Thousands of households*
Total losers	979
Gainers	
0-1	494
1-2	228
2-5	182
5-10	26
10+	4
Total gainers	934

Sheepmeat

Mr. Home-Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's policy for the support of sheep production in Scotland in future.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The outcome of negotiations on the Commission's proposals for reforming the EC sheepmeat regime will have an important bearing on future support arrangements for the Scottish sheep industry. In these negotiations the Government are seeking particularly to protect the interests of traditional sheep producers and to reject any measures which might discriminate against our industry.

Milk

Mr. Home-Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of milk produced in Scotland, the amount sold as liquid milk in Scotland, the amount processed to make cheese and other products, the amount exported, and the amount sold into intervention in each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on milk utilisation in Scotland is set out in the table below. (Figures are in million litres; years run from April to March.)

	Liquid Market	*Butter*	*Cheese*	*Condensed Milk and Chocolate Crumb*	*Whole Milk Powder*	*Cream*	*Other Products*	*Total*
1980-81	634	119	264	178	1	78	2	1,276
1981-82	623	183	289	155	2	77	1	1,330
1982-83	609	274	292	173	2	82	3	1,435
1983-84	605	299	298	133	1	85	1	1,422
1984-85	636	195	280	150	—	41	3	1,305
1985-86	646	134	313	148	—	31	3	1,275
1986-87	641	137	337	164	—	25	2	1,306

Detailed information in the form requested on the amounts of Scottish milk products exported and sold into intervention is not held centrally. However, exports account for only a very small proportion of Scottish production, as do sales into intervention.

Bus Services

Mr. Home-Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the bus routes in Scotland where services have been reduced or withdrawn since the introduction of deregulation in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: 3,404 changes in services were registered in Scotland during the period October 1986 to October 1987. 499 of those were new services, 416 were withdrawals while 2,489 were amendments to existing services. In view of the number of changes this question cannot be answered except at disproportionate cost.

Cheese Making

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in cheese making and in other creameries in Scotland in each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. However, the employment census of manufacturing industries conducted in 1981 and 1984 discloses that 3,762 and 3,103 persons respectively were employed in the preparation of milk and milk products in Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on recent trends in the production of cheese in Scotland and in demand for Scottish produced cheese.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In recent years the demand for Scottish cheese has been growing. Production of mature cheddar reached 28,346 tonnes in 1986, but is likely to fall back to around 21,000 tonnes this year. Production of other, higher value cheeses (such as feta and mozzarella) is continuing to grow. This year the availability of milk for cheddar manufacture has been limited by quota reductions, by an exceptionally high spring production peak involving lower production later in the year, and by growth in the output of higher value milk products. My noble Friend the Minister of State is currently pursuing with the cheddar makers ways in which greater supplies of milk might be secured for their markets.

Crime

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing trends in the incidence of each category of crime in each police force area and the percentage of those crimes which have been cleared up by the police in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics of crimes and offences recorded and cleared up in each police force area are published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library.

Roadlands Hospital, Haddington

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the accident and emergency service at Roadlands hospital, Haddington, East Lothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that a local review is being undertaken of the east unit of Lothian health board which includes the hospital. In the first instance this is a matter for the board.

Dornoch Firth (Railway Bridge)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions in relation to the British Railways Order 1986 tabled in November 1985, to provide for the construction of a railway bridge across the Dornoch firth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: British Rail announced on 23 July 1987 its decision to withdraw its request to Parliament for the authority to bridge the Dornoch firth with a new railway line linking Tain and Golspie.

Oban-Colonsay Ferry Service

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in respect of the proposed new timetable, due to be introduced by Caledonian MacBrayne in 1989, on the Oban-Colonsay service; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have received representations from the local community council and a number of other island interests about the proposed timetable for Colonsay from 1989 onwards. I understand that the proposed timing of one specific sailing is a matter of concern. It will be for the management of Caledonian MacBrayne to reach a view on the timing of their sailing in the light of their commercial judgment and operational requirements, following their usual consultations with local community interests.

Woodilee Hospital, Glasgow

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals have been put to him by Greater Glasgow health board, concerning the future of Woodilee hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Greater Glasgow health board is currently reviewing its strategy for mental illness services across the whole of its area. The long-term future of Woodilee hospital will be dependent on the outcome of that review. My Department has had discussions with the board about the interim measures it has taken so far at Woodilee following the evacuation of the hospital's main block earlier this year, and is currently considering proposals for further measures.

Random Breath Tests

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce random breath testing for drivers in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to amend the legislation on breath testing.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Deaf People (Telephones)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the possible closure of the London telephone exchange for deaf people; what plans he has to assist its continuance as a facility for deaf people; what discussions he has had with British Telecom about this exchange and the possible provision of similar facilities in other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 21 October. We have received representations on this matter from 151 hon. Members and 49 other people. We have also received a petition containing 247 names of people living mainly in the Spalding area.

Social Workers

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number of social workers qualified to work with the deaf and arrangements for training them; what discussions has he had with the relevant professional bodies; and what advice his Department is giving in this area.

Mr. Scott: Information on the number of social workers qualified to work with deaf people is not collected centrally. We are, however, aware of the difficulties in this area, and officials from the Department have held meetings with the professional and other bodies concerned. Training of social workers is primarily the responsibility of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work which has recently agreed in principle proposals to develop a distance learning package in this specialism.

Hospitals (Infection)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the estimated cost to date to each health region in dealing with outbreaks of the infection of multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus; and whether Her Majesty's Government will provide additional finance to health authorities toward this cost.

Mrs. Currie: Estimates are not available. It is for health authorities to decide how to meet, from within the funds available to them, the cost of infection control in hospitals from whatever source, and the care and treatment of those infected.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current period of waiting for orthopaedic patients (i) nationally and (ii) in the North East Thames region; and what proposals he has to provide additional funds to reduce this waiting time.

Mr. Newton: The table shows the latest available information for cases admitted from the waiting list:

Estimated median interval in weeks between the date an in-patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission, for patients discharged from Traumatic and Orthopaedic departments during 1985

Region of treatment	*Weeks*
North East Thames RHA	13
England	12

The first year's allocation of £25 million from the waiting list fund will enable health authorities to treat over 100,000 additional waiting list cases in 1987-88. These will include several thousand joint replacements and other orthopaedic procedures. The North-East Thames regional health authority is spending £762,500 of its £2·07 million allocations on projects in the trauma and orthopaedic specialty. As a result, its districts plan to treat 1,650 extra cases from orthopaedic waiting lists in 1987-88. By 30 September 1987, 636 of these had already been treated.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of people who received severe weather payments in each month of the winter of 1986-87 for which figures are available; and what proportion of each total were pensioners.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total expenditure on cold weather payments for each of the last five winters for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1983	Nil
1984	Nil
1985	1·7
1986	11·6
1987	10·2

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline his policy for targeting special winter fuel payments to elderly people and disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Help with heating costs is available each week to supplementary benefit claimants through the weekly scale rates and heating additions. Extra help through the exceptionally cold weather provision has been targeted on groups most at risk from the cold: the elderly, the very young and the sick and disabled.

Ativan

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to limit the availability of the addictive drug Ativan.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 27 October at column *256*.

Private Health Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1982-83 the health authorities which have received audit reports critical of their private patient arrangements.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows. The 1986-87 audit is still in progress.

1982-83
Cambridge
Calderdale
Leicestershire
Central Nottinghamshire
Hounslow and Spelthorne
West Lambeth
Lewisham and North Southwark
Bexley
Canterbury and Thanet

1983-84
Darlington
South Tees
Bradford
Nottingham
Sheffield
West Suffolk
Islington
North East Essex
Waltham Forest
Camberwell
Lewisham and North Southwark
Mid Downs
Merton and Sutton
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Oxfordshire
Torbay
Coventry
North Birmingham
North Staffordshire
Shropshire
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases

1984-85
Newcastle
Great Yarmouth and Waveney
Hammersmith and Fulham
North West Hertfordshire
North Bedfordshire
Bath
Northampton
East Berkshire
Milton Keynes
Aylesbury Vale
Southmead
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Central Birmingham
Mid Staffordshire
Rugby
Coventry
South Manchester

1985-86
North Hertfordshire
Riverside
Bloomsbury
City and Hackney
Southampton and SW Hampshire

Drugs

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will require all pharmaceutical companies which make payments for adverse reactions from drugs supplied by the National Health Service to inform him of the level and total of payments made, so that his advisers can assess the incidence and severity of the various side effects that have occurred;

(2) if he will ensure that the Committee on Safety of Medicines routinely obtain the scientific evidence that is presented in United States courts when there is a compensation claim following adverse reactions to a drug that also has a British product licence and is, or has been, prescribed for British citizens;

(3) if he will ensure that the Committee on Safety of Medicines routinely obtains any evidence about a pharmaceutical company's integrity that is presented in United States courts when there is a compensation claim following adverse reactions to a drug that also has a British product licence and is or has been prescribed for British citizens;

(4) if, unless there are exceptional circumstances, he will make it a condition of the purchase by the National Health Service of a pharmaceutical company's products that in the event of a company making payments because of adverse reactions from one of its drugs, the company must inform his Department of the nature, scope and cost of the payment scheme;

(5) if, unless there are exceptional circumstances, he will make it a condition of the purchase by the National Health Service of a pharmaceutical company's products that all known medical data or information relating to the company's integrity regarding research findings or adverse reactions reporting should immediately and routinely be reported to the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Newton: Companies are already required to provide the licensing authority with any evidence that is relevant to their application for a product licence at the time it is submitted. Under the terms of their product licence, they must also report adverse drug reactions and any other evidence which might cast doubt on the validity of the data submitted with their application immediately these are known to them. The licensing authority is concerned with the safety, quality and efficacy of medicinal products. Any question of compensation for adverse drug reactions is a matter for the claimant, the company and the courts. I see no reason to change the current arrangements relating to the purchase of medicinal products by the National Health Service.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to require companies when they warn of uncommon side effects to *(a)* draw attention to particularly vulnerable groups of people, *(b)* if the side effects are considered transient, to provide a time scale and *(c)* give specific descriptions of such side effects rather than use general terms.

Mr. Newton: The data sheets which accompany all medicinal products promoted to doctors must be consistent with the relevant prooduct licences, contain an accurate description of known side effects and, where appropriate, provide warnings about use by particular categories of patient. Appropriate warnings must also appear on produce labels or leaflets accompanying licensed medicinal products. For adverse reactions which are considered transient, a time scale is given where appropriate. I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 July 1987 at columns *261-62*.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, whenever a drug is withdrawn by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, he will publish the data which led to its withdrawal.

Mr. Newton: Medicinal products are withdrawn either as a result of voluntary action by pharmaceutical companies or the revocation of the product licence by the licensing authorities. In either case, action may be preceded or followed by one or more publications by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, such as "Dear Doctor" letters or "Current Problems", in which the medical profession is informed of data on adverse reactions to the drug. It is the general policy of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, wherever possible, to provide doctors with reasons when medicinal products are withdrawn from the market or are subject to major limitations in their use, providing that to do so would not breach the commercial confidentiality requirements of section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if a product licence is requested for a drug primarily intended for long term use by elderly people; and what are the current criteria laid down by the Committee on Safety of Medicines for the drug trials with respect to *(a)* the length of the trials and *(b)* the number and proportion of elderly people involved.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 July 1987 at column *261*.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how often his Department's statisticians check the validity of significance tests made in drug trials.

Mr. Newton: All data provided in support of any product licence application are rigorously assessed by professional DHSS staff and, when appropriate, by the expert members on the Committee on Safety of Medicines or other appropriate expert committee. Careful consideration of statistical techniques is an important part of this assessment.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what checks are made by the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the data provided by a company applying for a product licence; whether visits are made to the company's premises; whether there is consultation with the United States Food and Drug Administration; and to what extent the reputation of the company is relevant to the acceptance of its data;

(2) if he will appoint Committee on Safety of Medicines investigators with a similar role to the United States Food and Drug investigators to check the validity of pharmaceutical companies research findings and the integrity of their adverse reaction reports;

(3) if he will make it his policy that whenever there is firm evidence that a pharmaceutical company has violated drug regulations either in the United Kingdom or the United States of America, and in particular if it has paid a fine to the United States Food and Drug Administration for doing so, any further applications from such a company will only be accepted after a visit to the research premises and a personal investigation of the relevant records, with the additional cost to be borne by the company.

Mr. Newton: In assessing an application for a product licence, and in monitoring the safety of a medicinal product after marketing, the licensing authority takes into account all relevant factors, including any information provided by other regulatory authorities such as the United States Food and Drug Administration. We have no plans to appoint investigators to check companies' research or their reporting of adverse drug reactions, but if there were any reason to doubt the accuracy of the data supporting a particular licence application, the matter would be rigorously pursued with the company until the issue was resolved to the satisfaction of the licensing authority.

Photosensitivity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information is available on the incidence and severity of photosensitivity; whether the number of sufferers is thought to be increasing or declining; and to what extent the causes are known;

(2) how common is acute long-term photosensitivity; how many and which of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are known to have it as a side effect; and which they are.

Mr. Newton: No specific information is held by the Department on the incidence and severity of photosensitivity or on the number of sufferers. The causes of photosensitivity are well documented as, for example, in "Cutaneous Photobiology" by W. Frain-Bell (Oxford University Press 1985) which can be obtained through the Library of the House. Photosensitivity, in varying degrees and incidence, is acknowledged as a possible side-effect of most of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs currently available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to require companies applying for product licences to investigate photo-toxicity in the toxicity studies; and if he will ensure that all such tests are carried out in the summer months and include vulnerable fair-skinned patients.

Mr. Newton: Although an investigation of phototoxicity is not a general requirement on companies seeking a product licence for a medicinal product, the licensing authority, as advised by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, pays close attention to safety, quality and efficacy whenever an application is considered. If there is doubt about any aspect of safety, including phototoxicity, the company must provide whatever evidence may be needed to reassure the committee and the licensing authority before a licence can be granted.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate discussions with the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries in order to request the industry to finance research into intractable drug induced disorders, with priority being given to photosensitivity.

Mr. Newton: I have no reason to question the effectiveness of existing arrangements under which pharmaceutical companies already fund a considerable amount of research in academic departments, for a variety of purposes. I will, however, draw the right hon. Member's suggestion to the association's attention.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the research projects supported by his Department that are currently investigating drug-induced photosensitivity.

Mrs. Currie: The Department is not currently supporting any research into drug-induced photosensitivity.

The main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Social Fund

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the criteria for loans from the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Draft directions and guidance for the award of loans were included in the draft "Social Fund Manual" which was issued to interested parties for comment on 25 March 1987. Careful consideration was given to the views expressed and revised directions and guidance were included in the version of the manual placed in the Library on 9 October, which will be published later this autumn.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what allocation of money is to be made to the social fund.

Mr. Scott: The national budget for the discretionary part of the social fund in 1988-89, its first year of operation, will be £203 million. £60 million will be allocated for community care grants, £141 million for loans, and £2 million will be held back as a central contingency reserve.

Obstetric Beds

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage occupancy for obstetric beds for each regional health authority for each of the last six years.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Percentage bed occupancy for the Obstetrics specialty, National Health Service hospitals 1981–1986

Regional Health Authority	[1]*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern	68·3	65·2	62·9	62·4	65·2	63·4
Yorkshire	70·3	68·9	68·6	67·1	68·5	67·8
Trent	70·0	65·1	64·3	64·2	65·0	65·4
East Anglian	63·8	61·6	59·4	60·0	61·5	64·7
N. W. Thames	69·0	64·6	64·0	63·1	61·8	67·0
N. E. Thames	73·4	69·2	70·0	69·0	69·6	69·4
S. E. Thames	73·7	70·9	69·7	68·1	71·0	70·6
S. W. Thames	68·8	65·6	64·5	67·2	66·3	68·0
Wessex	70·6	66·6	65·9	64·2	66·1	67·1
Oxford	69·0	66·9	64·2	66·7	68·4	69·1
South Western	72·6	70·7	70·6	69·1	71·3	66·8
West Midlands	73·2	72·7	70·9	70·1	71·9	73·5

Regional Health Authority	[1] *1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Mersey	68·6	65·3	64·5	67·4	68·7	66·3
North Western	70·8	69·5	68·9	68·1	70·6	67·9
SHAs	75·0	67·9	68·0	69·9	66·8	70·1
England	70·6	67·8	66·8	66·6	67·9	67·9

[1] Figures for the Thames regions and Special Health Authorities are not comparable because of the effects of National Health Service restructuring in 1982.

Births

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of *(a)* low and *(b)* very low birth weight babies for each district health authority for each of the last six years.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. The recent OPCS Monitor series DH3 87/2, "Infant and Perinatal Mortality 1985: DHAs" gives the percentage of total births weighing less than 2,500 grams for each district health authority for 1985. A copy is in the Library.

Hospital Staffing

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what changes in junior hospital staffing within the National Health Service are envisaged by the Joint Planning Advisory Committee arising from the proposals in the document "Achieving a Balance";

(2) what changes he proposes in junior hospital staffing in the National Health Service as a result of the proposals in the document "Achieving a Balance".

Mr. Newton: The aims of "Achieving a Balance" are to improve patient care by removing the present imbalance in the hospital medical career structure. The package includes various measures to boost the number of consultants and to relate more closely the number of doctors in training grades to expected consultant opportunities. In determining the number of training grade posts needed, the Department will seek advice from the joint planning advisory committee which is already fulfilling this role for senior registrar posts. In most specialties there is likely to be a need to reduce the number of United Kingdom graduates now in the training grades, but their contribution to patient services will be replaced in other ways, for instance by additional consultant posts.

Medical Manpower

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those whom he has consulted on the proposals in the document "Achieving a Balance" in medical manpower.

Mr. Newton: The document was issued for consultation to all regional, district and special health authorities; royal colleges and faculties; family practitioner committees; and community health councils. It was also issued to the main national organisations in the fields of health and medical education, including the British Medical Association, General Medical Council, Medical Research Council, Association of Medical Research Charities, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom, Council for Postgraduate Medical Education, University Grants Committee, and a number of associations representing individual medical specialties. In addition, the full text of the consultative document was published in the *British Medical Journal*.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received from social workers specialising in work with kidney patients about changes in social security regulations affecting people on dialysis; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Correspondence was received last year from the renal special interest group of the British Association of Social Workers, and subsequently from the right hon. Member and other hon. Members on behalf of the association and others, about the replacement of the supplementary benefit scheme by the new income support scheme and its effect on kidney patients.

The rates of income support which my right hon. Friend announced on 27 October provide a substantial overall increase for disabled people. Furthermore, those claimants whose income support entitlement is less than their supplementary benefit entitlement at the point of change will have their existing benefit levels maintained. As the right hon. Member is aware, a major survey into the numbers, needs and circumstances of disabled people has been undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the first results of this survey will be published next year. The effect of the premium arrangements on the needs of kidney patients will be looked at in the light of these results.

Nurses

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from organisations representing nurses on the proposals for a community charge.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of recipients of invalid care allowance at 16 October.

Mr. Scott: At 19 October, the closest date to 16 October for which information is available, there were 88,000 recipients of invalid care allowance.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost to public funds of increasing the income disregard in respect of invalid care allowance to *(a)* £15 per week and *(b)* £17 per week.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information on which to base an estimate could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to shorten the delay in processing claims for invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: Additional resources have recently been devoted to processing claims and the average time taken to clear them is continuing to fall.

Community Charge Rebate Scheme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to make a statement on the operation of a community charge rebate scheme.

Mr. Portillo: An announcement will be made in due course. Discussions with the local authority associations on the operation of the community charge rebate scheme are already under way, in the light of which detailed proposals will be put to them as part of the statutory consultation procedure.

Rate Rebates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the maximum income that would enable the following categories to qualify for rate rebates now: *(a)* a single person under 24 years; *(b)* a single person 25 years and over; *(c)* a married couple with no children; *(d)* a married couple with two dependent chidren; *(e)* a pensioner couple; and *(f)* a single pensioner: and what changes he proposes to make to these limits in the context of community charge rebates.

Mr. Portillo: There is no specified maximum income level at which people cease to qualify for a rate rebate, and in any individual case this will depend partly on the size of the original rates bill. From 1988, the starting point for calculating rate rebates in the majority of cases will be the income support "applicable amounts", which will determine the relative level of rebate for the categories specified at a given level of income and a given domestic rates bill. How far above his applicable amount a person's rebate runs out, for a given rates bill, will be determined by the rate "taper". We expect similar arrangements to apply to community charge rebates but the relevant applicable amounts and taper will not be set until nearer the time.

Mersey Region (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the waiting lists in the Mersey region were in the each of the years from 1979 to the present.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list at 31 March, NHS Hospitals, Mersey Regional Health Authority

Year	*Number*
1979	41,103
1980	36,547
1981	33,082
1982	33,206
1983	36,187
1984	32,271
1985	30,767
1986	30,779
1987	29,147

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's consultation with the local authority associations and the voluntary sector on further implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: I cannot yet add to my reply to the hon. Members for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 27 October at column *254*.

Pregnancy Advice Bureaux

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will give a breakdown of the fees of which he is aware which are charged by the pregnancy advice bureaux and abortion clinics.

Mr. Newton: Information on fees charged by individual bureaux and clinics is supplied to the Department on an "in confidence" basis. My hon. Friend may wish to approach these organisations direct for this information.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, what is the percentage of women who are referred for abortions by each abortion agency of which his Department's investigative officers are aware.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, whether the figure of 74 per cent. of abortions after 18 weeks being performed upon single women includes married women who are separated from their husbands.

Mr. Newton: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will supply a list of the names and addresses of the proprietors of those abortion agencies and clinics which are linked financially to the knowledge of his Department;

(2) pursuant to his reply of October, at column *175*, if he will list the eight abortion agencies which have financial links with abortion clinics, stating in each case the number of places where counselling is undertaken and the number of clinics involved;

(3) pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will describe the scale and precise nature of the financial links between the eight abortion agencies and clinics in such a manner so as not to identify the eight agencies concerned.

Mr. Newton: It is not possible to publish details of the links between abortion counselling agencies and approved nursing homes without releasing details which are provided to the Department in confidence. My hon. Friend may wish to approach abortion counselling agencies direct for this information.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, when he expects the publication of the paper currently being prepared by the Manchester research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners on post-abortion stress disorder.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the paper is likely to be published early next year.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, whether he has any information concerning the revenue generated by the 99·7 per cent of abortions upon foreign women which were performed in the private clinics in 1986.

Mr. Newton: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, whether he has any plans to review his Department's current practice of not recording details of the after-care provided to non-resident patients who have abortions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, whether he has any plans to introduce a requirement for an information sheet and discharge letter in their native language to be provided to all non-resident women upon whom abortions are performed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: We are satisfied that this is already done as good medical practice, and have no plans to make it a statutory requirement.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those agencies which are currently licensed by his Department to counsel or refer women for abortions stating in each case the total number of women whom they dealt with in the latest year for which figures are available and state the number of those women who were referred for abortions.

Mr. Newton: Pregnancy advisory bureaux currently registered with the Department are listed as follows. Information on the numbers of women dealt with is not available centrally.

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Basingstoke Branch
Church Grange Health Centre
Bramleys Drive
Basingstoke RG21 1QN

Birmingham Pregnancy Consultation Service
14-16 Temple Street
Birmingham B2 5BG

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Birmingham Branch
Guildhall Buildings
Navigation Street
Birmingham B2 4BT

Blackpool Pregnancy Testing and Counselling Centre
Stanley Buildings
3 Caunce Street
Blackpool

Pregnancy Advisory Service—Blackpool
93 Abingdon Street
Blackpool FY1 1PP

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Bournemouth (Pelhams) Branch
Pelhams Clinic
Millhams Road
Bournemouth

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Bournemouth (Dean Park) Branch
23 Ophir Road
Bournemouth

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Brighton Branch
Wistons Site
Chatsworth Road
Brighton
Sussex BN1 5PA

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Chester Branch
98A Foregate Street
Chester CH1 1HB

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Coventry Branch
Coundon Welfare Clinic
Barker Butts Lane
Coventry

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Doncaster Branch
The Bungalow
1a Avenue Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire

Pregnancy Advisory Service
Rosslyn
17 Rosslyn Road
East Twickenham
Middlesex TW1 2AR

Options
Population Control Clinic
45 Fitzwilliam Street
Huddersfield HD1 5LG

Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Hull)
139 Beverley Road
Hull

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Hull Branch
32 Beverley Road
Hull

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Leeds Branch
8 The Headrow
Leeds
Yorkshire

Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Leeds)
4 Albion Street
Leeds 1

Marie Stopes Centre
10 Queens Square
Leeds 2

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Liverpool Branch
20-22 Rodney Street
Liverpool L1 2TQ

Pregnancy Advisory Service
Fourth Floor
Hepworth Chambers
Church Street
Liverpool L1 3BG

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
London Branch
7 Belgrave Road
London SW1

Birth Control and Pregnancy Counselling Ltd
10 Coptic Street
London WC1

The Gerrard Street Clinic
Medical Centre
36 Gerrard Street
London W1V 7LP

London Youth Advisory Centre
26 Prince of Wales Road
London NW5

Marie Stopes
North London Pregnancy Advisory Bureau
65 Shoot-Up Hill
London NW2

Metropolitan Pregnancy Control Centre
40 Mortimer Street
London W1

Pregnancy Advisory Service
11/13 Charlotte Street
London W1

Preterm
40 Mortimer Street
London W1N 7RB

Pregnancy and Gynaecological Advisory Service
26 Fouberts Place
London W1N 1HG

The Well Woman Centre
Marie Stopes House
108 Whitfield Street
London W1

The Well Woman Centre
Marie Stopes Annexe
114 Whitfield Street
London W1

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Luton Branch
3A Upper George Street
Luton LU1 2QY

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Manchester Branch
Suite F Ground Floor
Fourways House
57 Hilton Street
Manchester M1 2EJ

Marie Stopes Pregnancy Advisory Bureau
1 Police Street
Manchester M1 7LQ

Pregnancy Advisory Service—Manchester
5th Floor
Newton Buildings
Newton Street
Manchester M1 2EJ

Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Manchester)
Fifth Floor
2 St John Street
Manchester 3

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Milton Keynes Branch
First Floor
Eaglestone Health Centre
Standing Way
Milton Keynes MK6 5AZ

East Midlands Pregnancy Advisory Service
The Grange
480A Mansfield Road
Sherwood
Nottingham

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Sheffield Branch
160 Charles Street
Sheffield S1 2NE

408 Young People's Consultation Centre Ltd
408 Ecclesall Road
Sheffield S11 8PJ

Sheffield Pregnancy and Counselling Service
276 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2HS

Pregnancy Advisory Service
1A George Street
Newcastle-Under-Lyme
Staffordshire ST5 1JX

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Swindon Branch
Priory Road Health Clinic
Priory Road
Swindon SN3 2EZ

British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Leamington Spa Branch
Holly Walk Welfare Clinic
Holly Walk
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire

Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre
(Wolverhampton)
Second Floor
19-21 Queen Street
Wolverhampton

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, if he will list the abortion agencies and clinics which are run by the 32 individuals of whom his Department is aware who are both directors or trustees of a company or charity providing abortion counselling and also of a clinic providing abortions; and if he will list the names of those individuals.

Mr. Newton: This information, like any commercial information, was supplied to the Department on an "in confidence" basis and is therefore not for publication.

Mr Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will list the names and addresses of each abortion agency or clinic from which a licence has been withdrawn in the last 20 years following the discovery of breaches of the requirement to notify changes in financial arrangements.

Mr. Newton: No approved place has had its approval withdrawn for the reasons stated.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, whether he has any plans to make it a requirement for doctors working on a salaried basis at an abortion agency not also to perform abortions on these patients in a nursing home or clinic.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Nicholas Winteron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services. pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will explain how patient confidentiality would be breached by disclosing the numbers of abortions performed in each year after 18 weeks gestation in emergency to save the life of the mother.

Mr. Newton: Where small numbers are involved, it is possible that disclosure of information in detail would, when compared with figures already published, reveal sensitive information about individuals to persons with other knowledge of them. It is therefore policy to disclose information only in a form which minimises this risk . This policy was followed by giving grouped data in the reply of 26 October.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, why reliable information concerning the number of abortions performed in the case of rape has not been available for the past 20 years; and if he will give the details of the changes which are now being introduced to remedy this.

Mr. Newton: The Abortion Act 1967 does not require a certifying doctor to specifically mention cases of rape on the notification form, but in some cases the information is volunteered. Furthermore, until 1979 only medical conditions directly affecting the foetus were coded and analysed. The information obtained of cases of rape was, therefore, necessarily incomplete.

Between 1979 and 1986 the medical condition of the woman was also coded, but mentions of rape were not always separately identified. From 1987 onwards all mentions of rape will be separately coded and analysed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, at column *175*, if he will give a breakdown of the average cost of £170 of performing an abortion on the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: These detailed costs are not centrally identified.

Census

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is planning to hold a census in Great Britain in 1991.

Mr. Moore: Yes. My predecessor announced on 14 July 1983 (*Official Report* Vol. 45, col. *452*) that planning would proceed on the basis that the next census would be in 1991. The need for information on the population and alternative ways to gather it were subsequently examined, and it has been concluded that a census should be held in England, Wales and Scotland in 1991. The Registrars General have arranged for there to be consultations about the census with a wide range of users of census statistics, and submissions to them from any source are welcome. Proposals for the content of the census will be published as a White Paper next year.

Brain Death

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are estimated to die from brain death in hospital annually; and of these how many could be regarded as potential organ donors.

Mrs. Currie: No recent estimates of the nationwide incidence of brain stem death have been made. However, a study published in 1981 estimated that about 4,000 cases of brain stem death occurred annually in Great Britain.

The proportion of such patients who could be regarded as potential organ donors is not known.

Steroids

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what compensation has been made available for people who have suffered serious side effects from taking steroids, particularly when these drugs were first marketed.

Mr. Newton: Questions of compensation for individuals are matters to be pursued with the companies concerned and where necessary through the courts. Information about individual compensation settlements is not collected centrally.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been issued to regional health authorities about safe dosages of steroids; and what warnings about side effects are required to be given by doctors to patients who have been prescribed these drugs.

Mr. Newton: No special advice about safe dosages of steroids has been issued to regional health authorities. The British National Formulary, which is sent to all doctors, contains advice on safe dosages and on appropriate and inappropriate uses of steroids. Guidance on use and details of known side-effects are also contained in the data sheets which are supplied to all doctors for medicinal products, such as steroids, which are available only on prescription. It is for doctors to decide in each case what warnings about side-effects should be given to patients.

Hospital Complaints Procedure Act

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act to be implemented in National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Directions to health authorities on non-clinical complaints are being prepared and should be issued by the end of the year.

Discussions on the inclusion of clinical complaints procedures within these directions are continuing with the joint consultants committee.

Human Organs (Transplantation)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions have been sent to regional health authorities about introducing the required request procedure to increase the supply of human organs for transplant.

Mrs. Currie: We have received advice from the medical royal colleges, and are currently considering what action we should ask health authorities to take.

Hospital Waiting Lists (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures for each district health authority in London of the numbers currently waiting for hospital treatment.

Mr. Newton: The latest information available centrally is included in a bound volume of the hospital waiting lists for health authorities in England at 31 March 1987, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For current information the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the four Thames regional health authorities.

Means-Tested Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what measures he now proposes to introduce to reduce the number of people dependent on means-tested benefits;

(2) what steps he proposes to take to reduce the number of people dependent on means-tested benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: From next September, we will be removing the general eligibility of unemployed young people aged 16 and 17 for income support, guaranteeing a place on the youth training scheme for those who are not in full-time education and do not go into a job. Futhermore the introduction of the reformed structure of income-related benefits will help ensure better targeting of available resources on those facing the greatest needs. Amongst those in least need and entitled to smaller amounts, around 1 million fewer are expected to receive housing benefit. Family credit will extend improved help to over twice as many low income working families with children compared with family income supplement.

Deaf People (Telephones)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what priority for action has been given to funding of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf for funding a telephone exchange for deaf people, following his meeting with myself and representatives of the institute on 5 August; what subsequent meetings have been held, and when he expects to arrive at his decision.

Mr. Scott: We have been actively pursuing the question of the exchange's future funding. I understand that there was a meeting between the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and British Telecom last month. Officials from the Department will be meeting representatives of British Telecom and the other Government Departments concerned on 3 November. I shall make an announcement as soon as a decision has been reached.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many haemophiliacs have been infected by AIDS during the past 12 months following blood transfusions at National Health Service hospitals; and if compensation will be paid.

Mr. Newton: No haemophiliac patients are known to have been infected with the AIDS virus following the use of blood transfusions or blood products in the past 12 months.

AIDS

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from organisations or individuals on the plight of those infected with the AIDS virus as a result of treatment under the NHS, and what plans he has to respond to requests for assistance with the cost of treatment, including travel expenses.

Mr. Newton: We have received approximately 200 written representations from individuals and organisations on this issue. All the facilities of the NHS are available to those who have been infected with HIV. Help with fares to hospital is available for those who are eligible under the provisions of the National Health Service (Expenses in Attending Hospital) Regulations, 1950.

Single Payments (Scotland)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total amount of single payments paid to claimants in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland in the financial years 1979-80 to 1986-87.

Mr. Portillo [*holding answer 26 October*]: The amount of single payments paid to claimants in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde region and *(c)* Scotland in the financial years 1979-80 to 1986-87 is shown in the table. The figures include both full and partial awards.

Year (April to April)	*Scotland* £	*Strathclyde* £	*Greenock* £	*Port Glasgow* £
1979-80	10,019,290	6,626,140	103,447	90,184
1980-81	14,123,563	9,847,098	289,568	199,653
1981-82	12,375,533	7,906,488	215,181	108,610
1982-83	22,670,751	15,454,679	413,061	272,372
1983-84	37,067,373	24,936,115	589,042	366,898
1984-85	54,250,887	36,927,066	852,311	531,208
1985-86	71,053,317	48,170,412	1,106,074	766,240
1986-87	71,373,760	50,070,021	1,595,050	901,497

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Merit Awards)

79. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further proposals he has for merit awards to civil servants.

Mr. Brooke: Performance-related pay arrangements for grades 2 and 3 and an interim scheme for grades 4 to 7 are now in place. The new flexible pay system for scientific, professional and technical grades includes performance-related pay provisions which come into effect on 1 April 1988.

It remains our intention to extend performance pay in the Civil Service and we shall be bringing forward further proposals for the inclusion of other groups of staff.

Civil Servants (Departmental Regional Offices)

80. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the change in the proportion of civil servants working in departmental regional offices since 1980.

Mr. Major: The proportion of all non-industrial home civil servants working in Birmingham has risen from 1·6 per cent. in January 1980 to 1·7 per cent. in January 1987.

VAT (Spectacles)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has yet received the decision of the European Court of Justice on the issue of the levying of value added tax on spectacles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The judgment of the European Court has not yet been received; it is expected before Christmas.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate, for each of the last three financial years and in estimate form for the current financial year, the reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement which has accrued from the removal of the capital borrowing requirements of privatised industries into the private sector; and if he will break this down on an enterprise by enterprise basis.

Mr. Major: The nationalised industries' contribution to the public sector borrowing requirement is defined as the sum of their external financing requirements. The Government cannot provide estimates, which would be purely hypothetical, of what the financing requirements of privatised companies might have been had they been still in the public sector. Details of the industries' external finance up to the point of privatisation are published in the public expenditure White Paper for the following year; provisional outturns are first published in the cash limits provisional outturn White Paper.

Civil Servants (Computer Training)

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the survey conducted by the CCTA on the training of civil servants in the use of computer systems; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library when it is published.

Mr. Brooke: I am not aware of a specific survey on this subject, but, if my hon. Friend cares to write to me with further details, I will seek to assist him.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mrs. Gorman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take to rectify the anomaly whereby two or more people can each obtain tax relief on the same property while married couples are limited to a single amount of relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 29 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Fraser asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to propose to his fellow Ministers in the European Community that the Community encourages the conversion of loans to the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa to grants; and if he will propose to them other steps to relieve the burden of that part of the world.

Mr. Lilley: Most of our European Community partners have already converted their old aid loans to grants for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa as the United Kingdom has done. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will continue to press for further support from all Paris Club creditors for this proposal and also for his proposal to reduce the interest rate charged on rescheduled officially guaranteed debt. The Paris Club has already implemented the third part of my right hon. Friend's plan to help sub-Saharan Africa. To date, five African countries have been granted longer repayment periods when rescheduling through the Paris Club.

Charities

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each of the last three years, with an estimate for 1987-88, *(a)* the number of charitable organisations which have had applications for refund of tax on renewal covenants refused by the Inland Revenue, *(b)* the income lost to these charities by these refusals and *(c)* the number of individuals who thereby find the value of their payments to the charities reduces.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information requested is not available.

BP Share Offer

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will make a statement as to whether the Government intend to indemnify financial institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom involved in the protection of BP agent cases arising from their underwriting commitments;

(2) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the contract terms entered into by Her Majesty's Government with Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Sheerson Lehman and Salomon Brothers for the underwriting of the BP share flotation.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*holding answer 28 October 1987*]: A copy of the United Kingdom underwriting agreement and the international offer agreement for the BP sale have been placed in the Library.

Women

39. **Ms. Primarolo** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to the proportion of orchestral players in orchestras receiving financial support from the Arts Council that are women.

Mr. Luce: The proportion varies widely between orchestras. The average is about 20 per cent.

40. **Ms. Walley** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met *(a)* the Woman's Playhouse trust, *(b)* the standing conference of woman theatre directors and administrators and *(c)* the Campaign for Real Equality in Equity to discuss the position of women in the theatre.

Mr. Luce: I have not met any of these organisations, but I support equality of opportunity in the arts.

41. **Ms. Abbott** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has to the proportion of the total number of plays produced at theatres receiving financial support from the Arts Council that were by women writers, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally. An alternative indicator is the premieres of new plays by women authors, as a percentage of all premiers:

	Per cent.
1982-83	11·8
1983-84	11·0
1984-85	10·6
1985-86	14·0
1986-87	18·0

42. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many members of the board of the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House are women.

Mr. Luce: Three, nine and one, respectively.

43. **Ms. Short** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to help implement the Arts Council's equal opportunities policy statement in relation to the employment of women.

Mr. Luce: The council has my warm support in its policy of equal opportunities for women.

I have taken direct action by asking all those responsible for making submissions on appointments, or nominations for appointment, to the boards of arts bodies I sponsor to ensure that the names of suitable women are included in future short lists.

45. **Mrs. Ann Taylor** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to help implement the recommendations of the Cork report, "Theatre is for All", that there should be equal opportunity for women in all aspects of theatre.

54. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to help implement the recommendations of the Cork report, "Theatre is for All", that a higher priority should be given to women in new writing and project schemes.

Mr. Luce: I agree with the objectives of these recommendations, but action on them is a matter for the bodies concerned.

46. **Miss Lestor** asked the Minister for the Arts how many members of the boards of *(a)* the Arts Council, *(b)* the Crafts Council and *(c)* the Museum and Galleries Commission are women.

Mr. Luce: Three women are members of the Arts Council, six women are members of the Crafts Council and there is one women commissioner in the Museums and Galleries Commission.

47. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many chief librarians of public library authorities in England and Wales are women.

Mr. Luce: Since it is the responsibility of local authorities to appoint staff to their public libraries, no records are kept centrally.

48. **Mrs. Fyfe** asked the Minister for the Arts how many women are on the Scottish Arts Council or the Scottish Film Council.

Mr. Luce: Three and four, respectively.

50. **Ms. Harman** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many exhibitions by women artists have been mounted at the Hayward gallery in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: Exhibitions which included work of women artists in each of the last five years are as follows:

	Number
1982	2
1983	2
1984	—
1985	2
1986	4

52. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many women film directors received financial support from the British Film Institute in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: Between the period 1982-86 a total of 40 films were produced by the British Film Institute; women directors benefited from funding in each year, as follows:

	Number
1982	2
1983	3
1984	1
1985	2
1986	1
	9

53. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to the number of women photographers who received financial support from the Arts Council or from regional arts associations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is as follows:

Number of women photographers receiving financial support

	Arts Council	*Regional Arts Associations*
1982-83	1	2
1983-84	1	—
1984-85	1	—
1985-86	—	2
1986-87	4	3

56. **Miss Mowlam** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many building-based theatre companies have women artistic directors or general managers.

Mr. Luce: Five building-based theatre companies funded by the Arts Council or by regional arts associations have women artistic directors and 10 have women administrators.

57. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Minister for the Arts how many women are on *(a)* the Welsh Arts Council, *(b)* the board of the National Museum of Wales and *(c)* the board of the Welsh National Opera Company.

Mr. Luce: Three women are members of the Welsh Arts Council, two women are on the board of the National Museum of Wales and one woman is on the board of the Welsh National Opera Company.

59. **Ms. Quin** asked the Minister for the Arts how many directors of national museums are women.

Mr. Luce: Currently none, but Mrs. Esteve-Coll, director-designate of the Victoria and Albert museum will be taking up her post shortly.

60. **Ms. Armstrong** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many women are either directors or deputy directors of regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: There are no female directors of regional arts associations at present, but seven assistant directors, one deputy director and one head of administration are women.

61. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the number of women writers and producers who have been financially supported by the British Film Institute in the last five years.

Mr. Luce: During this period 21 women have produced or co-produced films for the British Film Institute and nine women writers have received funding.

62. **Mrs. Wise** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many technicians are women in performing arts companies receiving financial support from the Arts Council and regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

63. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many slides of work by women artists are on sale to the general public at the Tate gallery and the National gallery.

Mr. Luce: Twenty-one at the Tate gallery and four at the National gallery.

Women

64. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Minister for the Arts how many heads of department at the Arts Council are women.

Mr. Luce: Three.

Visits

65. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list, by region, the arts bodies he has visited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Luce: I have visited the following arts bodies and functions:

National Arts Bodies
The Arts Council of Great Britain
British Council
British Film Foundation
British Film Institute
Crafts Council
English National Opera
Hayward Gallery
Library Association
National Art Collection Fund
National Film Theatre
National Theatre
Royal Academy
Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts
Royal Festival Hall
Royal Opera House

National Museums and Galleries
British Museum
British Museum (Natural History)
Imperial War Museum, London and Duxford
National Gallery
National Maritime Museum
National Portrait Gallery
Science Museum
Tate Gallery
Victoria and Albert Museum

Scotland
Blackness Public Art Project, Dundee
Collins Gallery, Glasgow
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee
Dundee Repertory Theatre
Edinburgh Festival
Edinburgh Tapestry Company
Mitchell Theatre
National Gallery of Scotland
Royal Museum of Scotland
Royal Scottish Academy
SALVO
Scottish Arts Council
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
Scottish National Portrait Gallery
Seagate Gallery and Printmakers Workshop, Dundee

Northern arts
Newcastle Playhouse
Council of Regional Arts Association's Conference, Newcastle

North west arts
The Action Factory, Blackburn
Buxton Festival
Contact Theatre, Manchester
Harris Museum, Preston
Manchester City Art Gallery
Manchester Evening News Theatre Awards
Quarry Bank Mill, Styal
Wigan Pier
Drumcroon Centre, Wigan
Warrington Museum

Yorkshire arts
City Art Gallery, Leeds
Cooper Gallery, Barnsley
Crucible Theatre, Sheffield
Grand Theatre, Leeds
Graves Gallery, Sheffield
Jorvik Viking Museum, York
Land Farm Garden and Gallery, Hebden Bridge
Leadmills Complex, Sheffield
Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield
Opera North, Leeds
Piece Hall Complex and Art Gallery, Halifax
Railway Museum, York
Rotherham Arts Centre and Library
Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield
Worsborough Mill, Barnsley
Yorkshire Museum, York
Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield

East midlands arts
Concordia Theatre, Hinckley
Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery
William Morris Fellowship, Canons Ashby

South western arts
Colway Theatre Trust, Beaminster
John Makepiece Studio, Beaminster
Portland Heritage Trust, Isle of Portland
Walford Mill Craft Centre, Wimborne Minster

Southern arts
Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth
Bracknell Arts Centre
Connaught Theatre, Worthing
D-Day Museum, Portsmouth
Dance and Media Arts Centre, Swindon
Hornpipe Community Arts Centre, Portsmouth
Mary Rose Exhibition, Portsmouth
Montbatten Gallery, Portsmouth
Mount Pleasant Photography Workshop, Southampton
Nuffield Theatre, Southampton
Portsmouth College of Art, Design and Further Education
Railway Museum, Swindon
Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth
Theatre Royal, Winchester
Wyvern Theatre, Swindon

South East Arts
Little Theatre, Brighton
Haslemere Festival of Early Music
Southlands Arts Centre, West Yiewsley

London
British Film Institute's Film Archive, Berkhamsted
Dulwich Picture Gallery
Greater London Arts
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Halle at the RFH
London Festival Ballet
The Mermaid Theatre
Museum of London
National Youth Choir at the Royal Albert Hall
The Place Contemporary Dance Trust
The Roundhouse
Royal Opera House
St. John's, Smith Square
Sir John Soane's Museum
South Bank Board
Theatre Museum
Tricycle Theatre
Young Vic

Eastern Arts
Cecil Higgins Gallery, Bedford
Fermoy Centre, King's Lynn
King's Lynn Museum
Museum of East Anglian Life, Norwich
Norwich Castle Museum
Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia
St. George's Festival, Norwich
Wingfield College, Diss

Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts
Hull Humberside TIE Theatre Company
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull
Hull Town Docks Museum
Leisure Centre, Grimsby
New Theatre, Hull
New Town Docks Museum, Hull
Spring Street Theatre, Hull

Touring Exhibitions

66. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he supports the objective of touring exhibitions from the great London collections to other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: I do. The Government are committed to encouraging our great national museums and galleries to make the treasures in their care more widely accessible. The Government indemnity scheme has done much to encourage the lending of objects from the nationals, and between museums generally. I hope that the unit to be set up by the Museums and Galleries Commission in the course of this financial year will be similarly successful in stimulating the creation and use of touring exhibitions.

Theatre Touring

67. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister for the Arts what action is being taken to encourage theatre touring.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council is giving priority to the expansion and encouragement of theatre touring. Besides its day-to-day encouragement of touring opera, dance and drama at all levels, the council is planning to establish an independent production company, for which it will provide one third of the investment required. The remainder of the money, which will come from private sources, will thus be new money available to promote up to six new touring productions annually. The return earned by the productions will be available for reinvestment in future events.

I am greatly encouraged by the practical steps being taken by the Arts Council to enlarge its touring base, and I look forward to the development of similar schemes in other fields.

Payroll Giving

68. **Mr. Page** asked the Minister for the Arts whether arts bodies have taken full advantage of the payroll giving scheme.

Mr. Luce: The payroll giving scheme was introduced only on 6 April this year, and it is too early to say to what extent arts bodies have been able to benefit from it. I shall keep the position under review.

Museums and Galleries

69. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Minister for the Arts what is the latest number of museums and galleries in the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate of the annual number of visits to them.

Mr. Luce: A survey by the Museums Association in May 1985 recorded 2,131 museums and galleries in the United Kingdom. The information held on the Museums Association database suggests that some 73 million visits were made to museums and galleries in 1986 — an increase of 5 million over 1985.

Royal Opera House

70. **Mr. Michael Marshall** asked the Minister for the Arts what is the present position on the development scheme of the Royal Opera House.

Mr. Luce: I am still considering the revised proposals for the development of the Covent Garden site, in so far as they affect my responsibilities under the development land trust deed. However, I understand that the Covent Garden Community Association has been granted a right of appeal against the development in the High Court, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Theatre (Training Schemes)

Mr. Blair asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to help implement the recommendations of the Cole report "Theatre is for All" that there should be a 50:50 ratio of men and women in training schemes.

Mr. Luce: The report was commissioned by the Arts Council, and it is for it to implement the recommendations it has endorsed.

In 1986-87, 42 awards for training schemes were made, of which 25 were to women and 17 to men, a ratio of about 60:40.

Women's Theatre Companies

44. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Minister for the Arts what support women's theatre companies received from the Arts Council in the last financial year; and what proportion of the total funding of theatre companies this represents.

Mr. Luce: In 1986-87 two women's theatre companies (Monstrous Regiment and Women's Theatre Group) received joint funding of £140,000, which represents 1·2 per cent. of the Arts Council's allocation for drama, excluding the national companies. In addition, the Arts Council funded three women's theatre projects:

Theatre of Black Women
Blood Group
Women's Comedy Workshop.

Funding for these projects totalled £36,270 or 4·6 per cent. of the Arts Council's projects allocation.

Regional Arts

58. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will outline his plans to encourage the arts in the regions.

Mr. Luce: I welcome the shift of resources from London to the regions which has taken place as a result of the "Glory of the Garden" report.

As I outlined in my speech to the Council of Regional Arts Associations' conference at Newcastle, I intend to place increasing emphasis on the plural funding of the arts, in the regions as in London.

Arts Marketing Scheme

49. **Mr. Butler** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the progress of his arts marketing scheme.

Mr. Luce: I was pleased to announce on 30 July 22 awards to arts organisations under the scheme, reflecting a variety of innovative marketing techniques. I shall be interested to follow their progress and see how successful they are.

There was a good response, with over 200 applications, but some showed a need to improve marketing expertise. I have therefore offered a one-day professional consultancy to the unsuccessful applicants.

The scheme was experimental for one year. I do not believe it should be continued in its present form in 1988-89. I am now actively considering how I can follow it up to encourage arts bodies to market themselves more effectively in other ways.

Funding

51. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Minister for the Arts what studies his Department has conducted into the effect on the arts in Britain of the present level of funding for the current year.

Mr. Luce: I do not believe that my Department should attempt to duplicate research carried out by independent bodies. I am currently helping to fund two projects by the Policy Studies Institute. One is a research study into the economic impact of the arts, the results of which are to be published early in 1988. The other project is the third in the series "Facts about the Arts", the aim of which is to present a comprehensive picture, in tables and narrative, of the arts scene, at a particular date, but also to give an indication of general trends.

Museums

55. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent discussions he has had with representatives of museums in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Luce: I meet representatives of all sectors of the museums world both in London and during my regional visits. Most recently I attended the opening of the Winterhalter exhibition at the national portrait gallery. During November I look forward to visiting the national history museum's geological museum, and to seeing a number of museum developments outside London.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

77. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy on the question of the elimination of radioactive discharges from nuclear plants.

Mr. Moynihan: The total elimination of radioactivity in discharges from nuclear plants is impossible. Government policy is to ensure that discharges are reduced to levels which are as low as reasonably achievable. The authorising Departments are currently engaged on a programme of reviewing the liquid and gaseous authorisations for all nuclear installations in the United Kingdom, but operators are required to ensure the best practicable means to improve performance within the discharge limits set.

Privatisation

Mr. John Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have invited tenders for the following services *(a)* street cleansing, *(b)* refuse collection, *(c)* the provision of school meals; and what information he has on the outside tenders compared with those from in house direct labour organisations.

Mr. Chope: The Department does not collect systematic data on these matters but much useful information can be found in the annual surveys of contracting out which have appeared in "Local Government Chronicle"; and in the newsletter "Public Service Review" published by the Public Service Research Centre.

Planning Applications

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the discussions between his Department's planning inspectorate and local planning authorities regarding delays in dealing with planning applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend's view is that authorities should normally be able to decide at least 80 per cent. of applications made to them within the statutory eight-week period. The latest figures show that approximately 65 per cent. of applications are decided within that period. We publish quarterly statistics of performance and encourage authorities with the poorest levels of performance to improve their handling of applications. The National Development Control Forum is shortly to publish guidelines on the handling of planning applications.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that tenants of local authority housing will not be transferred to housing action trusts without their own or the local authority's consent.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend will consult the relevant local authorities and inform local residents when he decides to seek parliamentary approval for the designation of an area as a housing action trust, but the final decision on whether to seek designation of a particular area must remain his.

Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978

Mr. Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the community charge proposals will have on the provisions of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978.

Mr. Howard: Under the domestic rating system, rateable values are increased to take account of extensions and alterations to property. Rate relief is granted to disabled people to ensure that they do not have to pay higher bills as a result of modifications needed to their homes as a result of their disability. A similar provision will not be needed with the community charge, because improvements to people's homes will not affect the level of the charge.

Disabled relief will continue in respect on non-domestic hereditaments.

Pollution

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimate of future British sulphur emissions for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 through to 1995; and how this compares with all other Western European countries.

Mr. Moynihan: The level of future sulphur emissions will depend on factors such as future economic growth and energy demand, and estimates are therefore subject to considerable uncertainty. Official United Kingdom estimates, expressed, as a range, are available only for the years 1990 and 2000, as follows:

	(000 tonnes SO_2)
1990	3,400-4,200
2000	2,600-3,500

In 1986 the executive body of the convention on long-range transboundary air pollution completed a major review of national strategies and policies for air pollution abatement, in the course of which estimates of future SO_2 emissions were provided by most European countries. I am arranging to place a copy of the report[1] in the Library.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the proposed National Rivers Authority will be freed from public sector borrowing requirement restrictions.

Mr. Moynihan: No; the National Rivers Authority will be subject to financial controls equivalent to those applying to similar public bodies.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has proposals for establishing criteria for a charging policy by the proposed National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Moynihan: This is one of the issues being considered in the light of comments received on the consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority issued by the Government in July.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount and type from 1983 to 1986 of hazardous waste imported into the United Kingdom for each year and the total amount of hazardous waste imported, and the categories, for 1979.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no details held centrally of types of hazardous waste imported into the United Kingdom, or of total amounts imported before 1981. The following are the amounts of special waste imported each year between 1983 and 1986:

	Tonnes
1983	14,824
1984	5,000
1985	24,548
1986	53,000

Broadwater Farm

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list all moneys paid either to Haringey council for use on projects on the Broadwater Farm estate, or to the Broadwater Farm youth association, by his Department in the last three years, giving revenue and capital expenditures and the amounts and projects in each case.

Mr. Trippier: Over the past three years the following urban programme funding approvals have been given, by my Department for projects at Broadwater Farm estate. Those projects involving direct funding for the youth association are asterisked. The remainder are those of Haringey borough council.

	£	*1985-86*	*£*	*1986-87*	*£*	*1987-88*
Willan Road Nursery	50,000	Revenue	50,000	Revenue	55,000	Revenue
Broadwater Farm Youth Association*	47,852	Revenue	48,852	Revenue	49,852	Revenue
Broadwater Farm Tenants Association		—	19,050	Revenue	18,050	Revenue
			7,150	Capital		
Broadwater Farm Nursery Classes	39,600	Revenue		—		—
Broadwater Farm Skills Survey	12,000	Revenue		—		—
Broadwater Farm Holiday Projects*	9,500	Revenue		—	2,500	Revenue
Broadwater Farm Enterprise Workshops		—		—	400,000	Capital

Estate Action resources have also been allocated to Haringey borough council over the past two years in support of a range of capital housing works on Broadwater Farm.

1986-87

£646,989 supporting works including
- Anti-graffiti painting
- Security Works
- New Lighting
- Improvements to tower block
- Landscaping for children's day centre
- Improvements to tenants room
- Alarm systems for the elderly

1987-88

£359,533 allocated to date and supporting works including
- Improvements to the estates management office
- Landscaping and community gardens
- Anti-graffiti painting

Irish in Britain Representation Group

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how much each of the London boroughs, of Haringey, Camden, Islington and Hackney has paid in grants to the Irish in Britain Representation Group, stating capital and revenue grants; and if he will make a statement.

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[1] "National Strategies and Policies for Air Pollution Abatement" (annex, Table 1). Convention on long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, United Nations, New York, 1987.

Mr. Chope: None, since the Department does not collect systematic information about discretionary grants by local authorities.

Gipsies

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what notifications have been received from Calderdale and Kirklees regarding the provision of gipsy sites in each local authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: I am informed that Calderdale and Kirklees are currently considering the provision of gipsy sites in their areas.

Station Site (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South on 26 October, what reasons were given for the rejection by the Property Services Agency of a rail link sharing the former Bradford Exchange station site with a courthouse; whether at any stage a threat was made expressly or by implication that the courthouse project would be moved to Kirklees if the Property Service Agency's views were not accepted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The advice that the Property Services Agency gave to the City of Bradford metropolitan district council was that, in its professional judgment, the site could not accommodate both a rail link and a courthouse to meet the requirements of the Lord Chancellor's Department. The decision on the appropriate use of the site was a matter for the council.

Defective Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further consultations have taken place between officials of his Department and Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding the state of the Wimpey no fines properties in the Blakenall area of the borough.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been no further discussions since the Department's officers met Walsall metropolitan borough council on 16 September to discuss its overall housing programme; the matters discussed there, including the condition of Wimpey no fines properties, will be taken into account when we decide the HIP allocations for 1988-89.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended for the Minister for Housing or another Minister in his Department to visit the Wimpey no fines properties in Walsall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no current plans to do so; however, as my reply to the hon. Member of 21 October explained (Vol. 120, Cols. *829-830*), the Department's officials are keeping Ministers fully informed of the position.

Rating Reform

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from local authorities *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the introduction of the community charge as a replacement for domestic rates.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 24 July (Vol. 120, col.*722*).

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he proposes to specify the terms and conditions of appointment of community charge registration officers;

(2) whether he will permit authorities to nominate existing officers appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 as community charge registration officers.

Mr. Ridley: I intend to provide that the community charge registration officer for a local authority will be the person who has responsibility for administering the authority's financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the proposed duties of the community charge registration officer.

Mr. Ridley: The registration officer will be under a duty to compile and maintain an accurate and up-to-date register of all those who are liable to pay community charges in the area of his authority.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it will be a matter for the community charge registration officer or the local authority to decide matters of policy and resourcing relating to the task of community charge registration.

Mr. Ridley: Registration officers will be responsible for compiling and maintaining community charge registers. Local authorities will be required to provide registration officers with sufficient resources to carry out those functions.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters he has received on his proposals to reform local government finance since June 1987; what percentage of these letters he estimates to be in favour of his proposals; and what percentage of these letters he estimates to be opposed to his proposals.

Mr. Ridley: Since June 1987 my Department has received more than 3,000 letters about specific aspects of our proposals and requests for further information. Those who have written were neither invited to, nor on the whole did they, express a view on the proposals as a whole.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local authority *(a)* the number of persons he estimates would be liable to pay the community charge and *(b)* the number of community charge payers whom he expects to receive assistance with the community charge by a rebate system.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library the adult population figures underlying the community charge exemplifications which I published on 29 June (Vol. 118, c. *44*). It is not possible to make reliable estimates of the numbers of people likely to be eligible for community charge rebates in each area.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to make a statement on the proposed treatment of the Corporation of the City of London for the purposes of community charge and non-domestic rates.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The City of London is unique among local authorities in its very small resident population combined with its need to provide services for a large daytime inflow of commuters. It is also unique in that the city retains a "business vote". In the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) it was accepted that special arrangements would be required for the City of London. My officials have therefore discussed with the corporation and with the local authority associations proposals to allow the corporation to levy a small variable non-domestic rate provided a pre-determined proportion of expenditure is met by community charge payers. There will be arrangements to offset the contribution from city non-domestic ratepayers to city expenditure from their contribution to the national non-domestic rate pool.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local authority *(a)* the number of electors, *(b)* the number of domestic ratepayers who (i) now pay full rates, (ii) now pay part rates because of assistance by rate rebates and (iii) now pay no rates because of assistance by rate rebates and *(c)* the number of spouses or partners of domestic ratepayers who would be jointly and severally liable for the rates bill had the provisions he proposes for joint and several liability of community charge applied to rates.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library the available information for each local authority on the numbers of domestic properties liable for rates and the numbers of ratepayers receiving full and partial rebates.

The number of electors in each local authority area is published in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys monitor EL/87/1, available from the Library.

Precise information on the number of ratepayers' spouses or partners who would be jointly and severally liable for the rates bill is not available. However the 1981 census county reports, available from the Library, show in table 39 numbers of people living with spouses in each local authority area.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated costs incurred since June on promoting his proposals for local government finance reform, itemising separately *(a)* publications, *(b)* videos and similar material and *(c)* promotional tours by Ministers.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 29 October to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest figures he has for poll taxes, expressed both as total revenue and the charge per adult in £ sterling, in *(a)* Japan, *(b)* the Canadian provinces and *(c)* any other countries;

(2) what information he has as to how many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries do not have a tax on residential or domestic property.

Mr. Ridley: The most recent data we have are contained in annex K to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd 9714).

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to monitor the current year's electoral registration process to discern whether the prospect of a community charge is resulting in a change in the numbers of electors registered.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of staff, their grades and duties working on the implementation of his proposals to reform local government finance.

Mr. Ridley: The following staff in my Department are engaged on all aspects of the reform of local government finance.

Grade	*Full time*	*Part time*
Grade 3	—	2
Grade 4	—	1
Grade 5	3	3
Grade 6	1	—
Grade 7	5	5
SEO	1	2
HEO	7	3
EO	5	2
AO	3	2
AA	2	—
PS	3	1
Typist	2	—
Total	32	21

A number of staff in other Government Departments are also involved, as part of their other duties, in this area of work.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether estimates of the adult population used for revenue support grant and distribution of the proceeds of the national non-domestic rate pool will include students and persons who are exempt from paying community charge.

Mr. Ridley: I have yet to make proposals on the estimates of adult population to be used for the purposes of distributing revenue support grant and the proceeds of the national non-domestic rate pool. I intend, however, that these estimates should take account of the fact that students will pay a reduced community charge and that other categories will be exempt from paying the community charge.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the full-time equivalent of the numbers of staff of his Department employed on dealing with correspondence from the general public in relation to his proposals to reform local government finance.

Mr. Ridley: There are approximately 13½ staff (fte) involved in answering correspondence on rate reform. This includes both correspondence from Members of Parliament and the general public. Answering the inordinate number of parliamentary questions from the hon. Gentleman of course imposes considerable additional burden on my Department's resources.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the sources of the estimates of adult population by local authorities for the purposes of *(a)* revenue support grant and *(b)* distribution of the proceeds from the national non-domestic rate pool.

Mr. Ridley: No decision has yet been made as to the sources from which esimates of adult population should be drawn.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to deal with the rating of new domestic property during the period of phasing out rates.

Mr. Ridley: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await the publication of the legislation.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to give any assistance to local authorities whose areas contain large numbers of students to meet the cost of expenditure above that which would be financed by the basic community charge.

Mr. Ridley: The revenue support grant system will compensate fully for differences between authorities up to the level of their assessed need to spend; the full cost of expenditure above that level will fall on local charge payers.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to discuss with local government and in what forum the proposals for a community charge rebate scheme.

Mr. Ridley: We are considering, with the local authority associations, the most appropriate forum for future discussions on the community charge rebate system.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Commission for Racial Equality on the effect of his community charge proposals on families from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Ridley: None.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge to be paid by student nurses living in hospitals attached to teaching hospitals in inner London.

Mr. Ridley: I placed illustrative community charge figures for all local authorities, including inner London boroughs, in the Library on 29 June.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to change the financial limits measured in terms of a penny rate product if his proposals to change the system of local government finance are carried through.

Mr. Ridley: No decisions have yet been taken on this matter, but appropriate arrangements will be proposed.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for reviewing rateable value limits in the Leasehold Reform Act when domestic rates are replaced by the poll tax.

Mr. Waldegrave: I propose to issue shortly a consultation paper on the implications for the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and other landlord and tenant legislation of the proposed abolition of domestic rates.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *39-40*, giving figures of gainers and losers by households in England on the introduction of the full community charge, he will make a statement showing why the single pensioner and other single adult losers are greater than the same categories for Great Britain given in table J7 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying For Local Government".

Mr. Howard: The figures are on different bases. Those I gave to the hon. Member on 26 October (Vol. 121, columns *39-40*) showed the estimated position without any transitional grant provisions. Table J7 of "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) showed the estimated effect with the continuation of the transitional grant provisions proposed in the Green Paper.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* any information he has on a parish-by-parish basis on the effects of his proposals to reform local government finance on the finances of parish councils, showing *(a)* the amount of parish precept per household and *(b)* the amount of community charge per adult in respect of parish services, calculated on the same basis as the figures referred to in his answer on 29 June, *Official Report*, column *44*.

Mr. Ridley: There are about 8,000 parish councils. Information about parish precepts is available but could only be expressed as an amount per household at disproportionate cost.

Information about parish expenditure is not collected centrally. As a result of our proposals for the payment of grant and non-domestic rates published on 23 September, parish council expenditure will be supported by grant and non-domestic rates in the same way as other local government expenditure. The illustrative community charges published on 29 June include parish precepts.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the 1987-88 community charge for the City of London on the same basis as that for all other authorities referred to in his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *44*.

Mr. Ridley: No. We have always made it clear that separate arrangements would be necessary for the City of London.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *862-3*, he will place in the Library the comments he has received from the Audit Commission on the effect of his proposals for the reform of local government finance on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities.

Mr. Ridley: No. I do not have permission from the commission to publish its comments.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the effect on the level of community charge in each local authority of a 5 per cent. evasion rate, based on the figures referred to in his answer on 29 June, *Official Report*, column 44.

Mr. Ridley: No. There is no basis for assuming a uniform 5 per cent. rate of evasion.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to define great personal sensitivity in the context of information which will not be available to community charge registration officers, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, column *825*.

Mr. Ridley: As I indicated in my answer of 21 October (Vol. 120, col. *825*), such material will be prescribed in regulations.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to omit any members of Her Majesty's Forces from the community charge register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: It would be impractical to register individually the most mobile service personnel for the personal community charge. It would also be undesirable, for security reasons, for certain details to be included in community charges registers.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his latest estimates of the likely evasion rate of community charge.

Mr. Ridley: I have made no such estimate.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information local authorities will be permitted to provide on total revenue and spending when sending out poll tax demands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 29 October]:* This is a matter for further discussion with the local authority associations. It is not obvious that any specific prohibitions will be required. In line with our proposals for the operation of the grant system and the local collection fund, however, we shall be taking powers to prescribe the minimum information to be provided and the format of the community charge bill.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what instructions or codes of practice he laid down in respect of the appointment of consultants by the London Docklands development corporation, and what action he proposes to take consequently on the report of auditors to the corporation, Robson Rhodes Corporation, on future procedure for appointing consultants adopted by the London Docklands development corporation;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from Messrs. Robson Rhodes to the London Docklands development corporation concerning its annual accounts together with any reply or statements it made in response.

Mr. Trippier: The corporation is required by the terms of its grant memorandum to award consultancy contracts on a competitive basis.

The corporation has not yet completed its internal consideration of the management letter. It will do so at the next meeting of its audit committee. My Department will then consider the letter and the adequacy of the LDDC's response.

I will consider what statement should be made for the *Official Report*.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of consultants appointed by the London Docklands development corporation within its expenditure on consultancies of £7·9 million in the last financial year, together with the nature of the contract, and indicating those cases where the auditors have found no evidence of formal competition.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. I shall do so as soon as the information has been brought together.

Planning Zones

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards the introduction of simplified planning zones.

Mr. Waldegrave: A commencement order and regulations enabling local planning authorities in England and Wales to make simplified planning zone schemes (SPZ's) come into force today. The regulations provide the detailed procedures and were the subject of consultation earlier this year.

SPZ's are based on the planning regime successfully pioneered in enterprise zones and will provide local authorities with an important new means of facilitating development, particularly in the older urban areas. They enable local planning authorities to give advance planning permission for specified types of development in defined areas. Schemes will provide developers with certainty about the acceptability of projects, and remove the need for them to make individual planning applications in the area concerned.

I hope that authorities will take full advantage of this new opportunity and prepare schemes as soon as practicable.

Certain types of development are excluded from the scope of SPZ's, and the Act provides that SPZ's cannot be designated in certain protected areas such as national parks and green belts.

New, simplified procedures for the preparation of local plans also come into operation today.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a timetable for the implementation of competitive tendering procedures for individual local government services in the phasing programme.

Mr. Howard: The Department is issuing a consultation paper today which sets out proposals for implementation of part I of the Local Government Bill in England. I am sending my hon. Friend and members of Standing Committee A copies of the paper, and I have also placed a copy in the Library.

The paper proposes a phased introduction of competition by local authorities, with authorities split into groups and each group taking the activities covered by the Bill in a different order. Each group will have to expose activities to competition at six-monthly intervals, starting by 1 April 1989. All authorities will have to expose at least 10 per cent. of their ground maintenance work to competition by that date, and that percentage figure will be increased to 100 per cent. over a five-year period.

The paper also proposes a de minimis exemption so that authorities would not have to expose any activity to competition if they spend less than £100,000 per annum on carrying it out.

Comments on the proposals are to be sent to the Department by 31 January 1988.

Whale Products

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the importation of whale products according to product and ultimate use.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 29 October 1987]:* Applicants to the Department to import whale products under EC regulation 3626/82 which implements the convention on international trade and endangered species within the European Community must specify the product concerned and the purpose of import. Import permits are normally granted only for personal or scientific purposes. During the last eight years various products have been imported for these purposes including teeth, bone, tusk, blood, powder, sperm, sperm oil and spermaceti wax.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a report giving his latest assessment of the effect of a revaluation of non-domestic property, showing separately the effects on a regional basis and by type of property.

Mr. Ridley: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd 9714), paragraph D15-23, indicated the expected broad effects of revaluation. Since then, several leading firms of surveyors have published more detailed forecasts which generally confirm those contained in the Green Paper.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from *(a)* the Confederation of British Industry and *(b)* the Institute of Directors on his proposals for a national non-domestic rate.

Mr. Ridley: The CBI response to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" supported the Government's proposals in broad terms, subject to certain conditions. It has since expressed strong support for the Government's manifesto commitments, while making it clear that they have views about how those commitments should be achieved. Exchanges of view are continuing.

The IOD in its response to the Green Paper welcomed the community charge, but opposed the proposals for a national non-domestic rate, although noting that

> "By strength of feeling, however, there was probably a majority in favour of a uniform business rate because members in a minority of areas saw the proposal as literally their last hope."

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the figures from form ACCR 86/87, showing for each local authority *(a)* total accumulated capital receipts and *(b)* cash-backed accumulated receipts at 31 March.

Mr. Ridley: Returns from local authorities for 1986-87 are currently being received and analysed. When the information is complete, I will place the figures in the Library of the House.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what jurisdiction the proposed National Rivers Authority will have in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: It is not possible to go beyond what was said in the Government's consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority, published in July, until we have considered all the comments received on that paper. Specific questions about the jurisdiction of the National Rivers Authority in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

DEFENCE

Meteorological Office (Storm Warnings)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what public warnings were issued on the night of 15 and 16 October by the Meteorological Office when the hurricane arrived at the coastline of the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will publish the precise time at which the Meteorological Office recorded the existence of the hurricane in the vicinity of the United Kingdom on the night of Thursday 15 and 16 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 29 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

British Petroleum

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to public funds of the use of the Royal Marines and Commandos in the British Petroleum share launch.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence who authorised the use of Royal Marines to help launch the BP offer price announcement on 15 October; how much was paid for their services; and who paid.

Mr. Freeman: The use of the Royal Marines on this occasion was authorised by the Directorate of Naval Recruiting in accordance with standard procedures. The precise costs to be recovered from BP are still being assessed.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the date on which the Royal Yacht Britannia was last tested operationally in her role as a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve auxiliary hospital ship.

Mr. Freeman: Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia's declared wartime role is as a naval hospital ship: she has no formal connection with the Royal Naval Reserve. Although Britannia has not been involved in operations as a hospital ship, she has exercised this role on a number of occasions and, in January 1986, she provided valuable medical facilities during the evacuation of civilian refugees from Aden.

British Nuclear Tests Veterans' Association

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received recent representations from the British Nuclear Tests Veterans' Association regarding compensation for their members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes, we have received such representations. Under present arrangements claims for compensation will be considered by the Department of Health and Social Security.

RNAD Coulport

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will invite tenders for the construction of a floating jetty at RNAD Coulport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my predecessor gave on 3 March 1987. In matters of design and construction, the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence. The floating jetty at RNAD Coulport is a unique and complex structure, and the design work and associated hydraulic model tests are well advanced. The Property Services Agency now expects to invite tenders in the next few weeks.

Gulf War

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Defence what preparations have been made for specialist British troops to be used in a supportive capacity for a possible United States land operation in the Gulf region; what specialist training such British forces have received; in what circumstances their troops will be used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No preparations have been made for participation by specialist British troops in any such operation.

Theatre Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decision affecting the modernisation of theatre nuclear weapons in service with British forces has been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 24 March 1987 at column *162*.

Nuclear Weapons (Underground Storage)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have concluded their discussions with the United States Government or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation officials about the construction of underground storage facilities for nuclear weapons in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My Department is involved in continuing discussions with the United States Government on this matter.

Armed Forces (Bullying)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take to combat bullying and brutality in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Feeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 28 October 1987 at column *341*.

NATO (Main Battle Tank)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy upon the statement of NATO's Secretary-General that one country, or consortium of countries, should be asked to design and build NATO's next generation of main battle tank.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with our policy of seeking international collaboration in weapons procurement wherever this is practicable and advantageous, we are exploring with our allies the prospects for harmonising operational characteristics and time scales for potential requirements for a next generation of main battle tank. It is too early, however, to prescribe an appropriate procurement method for such a project.

Nuclear Arms Links

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his recent discussions with Mr. Andre Giraud, France's Defence Secretary, particularly in respect of nuclear arms links.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend last met M. Giraud on 26 October in the course of the WEU ministerial meeting at The Hague. They discussed a range of defence matters of mutual interest.

Modular Stand-Off Weapon

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what the likely cost would be to Her Majesty's Government of the development of a modular stand-off weapon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is too early to say.

Lance Missile

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had any discussions about the development of an improved Lance battlefield nuclear missile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly reviews with his ministerial colleagues in NATO the need for the modernisation of NATO's nuclear systems. This is an essential element in the Alliance's policy of maintaining only the minimum forces necessary for deterrence. No decisions on modernisation as it affects British forces have yet been taken.

Conscription

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether staff in his Department undertook any press briefings during the summer recess in respect of the issue of conscription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No press briefings on the issue of conscription have been undertaken by staff in my

Department during and since the summer recess. The Government's view on the issue was given by the Prime Minister on 20 March 1986: conscription would mean an enormous change in the whole of our defence policy which is founded on professional armed services, and which has served our country well.

Cruise Missile Components

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is aware in advance of each occasion when cruise missile components are flown into the USAF Alconbury airbase in Huntingdonshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United States Air force has kept my Department informed of the progress being made towards achieving a ground-launched cruise missile operating capability at RAF Molesworth. This includes its programme of deliveries of GLCM components.

British Telecom Research

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost to his Department of use of the British Telecom research centre near Brightwell.

Mr. Sainsbury: The cost to the Department of the use of the British Telecom research laboratory at Martlesham heath, near Brightwell, was approximately £800,000 for the financial year 1986-87.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether nuclear materials have been kept at the Frates ammunition dump, Gosport, or Collingwood naval base, Fareham;

(2) what is the estimated number of miles travelled per annum on Britain's roads by vehicles carrying military nuclear weapons material.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to comment on the location or movement of nuclear weapons or their component materials.

NFR90 Frigate

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expenditure (i) incurred and (ii) committed by Her Majesty's Government on the development of the NFR90 frigate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The expenditure incurred to date by Her Majesty's Government on the collaborative NFR90 project is £1·7 million, this being the United Kingdom share of the cost of the feasibility study. No other monies are currently committed to this project. A decision on whether the United Kingdom will enter the project's next phase, project definition, is expected to be made soon.

Arms Control (Inspection)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is proposed that all cruise missile bases in the United Kingdom will be subject to Soviet inspection under the proposed arms control agreement and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We are in close consultation with the United States on the form which a verification regime associated with the proposed INF agreement might take, including the question of inspections. Under such a regime, we would expect all ground-launched missile operating bases to be subject to inspection, including those in the United Kingdom.

Exercise Certain Strike

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to Her Majesty's Government of participation in Exercise Certain Strike.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The total cost of United Kingdom participation in Exercise Certain Strike is not identified in the Estimates separately from the total provision for training. Our assessment of the extra costs involved has not yet been completed.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will declassify the information as to the number of nuclear weapons *(a)* possessed and *(b)* operated under dual-key arrangements by the United Kingdom which fall within the terms of the proposed arms control agreement, and as to the percentage, within a band of 10 per cent., that this number of nuclear weapons related to the total number of nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No British owned or operated nuclear weapons fall within the terms of the proposed INF agreement.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of nuclear weapons in Britain which are *(a)* land-based, *(b)* sea-based and *(c)* air-based systems.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I cannot add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 13 July 1987 at column *345*.

Battlefield Artillery Engagement System

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original estimated cost, and what is the current estimated cost, of the battlefield artillery engagement system and associated software; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Current cost estimates are commercially sensitive. Estimated costs at the start of full development were some £175 million when revalued to average outturn prices.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many years late on the original time scale the battlefield artillery engagement system is currently running; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between the start of full development in 1980 and subsequent conversion to incentivised contractual arrangements in 1985, there was a slip of approximately two years. Subsequently there has been a slippage in the development programme of a number of weeks. The extent to which this may affect dates for introducing equipment into service will depend on progress from now on.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the likely reduction in provision to the Army of the current proposals for the battlefield artillery engagement system as against the original plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Army will receive sufficient equipments to meet essential operational requirements. Exact numbers of equipments to be deployed are classified.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures his Department has adopted to monitor the efficiency, management and cost in the development of the battlefield artillery engagement system; what assessment he has made of the efficacy of these procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1985 the contract for development and the first phase of BATES production has been on a maximum price-target cost basis. This offers the contractor financial incentives and includes agreed levels of achievement against which progress is closely monitored. Regular progress reports are formally reviewed between the MOD and the contractor. These arrangements can be amended should this be considered appropriate.

Marconi

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action is being taken upon the findings of his Department's investigations into the allegations that Marconi, or its four subsidiaries in Portsmouth, made excessive profits on Ministry of Defence contracts; how much public money is involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Investigations by the Ministry of Defence police into allegations of irregularities over contracts with Marconi Defence Systems began in October 1986 and are continuing. Responsibility for the direction of the investigations and the prosecution of any cases which arise from them was referred to the Director of Public Prosecution's fraud investigation group on 19 August 1987. As this is now a matter for the Law Officers of the Crown I am unable to comment further about these investigations.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many registered entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the Data Protection Act 1984 is that there will be no charge for current, past and potential MOD employees but for other data subjects the statutory fee of £10 will be charged. The MOD has six register entries covering a total of 16 purposes. The total cost to a data subject, who is not a current, past or potential MOD employee, seeking access to personal data held under all registrations would be £60.

Jeffrey Singh

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take on the evidence of bullying and racism arising from the death of Jeffrey Singh, found hanged at Shorncliffe barracks, Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The death of junior soldier Jeffrey Singh was fully investigated by a coroner's court. No evidence of bullying or racism was found.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of nuclear (i) missiles, (ii) warheads and (iii) throw-weight for NATO forces *(a)* worldwide, *(b)* in Europe and *(c)* in the United Kingdom: (A) in June 1979, (B) now and (C) after implementation of the provisions of the current intermediate nuclear force negotiations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information on the number and location of nuclear missiles deployed with NATO forces has been published annually in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" since 1980.

The information which the hon. Member is seeking on warheads and throw-weight is classified.

Under the currently proposed INF agreement, all NATO's ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing II missiles would be eliminated.

Following an INF agreement, it will remain NATO's policy to maintian the minimum level of forces consistent with credible deterrence.

Members of Parliament (Classified Information)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department takes to access eligibility for access to classified material of right hon. and hon. Members *(a)* appointed to, or *(b)* candidates for, parliamentary positions associated with defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: None.

Committee of Public Accounts (Project Notification)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the operation of the system of notification of his Department to the Public Accounts Committee of projects costing over a certain sum; whether that threshold refers to eventual total anticipated cost; and when the system is next due for renewal

Mr. Sainsbury: The system of notification to which the hon. Member refers was described by my predecessor on 2 February 1987, columns *516-17*. The threshold of £250 million related to the total expected cost of development and production combined. The Government have no plans to review the system, but this does not exclude the possibility that changes of detail may be agreed between the Committee and my Department from time to time.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will take steps to ensure that overall control of events following an accident involving United States nuclear weapons on British soil rest with the British authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There is very close co-operation between the United Kingdom and the United States on contingency planning for the highly unlikely event of an accident involving a United States nuclear weapon in this country. The roles and responsibilities of both Governments are governed by special arrangements between the two nations. It is clearly understood in these arrangements that the United Kingdom has sovereign rights over its territory and territorial waters. In addition, as in all circumstances, United States military units in the United Kingdom would be required to comply with the relevant laws of the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Accident Exercises

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received about the use of thorium 232 in nuclear accident training exercises on British soil; if he was consulted about its use in advance; what assessment he has made of the implications for the environment and for the safety of the civilian population of the use of thorium 232; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements he has made to ensure the safety of all civilians living or camping in the vicinity of Royal Air Force bases on which United States nuclear accident teams carry out their exercises involving the use of radioactive material.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My Department has received two representations specifically regarding the alleged use of thorium 232 during nuclear accident training exercises in the United Kingdom. Thorium 232 has not been used during nuclear accident training exercises in the United Kingdom by the British armed forces. In addition, I have been assured by the United States authorities that their military units based in this country do not use radioactive contaminants of any kind during United States nuclear accident response training exercises in the United Kingdom.

Trident

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the proportion of *(a)* development and *(b)* the production costs of the warhead element of the Trident programme which will be attributable to (i) the United States of America and (ii) the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to release information of this nature for reasons of security.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what factors he attributes the fall since 1981 in the cost estimate for the Trident warhead procurement programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: The fall is attributable to the fact that after six years it has been possible to estimate the costs to completion with greater precision.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what factor he attributes the rise since 1981 in the proportion of total Trident programme expenditure attributable to warhead, miscellaneous and unallocated contingency expenditure.

Mr. Sainsbury: Approximately one third of the increase in the proportion of the Trident budget attributable to "Warhead, miscellaneous and unallocated contingency etc." is due to net cost increases in the areas of support and contingency within this element of the budget. The remainder is due to net cost reductions in other elements of the Trident budget.

Army Exercise, Angus

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of tests at an army camp at Angus, Scotland, in which troops were sprayed with CS gas from an Army aircraft; what arrangements were made to ensure the safety of the troops involved; how many similar exercises have been conducted.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No Army exercises involving the spraying of CS gas from the air are conducted.

RAF Stations

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current and proposed military uses of RAF Bawdsey, RAF Woodbridge and RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: RAF Bawdsey is, and will remain, a United Kingdom air defence station. RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge are, and will remain, operational flying stations used by the United States Air Force.

Projects

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many current defence projects not separately notified to Parliament are estimated to exceed on completion *(a)* £50 million and *(b)* £250 million; and what is the total estimated cost of these projects.

Mr. Sainsbury: The 1987 major project statement for equipment now in preparation will include all the 38 current defence projects with approved expenditure in excess of £250 million — £200 million for certain projects; the estimated total value of approved work shown is expected to be some £42 billion at average 1987-88 outturn prices. The information in respect of projects exceeding £50 million is not readily available in the form sought. But the first defence equipment project report which will be submitted to the House of Commons Defence Committee next year and which will list projects estimated to cost £25 million or more for development or £50 million or more for production, is expected to add approximately 60 projects to those which feature in the major project statement.

Nuclear Attack

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of current military defence arrangements against nuclear attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government's whole defence strategy is designed to deter a potential aggressor from any form of attack. Many of our military defence arrangements are designed to counter more than one form of attack and it is therefore not possible separately to identify the cost of the arrangements against one particular form of attack.

Harrier Aircraft

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Harrier aircraft have crashed since 1979; and what is the total cost involved.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 January 1979, 26 Royal Air Force and 12 Royal Navy Harriers have suffered irreparable damage in accidents. The cost of this number of aircraft, in current prices, would be approximately £304 million.

Frigates and Destroyers

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence, in pursuance of the reply he gave in paragraph 11 of Cm. 228, "Implementing the Lessons of the Falklands Campaign", if he will name the 50 frigates and destroyers of the surface escort force which are either *(a)* operational or engaged in preparing for service, trials or training or *(b)* undergoing refit or on standby; and if he will distinguish into which category each falls.

Mr. Sainsbury: Paragraph 11 of Cmnd. 228 refers to the Government's continuing commitment to maintain a surface escort force of about 50 destroyers and frigates. I refer the hon. Member to annex B of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987". Since that document was published HMS Naid, HMS Fife and HMS Aurora have paid off; HMS Jupiter and HMS Alacrity have left refit and HMS Brilliant and HMS Hermione have entered refit.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the number of frigates ordered each year since 1979, giving the yards at which the orders are now being built.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information required is:

Vessel	*Date ordered*	*Shipyard*
Type 22s		
HMS Boxer*	April 1979	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Beaver*	April 1979	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Brave*	April 1981	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS London*	February 1982	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Sheffield	December 1982	Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
HMS Coventry	December 1982	Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
HMS Cornwall	December 1982	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Cumberland	December 1982	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Campbeltown	January 1985	Cammell Laird Shipbuilders
HMS Chatham	January 1985	Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
Type 23s		
HMS Norfolk	October 1984	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Marlborough	August 1986	Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
HMS Argyll	September 1986	Yarrow Shipbuilders
HMS Lancaster	September 1986	Yarrow Shipbuilders
The following Type 42 destroyers were also ordered in this period:		
HMS Gloucester*	March 1979	Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd.
HMS Edinburgh*	April 1979	Cammell Laird Shipbuilders
HMS York*	April 1979	Swan Hunter Shipbuilders

* Denotes vessel accepted from the shipbuilder.

Defence Installations, Uist

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence what implications the development of the simulated combat trainer for ground-launched low-level air defence by British Aerospace and others at Letchworth will have for his Department's installations in the Uists, particularly as regards the numbers of both civilian and military personnel either stationed or employed there.

Mr. Sainsbury: Rapier simulators are used to improve the realism and effectiveness of training, and thus help to maximise the benefit obtained from the firing of live missiles which will continue to take place at the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides. Thus there are currently no plans to alter the number of personnel employed at the range as a result of the development of new simulators.

Bullying

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel have been discharged in the last three years after being found responsible for bullying; and if he will give details of the services concerned and the ranks of those so discharged.

Mr. Freeman: Bullying is not specifically defined as an offence under the Service Discipline Acts. Charges would be framed under those sections of the Acts appropriate to the circumstances. Since January 1986 instances of bullying in the Army have been recorded separately from other disciplinary cases involving assault. In the period since then, two Army corporals and one private soldier have been dismissed following courts martial for offences involving bullying, all in the current year. One Royal Marine corporal has also been dismissed from the service following his court martial for assault on another Royal Marine.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has recently received regarding bullying and initiation ceremonies in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: My Department keeps me informed of all allegations of bullying and so-called initiation ceremonies which are investigated by the SIB. I routinely receive periodic reports on this subject, and I am informed of any new cases of bullying which arise.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the circular sent recently to units of the armed forces regarding the need to prevent bullying against recruits.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my comments in the recent defence debate on 28 October, at column 393.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Southern Health and Social Services Area Board

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total possible membership of the Southern health and social services area board; how many members presently serve on this board; how many members voted *(a)* for and *(b)* against the proposed new £2 million area board health headquarters at the board meeting this month; and how many of those who voted for this new headquarters are (i) elected councillors and (ii) non-elected persons nominated by him for board membership.

Mr. Needham: There are currently 24 places on the Southern health and social services board, one of which is vacant. At the October meeting of the board a proposal to rescind the decision taken in January to provide a new headquarters building pending further information and discussion was defeated by five votes to seven. The votes of individual members were not recorded.

Police Advisory Board

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what dates in 1985, 1986 and 1987, respectively, the Police Federation of Northern Ireland requested that a meeting be held of the Police Advisory Board; what response he gave to those requests; and why no meeting of the board has taken place.

Mr. Stanley: The Police Federation for Northern Ireland requested meetings of the Police Advisory Board on 9 September 1985, 16 May 1986, and 11 May 1987. After the 9 September 1985 request, the Police Federation itself sought a delay to enable further topics to be tabled. On 16 May 1986 it asked for two further items to be added to the agenda. The federation was informed that a meeting of the board would be called to discuss only the first subject raised and it was asked if it would be prepared to proceed on that basis. I am not aware of any reply being received. The latest request is being considered in consultation with all the interested parties; and the federation has been informed accordingly.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Police Advisory Board last met; and if he will provide a list of the meetings that have taken place during each of the past five years of the Police Advisory Boards of England and Wales, of Scotland and of Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: The Police Advisory Board for Northern Ireland last met on 22 March 1982. Meetings of the Police Advisory Boards in England and Wales, and Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Edmund-Davies Report

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to give effect to recommendation 41 of the Edmund-Davies report as accepted by the Government of the day; what machinery he has established through the Police Advisory Board to give effect to this recommendation; and when the Police Advisory Board for Northern Ireland last discussed this matter.

Mr. Stanley: The intention of recommendation 42 was to ensure that the police receive all the relevant benefits of industrial legislation. The Police Federation for Northern Ireland first raised recommendation 41 as a potential point for discussion by the Police Advisory Board on 11 May 1987 and the request is still receiving consideration.

ACE Scheme

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which organisations have been informed of the possible loss of Government funding for ACE workers or other projects because of their present or proposed uses of the Conway mill buildings in West Belfast; and what changes such organisations were advised to take if they wished to retain such funding.

Mr. Stanley: Three organisations were informed of the possible loss of Government funding because of their use of the Conway mill facilities. To name them might place individuals involved with them at risk. The organisations concerned were advised to relocate.

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the reasons for withdrawing ACE funding from the Twinbrooke tenants and community association; and what arrangements will be made for provision of a comparable service to the local community in the future.

Mr. Stanley: ACE funding was withheld in accordance with the Government's policy as stated in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 27 June 1985, at column *451*. Discussions have taken place with two other groups about the provision of similar services in this area.

Payment of Debt Act

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are subject to deductions from *(a)* wages and *(b)* welfare benefits under the Payment of Debt Act in the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87; and what is the number of representations he has received urging repeal or amendments to the Act.

Mr. Stanley: The number of people from whom deductions from salaries have been made since 1983 under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 is approximately as follows:

	Numbers
1983-84	2,267
1984-85	2,025
1985-86	2,135
1986-87	1,608

These figures are the aggregate of the numbers of people from whom deductions from wages or salaries have been made on behalf of Northern Ireland Electricity, the Northern Ireland gas undertakings, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the rating division of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Similar information in relation to deductions from welfare payments is not available.

There have been five requests calling for the repeal or amendment of the Act since 1983.

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of those convicted of crimes in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses.

Mr. Stanley: The information sought is not available. However, in Northern Ireland the number of offenders ordered by the courts to be detained in hospital for treatment, on the grounds that they were suffering from mental illness, in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1982	—
1983	—

	Number
1984	—
1985	1
1986	3

All were detained by restriction orders made under article 47 of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 and the previous similar provisions of the Mental Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1961. In this context mental illness covers any suffering from schizophrenic psychoses but not exclusively so.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many current occupants of Her Majesty's prisons in Northern Ireland have ever been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis;

(2) how many people were admitted to her Majesty's prisons in Northern Ireland who had previously been discharged from mental illness hospitals and units after a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis in each of the last five years; and how many were recidivists.

Mr. Stanley: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many occupants of National Health Service hospital and unit beds in Northern Ireland have a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis; what those figures are as percentages of *(a)* mental and *(b)* all hospital beds in Northern Ireland; and how those figures compare with each of the past five years.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Year Ending	*Number of beds occupied by patients with diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis*	*Percentage of mental illness beds occupied by patients with diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis*	*Percentage of all hospital beds occupied by patients with diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis*
30 June 1986[2]	1,237	35·1	9·1
30 June 1985	1,422	39·2	10·9
30 June 1984	1,407	39·8	10·9
30 June 1983	1,396	36·7	10·6
30 June 1982	1,356	[1]	[1]

[1] Not available due to industrial action in the health service.

[2] Latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds have been specifically earmarked for the care of the mentally ill following the closure of mental hospitals in Northern Ireland in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No psychiatric hospitals have been closed in Northern Ireland during the last year.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the admissions by diagnosis and order of admissions, including percentage change in numbers and rates per 100,000 population, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Northern Ireland for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	First Admissions			*Total Admissions*		
	Number	*Per cent. change since 1984*	*Rate per 100,000 population*	*Number*	*Per cent. change since 1984*	*Rate per 100,000 population*
1984	134	—	9	1,105	—	71
1985	121	−9·7	8	1,089	−1·4	70
1986	108	−19·4	7	917	−17·0	59

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the discharges and deaths by length of stay, including percentage change in numbers and percentage distribution, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Northern Ireland for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Length of stay of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis

Numbers

	Less than one month		*One and less than three months*		*Three and less than six months*		*Six and less than 12 months*		*12 months or over*		*Total discharged/died*	*Per cent. change over 1984*
		per cent.		*per cent.*		*per cent.*		*per cent.*		*per cent.*		
1984	484	44	366	33	132	12	51	5	63	6	1,096	—
1985	479	43	430	38	109	10	52	5	50	4	1,120	+2·2
1986	423	43	361	37	78	8	35	4	84	9	981	−10·5

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the provision of community care for patients suffering from schizophrenic pyschosis discharged from National Health Service mental illness hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The chairman of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship (Northern Ireland) wrote to me in general terms seeking assurances that adequate provision will be made for sufferers of schizophrenia moving out to live within the community in future.

In my reply I gave the chairman the assurances sought.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of those convicted of crimes in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years had ever previously been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals with a main diagnosis of schizophrenia psychosis.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him today.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many community psychiatric nurses there have been in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Community Psychiatric Nurses employed in the Health an Personal Social Services

Year	*Number*
1983	62
1984	64
1985	75
1986	79
1987	115

AIDS

The Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland have been diagnosed as HIV positive over the last three years; how many of these were haemophiliacs; what plans he has for counselling and support for HIV positive patients within the health service; how many patients in Northern Ireland have contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Forty individuals have been diagnosed as HIV antibody positive in Northern Ireland in the last three years, of whom 16 were haemophiliacs. Of the total identified as being HIV antibody positive, three have gone on to develop AIDS, all of whom have died.

The provision of care for HIV antibody positive patients is a matter for each health and social service boards in light of local circumstances. Anyone wishing to be tested for the HIV virus can make arrangements through their own general medical practitioner or themselves attend the department of genito-urinary medicine at the Royal Victoria hospital or any of the sexually transmitted disease clinics in the province.

Each individual attending for testing is offered counselling before the test is undertaken and if found HIV antibody positive, again after the tests have been carried out. In addition testing and counselling has been offered to all haemophiliacs in the Province.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his Department's policy towards fees for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act; how many register entries his Department has; and what would be the total cost to a data subject seeking access to personal data held under all register entries.

Mr. Stanley: The Northern Ireland Office and each of the Northern Ireland Departments are setting subject access fees, within the prescribed maximum fee of £10, which are intended to recover the full costs of the subject access service except where circumstances justify a free or subsidised service.

A total of 55 part A, coupled with 125 part B registrations, have been made.

The total subject access cost from any one data subject would depend on the number of register entries holding personal data on that individual excluding those accesses which are being supplied free. Fees already set are in the range of £5-£8.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has made to the Social Security Advisory Committee's statement that his decision to proceed with the social fund as planned does not have its support; and what estimates he has as to the number of claimants in Northern Ireland who will lose as a result of the social fund.

Mr. Needham: No response has been made and no such estimates are available.

Speech Therapists

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of efforts to upgrade speech therapists' pay.

Mr. Needham: The pay of speech therapists in Northern Ireland follows the rates negotiated in Great Britain. I understand that negotiations on a new grading package are in progress in Great Britain. In recognition of the fact that these negotiations are likely to take some time to conclude an interim lump sum of £250 has been agreed for speech therapists in partial compensation for the increase due for the period 1 April 1987 to 30 November 1987.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are in receipt of housing benefit in each of the following areas covered by district offices: Downpatrick, Banbridge, Kilkeel, Newry District 1 and Newry District 2.

Mr. Needham: The following information has been supplied by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Numbers of tenants in receipt of housing benefit (October 1987)

NIHE district office	
Downpatrick	3,635
Banbridge	2,302
Kilkeel	1,095
Newry District 1	3,050
Newry District 2	2,956

The numbers relate to NIHE tenants and tenants of private landlords.

Chiropody

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the chiropody service in *(a)* the Down unit of management, *(b)* the Newry and Mourne unit of management and *(c)* the Banbridge unit of management; and if the Department of Health and Social Services has held any discussions about increasing the work force to deal with the elderly and infirm in the community.

Mr. Needham: Chiropody services are provided by health and social services boards for the elderly, handicapped persons, expectant mothers, schoolchildren and diabetics. Access to and frequency of treatment depends on the manpower available to meet demands from patients in these priority groups. Down unit of management has three chiropodists in post, to serve a population of 55,800, Newry and Mourne has six staff for a population of 76,600 and Craigavon and Banbridge 5·4 whole-time equivalent chiropodists for 103,400 people.

The Department has not been involved in discussions about increases in the work force. Decisions on such matters are taken by boards in the light of local needs and priorities.

Home Helps

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many home helps are employed in the Down unit of management (all), the Newry and Mourne unit of management (County Down only) and the Banbridge unit of management (in the electoral wards of Bannside, Katesbridge, Dromore North, Dromore South, Quilly, Garran and Croob); and how this compares with 1980-81.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Home helps at 30 September

Unit of Management	*1980*	*1987*
Down	474	519
Newry and Mourne[1]	982	1,066
Craigavon/Banbridge[1]	815	985

[1] A breakdown in the form requested is not readily available.

Local Government Reform

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to reform local government finance in Ulster; and what proposals he has to introduce a community charge in the Province.

Mr. Stanley: The Green Paper of January 1986, "Paying for Local Government", which forms the basis of the Great Britain reforms, made it clear that the proposals did not apply to Northern Ireland. This reflects the fact that local government arrangements in Northern Ireland are significantly different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

My right hon. Friend has therefore decided to monitor the development of the proposals in England and Wales before deciding whether, or to what extent, they should be applied in Northern Ireland.

Local Government Elections

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes in legislation are planned to enable "I" voters to vote in the next local government election in Northern Ireland; and when he expects such changes to be in operation.

Mr. Stanley: The Government intend to introduce a Bill enabling "I" voters to vote in local government elections in Northern Ireland as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Health Boards

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what bonus or efficiency payments are payable to managers of health boards; and what are the criteria used in deciding whether or not to grant such payments.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: A performance-related pay scheme for general managers of health and social services boards was introduced in December 1986. The scheme allows for annual additions to pay of up to 4 per cent. subject to a maximum of 20 per cent. cumulatively.

The criteria for deciding how much, if any, performance-related pay will be awarded are based on a system of individual performance reviews. This system provides for the setting of a number of key objectives for the year ahead against which the performance of the general manager will be assessed by the chairman on behalf of the board.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those health boards which *(a)* provide all acute medical services to their populations; *(b)* provide such services to populations outside their area and *(c)* expect other health boards to provide such services for them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: All four health and social services boards provide a full range of acute medical services with the exception of a small number of regional services for example cardiac surgery, renal services, plastic surgery, which by their nature can best be provided primarily at the main teaching hospitals in the Eastern board area.

In addition certain services because of their highly specialist nature and because of the small numbers involved—for example heart and liver transplants—are provided elsewhere in the United Kingdom. All four boards provide services to population outside their area. The boundaries of areas and units of management are of course for administrative purposes only and are not clinical boundaries; patients and staff can cross them as necessary.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of places on each area health board is held by elected representatives.

Mr. Needham [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: The information is as follows:

Health and Social Services Board	*Number of places*	*Number of places held by District Councillors*	*Per cent.*
Eastern	34	4	12
Northern	29	8	28
Southern	24	6	25
Western	24	8	33

Approximately 30 per cent. of the places on each board are reserved for nominees of district councils. At present there are nine vacancies in this category.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 November 1987

THE ARTS

William Morris Gallery and Museum

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to provide central funding to the William Morris gallery and museum in Waltham Forest.

Mr. Luce [*holding answer 2 November 1987*]: I am aware that the William Morris gallery and museum contains an interesting and important collection. Primary responsibility for its funding, as a local authority museum, lies with the borough of Waltham Forest, although the museum is eligible also to apply for assistance under grant schemes run by the Museum and Galleries Commission and the Area Museum Service for South-Eastern England.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

David Baveghens

Mr. Hayes asked the Attorney-General why the Crown prosecution service dropped the case against David Baveghens who was subsequently convicted in a private prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have read an article in *The Times* of 28 October 1987 and have noted the remarks attributed therein to the Police Federation and to Sergeant Michael Bennett. I am anxious to respond to those remarks at the earliest available opportunity. Sentence on Mr. Baveghens has been postponed pending the preparation of social inquiry reports. It would not be appropriate for me to make any further comment until sentence has been passed and the case has been concluded.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Abuse

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions of child sex abuse there have been in Leeds for the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information held centrally is given in the following table. For other sexual offences it is not possible from the records held centrally, to distinguish the age of the victim.

Persons found guilty of certain sexual offences where the victim is known to be aged under 16 by court and offence

Leeds area[1] *Number*[2]

Offence description	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a women or an animal	14	9	12
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a women or an animal	1	—	2
Indecent assault on a male person under 16	16	21	19
Indecent assault on a female person under 16	33	83	67
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	9	13	8
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16	13	13	15
Incest with girl under 13	6	4	7
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16	—	—	1
Abduction of unmarried girl under 16	—	2	—
Gross indecency with children	5	9	7
Total	97	159	138

[1] Leeds petty sessional division and Leeds Crown Court.

[2] The figures are those held centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the standard waiting time for payment by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board between the crime being committed and payment to the victim.

Mr. John Patten: The statistics kept by the board use the date of application as the baseline rather than the date of the crime.

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many payments by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have been made in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Cleveland and *(c)* Langbaurgh constituency in each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The board's jurisdiction covers England, Wales and Scotland. The number of compensation awards paid by the board in the last five years is as follows:

	Number of awards
1982-83	19,733
1983-84	21,133
1984-85	19,771
1985-86	22,534
1986-87	[1]21,925

[1] Provisional.

The information required to answer parts *(b)* and *(c)* of the question is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Hurd: The amounts spent by the Home Office on press advertising in each of the past five financial years is as follows:

	£
1982-83	696,000
1983-84	524,000

	£
1984-85	677,000
1985-86	398,000
1986-87	1,366,000

Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in national newspapers and that in the press generally: the same is true for individual titles.

Young Prisoners (Statistics)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* females and *(b)* males under the age of 18 years were in penal custody at the last date for which figures are available; and what information he has about the types of institution in which each were placed.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 28 October 1987]*: The information is given in the following table:

Estimated population aged under 18 years in prison department establishments in England and Wales on 31 August 1987: by type of establishment, type of prisoner and sex.

Number of Prisoners

Type of establishment	*Untried or convicted unsentenced*		*Sentenced*		*Non-criminal*		*Total*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Remand centres	682	5	66	—	—	—	748	5
Local prisons	133	8	97	2	—	—	230	10
Other closed prisons	—	—	21	—	—	—	21	—
Closed youth custody centres	5	—	773	22	—	—	778	22
Open youth custody centres	—	—	204	11	—	—	204	11
Senior detention centres	—	—	122	—	—	—	122	—
Junior detention centres	—	—	175	—	—	—	175	—
Total	820	13	1,458	35	—	—	2,278	48

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid (Group of Seven)

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which member of the Group of Seven leading industrial countries provided the greatest amount of aid as a percentage of gross national product in 1979; and what was the rank aid-donor order by that measure of all members of the Group of Seven in 1986.

Mr. Eggar: According to development assistance committee calculations, France provided the greatest amount of aid as a percentage of gross national product in 1979.

In 1986 the rank order was: France, Canada, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Japan, United States.

Zimbabwe National Railways

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the grants to the Government of Zimbabwe which relate to the provisions of support for the Zimbabwe national railways for the following years: 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar: British aid for the national railways of Zimbabwe has been provided under aid and trade provision arrangements and an aid loan, both agreed in 1981, and from our technical cooperation programme for Zimbabwe. Expenditure in the three years in question was as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Aid and Trade Provision Funds for Railway Electrification	7,000	—	—
Aid Loan for Rehabilitating Locomotives	—	47,000	90,000
Technical Cooperation	90,000	—	—

Job Dispersal

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to proposals for the further dispersal of Overseas Development Administration jobs to the Glasgow-East Kilbride area.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has considered representations from the local trade union sides in East Kilbride and London about further dispersal of Overseas Development Administration jobs to the Glasgow/East Kilbride area. While the location of jobs between London and East Kilbride is kept under review, my right hon. Friend has no plans for a further major dispersal programme.

Food Aid

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will obtain from the EEC Commission details of the amount of foodstuffs which have been sent from Germany to Third-world countries under the EEC food aid programme since the Chernobyl nuclear accident; and if he will further inquire what part of the total consisted of food imported to Germany from the German Democratic Republic under the inner German trade agreement.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to the answers given by my hon. Friends the Minister for Overseas Development on 26 October, at column 12; and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 29 October, at column 409.

PRIME MINISTER

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what are the implications for Britain of the contingency plan for the deployment of United States chemical weapons in Europe in time of crisis.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 24 July 1986, at column *490*. The United States contingency deployment plan does not designate any specific country as a destination for receiving binary munitions, and the United Kingdom has not been approached about possible contingency deployment to this country. If such a request were ever to be received, it would be a matter for decision by the Government of the day in the light of all the circumstances prevailing at the time. Any deployment to the United Kingdom at any time would require the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government refuse to enter into direct negotiations towards achieving a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The Prime Minister: It would be premature to open negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty until progress is made on outstanding problems, notably verification. We welcome the stage-by-stage approach adopted by the United States and the Soviet Union which aims as a first step at agreement upon effective verification measures which will make possible the ratification of the bilateral 1974 threshold test ban and 1976 peaceful nuclear explosions treaties.

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what change is envisaged in the role of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons toward the conventional forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic in the event of substantial measures of nuclear disarmament.

The Prime Minister: For as long as the security of this country and our allies continues to depend on nuclear deterrence, I envisage no significant change in the role of United Kingdom nuclear weapons.

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister at what stage Her Majesty's Government will enter the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons into the strategic arms reduction process.

The Prime Minister: The conditions that must be met before we could consider associating our independent deterrent with the arms control process are well known. They were set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at the United Nations in 1983:

> "If Soviet and US strategic arsenals were to be very substantially reduced, and if no significant changes had occurred in Soviet defensive capabilities, Britain would want to review her position and to consider how best she could contribute to arms control in the light of the reduced threat."

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to withdraw battlefield nuclear weapons from West Germany; if she has received any representations from the Federal Republic of Germany to this effect; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Under long-standing Alliance arrangements, British forces in Germany operate battlefield weapons systems capable of firing nuclear warheads supplied by the United States. I have no plans to withdraw from these arrangements, nor have I received any representations from the German Government asking me to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Colvin asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister to list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Stern asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Fearn asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

African National Congress

Mr. Galloway asked the Prime Minister what status the British Government accord to the African National Congress mission in London; and, in the light of recent events, what steps she will take to ensure its protection from terrorist attack.

The Prime Minister: The African National Congress is accorded no official status in this country. I understand that leading members of the congress have been given advice about their personal security by the police. On security matters, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 27 October, at column *204*.

South Africa

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress made in respect of the voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment on 22 April this year, at columns *560-61*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress made with regard to imposing a voluntary ban on new direct investment in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on 23 July 1987, at columns *305-7*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress made in respect of the ban on importing gold coins, iron and steel from South Africa.

The Prime Minister: With effect from 5 November 1986 the United Kingdom ban on imports of South African gold coins was modified to include gold coins whether or not consigned from South Africa and to exclude gold coins minted before 1961. On 27 September 1986 the import of certain iron and steel was banned. Subject to satisfactory evidence, imports of iron and steel under contracts concluded before 19 September 1986 are allowed to go ahead. These interpretations are consistent with decisions taken in the European Community.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress made in respect of the cessation of oil exports and exports of sensitive equipment destined for the security services in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: We continue to abide by our international commitments in South Africa, including those on oil exports and exports of sensitive equipment for the security services.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to make an official visit to the European Court of Justice.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

British Broadcasting Corporation

Q10. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received concerning Government funding for the British Broadcasting Corporation to operate a satellite television news service.

The Prime Minister: The BBC external services put forward a new proposal to establish a satellite television news service to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 6 August. Examination of the complex issues raised is not yet completed.

European Community (Copenhagen Meeting)

Q15. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Prime Minister what consultations she expects to arrange in respect of the items on the agenda of the Heads of Government of member states of the European Community to be held in Copenhagen in December.

The Prime Minister: The agenda for the December European Council is being prepared by the Foreign Affairs Council in the usual way. I continue to take opportunities to discuss the various issues with other European Community Heads of Government in the course of bilateral meetings.

Science

Q42. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister how many meetings she has chaired of committees in relation to her responsibilities for science.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose such information.

Dorset

Q48. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Prime Minister if she will visit Blandford Forum, Corfe Mullen and Wimborne Minster.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Liverpool

Q57. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Liverpool.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Storehouse Group

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission any bid by Benlox holdings for the Storehouse group.

Mr. Maude: The current offer by Benlox Holdings plc. for Storehouse plc. is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. and noble Friend will make his decision whether to refer the proposed acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the director general's advice.

Anti-Dumping and Import Legislation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what legislative provisions are used by the EEC Commission in operating its anti-dumping powers; and if he will list each of the relevant provisions in the *Official Report;*

(2) if he will give guidance to United Kingdom importers on the legislative provisions operated by the EEC Commission in applying its powers to curb imports on the basis that these are used for what are described as screwdriver production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Community's anti-dumping powers are contained in Council regulation (EEC) No. 2176/84 of 23 July 1984. This regulation was amended by regulation No. 1761/87 of 22 June 1987 to introduce new rules whereby products assembled within the European Community could in certain circumstances be subject to anti-dumping duties where assembly operations with little added value are being used to circumvent existing anti-dumping duties on imports of the complete product. Advice and guidance are given to United Kingdom companies and other interested parties by officials in the Department's unfair trade unit. Information on these provisions has also been published in *British Business*. Companies which are not dumping have nothing to fear from this legislation.

Regional Grants

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what rules of confidentiality apply to the revelation of offers of grant-aid to companies whilst their choice of location is still being negotiated.

Mr. Atkins: Details of regional grants are published in *British Business* when a payment has been made. Levels of potential support under some of the Government's schemes of assistance are publicly available. Local authorities may also indicate the nature and level of assistance they can offer to specific projects.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper title.

Mr. Butcher: Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in national newspapers and that in the press generally. Nor is it readily available for amounts spent other than centrally by my Department.

The figures which are readily available are:

	£
1982-83	1,340,523
1983-84	1,198,443
1984-85	2,810,883
1985-86	1,216,424
1986-87	986,798

It is not the practice of Her Majesty's Government to publish the sums paid to individual contractors.

Office of Fair Trading

Mr. Sackville asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to the Office of Fair Trading's cash limit or running costs for 1987-88.

Mr. Maude: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates the cash limit on class XX, vote 16 will be increased by £444,000 from £9·585 million to £10·029 million. This increase will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure. The running cost limit is increased by £416,000 from £9·065 million to £9·481 million. The additional expenditure is required in connection with the installation and development of the consumer credit licensing branch computerisation project.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Consulate, Bangkok

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the sterling charge made by Her Majesty's consulate in Bangkok for a British visa; what percentage this represents of the average weekly wage of a Thai employee, such as a chauffeur or gardener employed at Her Majesty's embassy; and how the total revenue received from the issue of visas in Bangkok in the financial year 1986-87 compares with the cost of maintaining British diplomatic and consular representation there.

Mr. Eggar: The fee charged by all British missions for single-entry visit visas for the United Kingdom is the local currency equivalent of £20. This represents approximately 90 per cent. of the average weekly wage of a Thai chauffeur or gardener employed at Her Majesty's embassy in Bangkok.

The total revenue received from the issue of visas in Bangkok in the financial year 1986-87 was £583,000. The cost of maintaining British diplomatic and consular representation there in the same year was £2 million.

British Council

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what profit the British Council's direct teaching of English earns annually, taking into account the overheads incurred in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council has 51 direct teaching operations in 32 countries. Their global operations are not always in surplus. In 1986-87, for example, there was a deficit of £0·2 million on a total turnover of £21·3 million after overseas running and investment costs and London overheads were taken into account. But for 1987-88, the council forsees a surplus of £0·3 million for re-investment in its teaching operation itself and to finance more cultural activities in the countries where the surplus is earned.

Gross National Product

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what particular or special action the Government are taking to assist the seven members of the Commonwealth who have had a negative gross national product per capita growth rate from 1973 to 1985; and whether he will call a conference of the other Commonwealth nations to see if some new joint action could be organised to try to rectify this problem.

Mrs. Chalker: We give high priority within the aid programme to Commonwealth countries, including those 12 whose per capita GNP has fallen, but taking into account the economic policies being pursued. We have no plans at present to call a special conference.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure on advertising and other forms of promotional literature for the financial years 1982-83 to 1986-87 was (all figures pounds sterling):

	FCO (Diplomatic Wing)	*FCO (ODA Wing)*
1982-83	229,711	135,506
1983-84	205,247	252,691
1984-85	149,932	234,050
1985-86	160,535	271,084
1986-87	335,754	228,347

This relates to advertising in national and local newspapers, and in specialised periodicals. No separate breakdown is available for advertising in national newspapers.

Some £162,633 of the diplomatic wing expenditure in 1986-87 related to the advertising under the Anglo/Soviet agreement for the settlement of claims, which has since been recovered from the Russian fund.

WALES

A-class Roads

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by each Welsh county, the number of miles and the cost of construction of all A-class roads completed in each year since 1974.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not readily available.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1974-75 the total public expenditure of his Department, together with the percentage increase or decrease over the preceding year in real terms.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is estimated to be as given in the table:

£ million

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Total Welsh Office Public Expenditure—Cash Prices	845	1,076	1,248	1,291	1,489	1,769	2,105	2,216	2,389	2,609	2,640	2,780	3,028
Total Welsh Office Public Expenditure—Real Terms (1985-86 Prices)	2,862	2,900	2,972	2,699	2,812	2,859	2,869	2,751	2,766	2,888	2,799	2,780	2,939
Percentage change (year on year)	—	1·33	2·48	−9·19	4·19	1·67	0·35	−4·11	0·55	4·41	−3·08	−0·68	5·72

The amounts shown at 1985-86 prices have been derived by the application of the GDP market price deflators

The series of figures shown in the table are not directly comparable year on year because over the period there have been revisions to the classification of public expenditure and in the responsibility for certain new services.

Further Education

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of pupils in each Welsh local education authority remaining in full-time education after *(a)* 16 years of age and *(b)* 17 years of age; and what these figures represent as a percentage of the total age group in each county.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The numbers of pupils and students aged 16 and 17 attending schools or colleges of further education in each local authority on a full-time basis in 1985-86, are given in the table. These numbers have also been expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 16 and 17 respectively in each authority.

	Numbers attending schools or colleges of further education		*Numbers as a percentage of total population aged*	
	16 years old	*17 years old*	*16 years old*	*17 years old*
Clwyd	3,299	2,326	50·8	36·9
Dyfed	2,633	1,910	49·7	37·5
Gwent	3,598	2,229	50·0	31·8
Gwynedd	1,778	1,120	46·8	30·3
Mid Glamorgan	4,301	2,414	50·6	29·4
Powys	1,072	617	63·1	36·3
South Glamorgan	3,049	2,048	46·2	32·0
West Glamorgan	2,836	1,882	49·8	34·2

Motorways

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by Welsh county the number of miles of motorway in each county.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the table.

Length of motorway (M4) in Wales, by county, as at 1 April 1987

	Miles
Clwyd	Nil
Dyfed	3
Gwent	25
Gwynedd	Nil
Mid Glamorgan	17
Powys	Nil
South Glamorgan	13
West Glamorgan	17

Domestic Rates

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Alyn and Deeside constituency for each year since 1979 in real terms, showing the percentage change between the years in each case.

Mr. Peter Walker: Rating information is only collected on a district basis. The figures for Alyn and Deeside DC are shown in the table:

	Average domestic rates bill (£)	*1987-88 prices*	*Percentage change*
1979-80	123	214	
1980-81	167	245	14·5
1981-82	203	271	10·7
1982-83	226	282	3·9
1983-84	226	269	−4·4
1984-85	261	298	10·6

	Average domestic rates bill (£)	*1987-88 prices*	*Percentage change*
1985-86	284	306	2·6
1986-87	315	329	7·7
1987-88	329	329	−0·1

School Rolls

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of pupils on rolls in each of *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* high schools in the Alyn and Deeside constituency.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of full-time and part-time pupils on roll at January 1987 in maintained schools identified as being in the Alyn and Deeside constituency was:

	Number
In primary schools	6,491
In secondary schools	5,245

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Schizophrenic Psychosis

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Wales what research projects his Department has funded to test the effectiveness of community care for people suffering from schizophrenic psychosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 30 October 1987]*: The Department of Health and Social Security's directly managed research covers Wales and I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Conductive Education

12. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has now decided to meet the grant application of the Foundation for Conductive Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I am pleased to inform the hon. Member that my right hon. Friend announced on 14 Octover that he had agreed to provide grant assistance of £326,000 to enable Birmingham university to carry out a research evaluation of the conductive education product being established in Birmingham by the Foundation for Conductive Education.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

16. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of those representations he has received in relation to his proposals for the future arrangements for determining teachers' pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

49. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of those representations he has received in relation to his proposals for the future arrangements for determining teachers' pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have not yet received any detailed submissions on the proposals set out in the Green Paper which I laid before Parliament on 27 October.

64. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the work of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on 27 October at columns 220-21.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Government intend releasing information on teachers' pay and conditions of service to the European Trade Union Committee on Education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The publication entitled "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987" sets out provisions covering the pay and conditions of service of teachers in England and Wales. The Green Paper "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: A Consultative Document" sets out proposals for future arrangements for the pay and conditions of school teachers in England and Wales. Both these documents cost £4·50 and can be purchased through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Mature Students

17. **Mr. Harry Barnes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to provide additional places in higher education for mature students; and if he will make a statement.

34. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to provide additional places in higher education for mature students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's plans, as published in the higher education White Paper, envisage a further substantial increase in the recruitment of mature students to higher education. In the case of full-time students this increase is expected to be about 18 per cent. over the decade to 1995. As a result of additional funding announced last year the number of registered undergraduates at the Open University will rise to approximately 73,000 in 1990, an increase of some 5,500 compared with 1985. The Government are currently reviewing demand in the light of the latest figures.

School Governing Bodies

18. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has had discussions with church leaders about the role of church appointees on school governing bodies.

Mr. Dunn: Ministers and officials regularly talk to representatives of the churches on a range of issues concerning schools, including the role of governing bodies.

Nursery Education

19. **Mrs. Mahon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to extend the provision of pre-five education; and if he will make a statement.

24. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of nursery school places.

65. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to encourage greater provision for nursery school education.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg).

23. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the current national shortage of trained nursery school teachers; and what action he has taken to meet current demands.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not possible to estimate precisely to what extent there is a shortage of trained teachers for the early years, ages three to eight, which includes teachers in nursery schools. But information available to my Department suggests that some authorities, particularly in London, are experiencing local difficulties often exacerbated by external factors such as housing costs. To meet present and immediate future demands, the target allocation of initial teacher training places for the primary sector has been expanded by nearly 20 per cent. from 1986 to 1989. Within their allocations, institutions have been asked to give greater emphasis to early years training. This measure, together with local authorities' own recruitment campaigns, should ensure a sufficient supply of teachers for the early years.

51. **Mr. McCartney** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in relation to pre-five education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in relation to pre-five education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: On behalf of my right hon. Friend I had a most useful discussion on 9 September with representatives of the British Association for Early Childhood Education on a range of areas of concern to the association relevant to under-fives education. The association has since forwarded to my right hon. Friend a memorandum which is currently being studied.

English Teaching

20. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the standards of English teaching in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: English will be one of the core subjects in the national curriculum. We intend to establish a working group to advise on attainment targets and programmes of study for pupils. It will draw upon the conclusions of the Kingman committee which my right hon. Friend set up to recommend what teachers and pupils should know specifically about the workings of the English language. We are also providing education support grants to develop oral work in schools; and we are funding the school curriculum development committee's national projects to improve pupils' writing and oral skills.

Teachers (Training)

21. **Mr. Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to expand the provision of in-service training for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

28. **Mr. McAvoy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to expand the provision of in-service training for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A new local education authority training grant scheme was introduced with effect from 1 April this year to support in-service training. Under this scheme LEAs in England are planning to spend £265 million in 1987-88 compared with £225 million in 1986-87 under the previous arrangements for funding LEAs' in-service training. For 1988-89 the Government are increasing the total of expenditure on which specific grant is available under the scheme to £207 million, compared to £200 million this year.

Non-teaching Staff

22. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number per 1,000 population in each of the education authorities within the Greater Manchester area of non-teaching staff employed.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number in June 1987 of non-teaching staff employed on education, expressed per 1,000 of population in each of the authorities requested was as follows:

	Number
Bolton	15·6
Bury	13·3
Manchester	24·8
Oldham	13·3
Rochdale	15·4
Salford	15·4
Stockport	11·4
Tameside	13·5
Trafford	10·9
Wigan	13·6

Education Reform

25. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much interest has been shown by secondary schools concerning the suggestion that they will be able to opt out of local government control.

42. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary schools have shown an interest in wanting to opt out of local government control.

Mr. Dunn: A significant number of requests for further information about the grant-maintained schools policy has been received within the Department. It is not possible at present to deduce how many secondary schools might be seriously interested in opting out.

27. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding his consultative document on the national curriculum.

50. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has received to his consultative document on the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's consultative document on the national curriculum was published on 24 July, with a formal closing date for comments of 30 September. So far we have received over 7,000 responses, from national and regional organisations, individual members of the public, and others.

29. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates his Department has made as to the number of additional civil servants that will be required to help administer schools that opt for direct funding from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No more than a modest addition to the Department's staffing should be required to administer the grant arrangements for schools which opt out of local authority control. Funding of the former direct grant schools, for example, was administered by a team of eight officials.

31. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the impact of his proposals on opting out of local education authorities capacity to reorganise education.

Mr. Dunn: Grant-maintained status will not be a refuge for weak or failing schools which LEAs wish to close as part of a sensible strategy for rationalising their provision. Where an application for grant-maintained status coincides with an LEA's proposals involving the applicant school, my right hon. Friend will take the respective merits of both sets of proposals into account before reaching his decision.

38. **Ms. Armstrong** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library those representations he has received in relation to his consultative proposals to devolve financial management to schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

45. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will take to ensure that schools that have indicated a wish to opt out of local authority control will not be placed at a disadvantage while the legislation is going through Parliament.

62. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that those schools which have indicated an interest to opt out of local government control will not be at a disadvantage pending the Education Bill reaching the statute book.

Mr. Dunn: Schools will not be able to apply for grant-maintained status until the legislation has reached the statute book. Any proposals made by local authorities in the meantime in respect of particular schools will be judged by my right hon. Friend on their merits. Local authorities will remain under a duty adequately to maintain all those schools for which they have responsibility.

46. **Mr. Win Griffiths** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will place in the Library a copy of those representations he has received in relation to his consultative paper, "Admission of Pupils to Maintained Schools", and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

48. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decisions have been made on the Essex education authority's proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education in Epping Forest.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has approved Essex education authority's proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education in Epping Forest.

53. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he now has a definite date for the publication of the Education Bill.

57. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he can now give the publication date of the Education Bill.

63. **Mr. Jack** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the new Education Bill to be published.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government hope to publish an Education Bill within the next few weeks.

68. **Mr. Nelson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the time allowed for consultation on the five papers on reform of the education system published in July and September of this year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have received over 14,000 responses to the various consultation documents issued in recent months. Some of these have commented on the time allowed, but my right hon. Friend has made it clear that the process of consultation will continue during the passage of Education Bill and beyond.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he expects to publish a White Paper on his plans for educational change consequent on receipt of replies to his consultative papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The responses to our consultation papers will inform the preparation of legislation which we hope to introduce within the next few weeks.

Research Councils

26. **Mr. Dunnachie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the funding of research councils; and if he will make a statement.

32. **Mr. McLeish** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the funding of research councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Following the publication on 20 July 1987 of the ABRC discussion document "A Strategy for the Science Base" and the publication on 23 July 1987 of the ABRC's advice "Science and Public Expenditure 1987" my right hon. Friend and I have received 155 representations about the funding of research councils.

Irish Nationals

30. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest figures available for the cost to maintain public funds of nationals of the Irish Republic studying at British educational institutions.

Mr. Jackson: Information is only available to allow a calculation to be made in respect of full-time and sandwich students from the Irish Republic attending United Kingdom universities, polytechnics and colleges. Such students, along with students from other EC member states, are charged fees at the home rate, the cost of implied subsidy for the 1,000 students from the Irish Republic in 1985-86 being estimated at £3·5 million.

In addition, since 1986-87 full-time and sandwich students from EC member states on first degree and diploma courses are eligible for reimbursement of the tuition fee otherwise payable if they meet broadly similar residence requirements to those which United Kingdom students on the same courses have to satisfy to have tuition fees paid as part of their mandatory award. In 1986-87 680 Irish students were reimbursed fees at a total cost of £390,000.

Irish students are also eligible for support under two Government awards schemes operated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council, respectively. In 1986-87 these two schemes together supported 15 students at a total cost, including maintenance, of £80,000.

HMI (Report)

33. **Mr. Morley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a copy of any representations he has received on Her Majesty's inspectors' 1987 report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

Student Grants

35. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to complete his review of student financial support; and if he will make a statement.

37. **Mr. Worthington** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to complete his review of student financial support; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report of the review of student support; and what consultations will be held on its proposals.

Mr. Jackson: The Government hope to publish proposals for consideration in the first half of 1988.

40. **Mr. Hinchliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to protect the real value of student grants after the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to protect the real value of student grants after the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Decisions on the level of student grants in future years have not yet been taken.

City Technical Colleges

36. **Miss Mowlam** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will indicate what city technology colleges have so far received financial support and from which organisations.

47. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will indicate what city technology colleges have so far received financial support and from what organisations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Financial support has been pledged by Hanson Trust for the city technology college, Kingshurst; by Dixons Group plc for a South Yorkshire CTC; by Mr. Harry Djanogly, for the Nottingham CTC; and by the Philip and Pauline Harris Trust for a Wandsworth CTC. Support from other sources has been promised or is being negotiated for CTCs in other locations. The trustees for the Kingshurst and Nottingham CTCs have begun to receive grant from the Department to cover the transitional running costs of these projects.

66. **Mr. Battle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in relation to the proposed city technology colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Textbooks

39. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the provision of textbooks in maintained secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buckley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the provision of textbooks in maintained secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Responses to the Government's consultation exercises have included comments on certain aspects of textbook provision in secondary schools. The provision of books was also discussed when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science met the Educational Publishers Council on 28 October.

Teachers (Industrial Action)

43. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current level of industrial action by teachers in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: No action is taking place on a national basis. We are aware of a few local disputes which have involved some industrial action.

Universities (Funding)

44. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee to discuss the future funding of universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend frequently discusses matters of university funding with the chairman of the University Grants Committee in the course of normal business, most recently on 27 October.

Borough of Barnet

54. **Mr. John Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many pupils from outside the London borough of Barnet have opted to be educated within that borough.

Mr. Dunn: Returns to my Department show that in January 1987 there were 3,980 pupils aged 5 years or more belonging to other authorities being educated in schools maintained by the London borough of Barnet. Over half of these came from the London boroughs of Brent and Haringey.

Teachers (Shortage Subjects)

55. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what latest figures he has for the recruitment of teachers in shortage subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Firm recruitment figures for entry to initial teacher training are not yet to hand but applications for courses in 1987 are up 15 per cent. overall and in mathematics, physics and craft design and technology they have increased by 39, 60 and 60 per cent. respectively.

The high rate of applications, which has been encouragingly consistent throughout 1987, suggests that the package of measures taken by the Government to improve supply is showing signs of success. A further statement will be made as soon as more up-to-date figures are available.

Assisted Places Scheme

56. **Mr. Riddick** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied with the current take-up of places in the assisted places scheme; and if he has any plans to expand the scheme.

Mr. Dunn: Yes. In the academic year 1986-87 nearly 98 per cent. of places available for entry to the assisted places scheme at ages 11, 12 or 13 were filled.

This Government have committed themselves to an eventual target of 35,000 assisted places in England and Wales. Independent secondary schools in England have been invited to say whether they would wish to join the scheme at some future date or to take up additional places if they are already participants. New schools wishing to join the scheme will be expected to satisfy the same criteria as existing participants.

Higher Education

58. **Mr. Darling** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the funding of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Education Budgets

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the question of education budgets of authorities in the northern region.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has received no recent representations on overall education budgets of local authorities in the northern region. There has been some correspondence on particular aspects of education finance and my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State have discussed capital expenditure allocations this year with representatives of Bradford, Calderdale and Rotherham local education authorities.

Inner London Education Authority

61. **Mr. Bowis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department takes to monitor examination results in the schools of the Inner London education authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department's current source of information on the examination achievements of pupils in English schools is the annual school leavers survey which includes, for a 10 per cent. sample of pupils, details of their CSE and GCE achievements.

Information from this survey is published in the Department's statistical bulletins and, more extensively, in "Statistics of Education Volume 2 (School Leavers CSE and GCE)", copies of which are available in the Library.

Grammar Schools

67. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will be issuing guidance to local education authorities following Mr. Justice McCullough's ruling of 14 October 1987 that the provision of fewer grammar school places for girls than boys is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Mr. Dunn: It is for individual local education authorities in the first instance to consider the implications of this ruling for their own school provision.

Core Curriculum

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how soon the implementation of the core curriculum will apply in the private educational sector.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government do not believe that it would be right to impose the national curriculum on independent schools, which are outside the national system of maintained education, but they believe that many will wish to adopt it; my right hon. Friend will urge them to do so. He will also take his national curriculum policies into account in considering new applications for registration, and Her Majesty's Inspector's reports on existing independent schools.

City technology colleges will be independent schools, but my right hon. Friend intends to make it a condition of grant that they keep to the substance of the national curriculum, within their own distinctive ethos.

Polytechnics (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the total bids for capital spending in polytechnics submitted by local education authorities in England and Wales for the years 1984-85, 1985-86, 1987-89 and 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: Bids are not submitted in England in a form that would enable this information to be given. Local education authority capital spending in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Parents' Meetings

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will obtain from local education authorities and publish the number of annual parents' meetings held in maintained schools in England and Wales in accordance with section 31 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, the number of meetings attended by the required number of parents, and the number of meetings passing resolutions in respect of sub-paragraph 4*(b)* of that section.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Celtic Studies

Mrs. Margaret Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive a final report from the University Grants Committee on its current review of the teaching and research in Celtic studies at Scottish universities.

Mr. Jackson: The University Grants Committee expects to complete its review within the current academic year. It is for the committee itself to determine the distribution of resources to individual universities.

Sign Language Interpreters

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any proposals for the provision of professional training for sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, leading to a professional qualification as a basis for a national network of interpreters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no such proposals. He would see any developments of this kind as the outcome of collaboration between employers and providers of training in the local authority and voluntary sectors.

GCSE

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much Government grant has been paid to each general certificate of secondary education examination board in order to develop the new exam; and what percentage of the exam fees being charged by each board is to cover development costs.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have provided substantial resources to ensure the successful implementation of the new GCSE examination including the following assistance to the GCSE examining groups in the financial years 1984-85 to 1987-88, mainly to help provide training for teachers and examiners.

	£
London and East Anglian Group	213,644
Midland Examining Group	244,234
Northern Examining Association	251,912
Southern Examining Group	227,024
Welsh Joint Education Committee	191,203

Information about costs covered by GCSE examination fees is not held centrally. The examining groups are responsible for setting the fees, taking into account the various costs incurred by them including the costs of developing syllabuses.

Conductive Education

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the meeting with representatives of Rapid Action for Conductive Education on 29 October.

Mr. Dunn: The meeting with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and representatives of the Rapid Action for Conductive Education (RACE) provided a useful opportunity for me to hear more about conductive education. The representatives of RACE set out certain proposals for consideration. I explained that the Department is providing £326,000 to fund the evaluation project by Birmingham university and I expressed my readiness to have further meetings with RACE.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mrs. Rumbold: The figures for advertising in national newspapers are as follows:

	£
1982-83	5,988
1983-84	9,570
1984-85	18,544
1985-86	14,804
1986-87	532,000

The breakdown by individual newspaper is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Schools (Control)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available to the general public in booklet form details of his proposals to enable schools to apply to be released from local authority control and management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Department will be publishing in various forms information for parents, governors and others on the policies for schools which will form part of the forthcoming legislation.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for expenditure on education and science from 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The following are the Government's plans.

Public spending on education and science

1. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his statement today, provision for education and science in 1988-89 will be £17,962 million. This total is £1,303 million or 7·8 per cent. higher than provision for 1987-88.

2. Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary legislation, additional resources are being provided to enable the Government to implement their proposals for education reform. About £65 million over three years will be provided to fund work in support of the Government's proposals for a national curriculum, particularly that of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Nine million pounds is being made available in 1988-89 to enable polytechnics and colleges to assume responsibility for managing their own affairs. In higher education the resources available should be sufficient to provide for at least the numbers of students projected in the Government's White Paper "Meeting the Challenge" (Cmnd. 114)—projection Q. In addition, I am making provision for a substantial programme for the improvement of school buildings. Further details of my plans are as follows.

Buildings and equipment for schools and colleges

3. Gross provision for capital spending on schools and colleges has been increased by £100 million a year—or 22 per cent. — over the survey period. Within this provision I shall be allocating about £50 million in 1988-89 specifically for a programme of school improvements to help LEAs tackle the accumulated deficiencies identified in my Department's survey of school buildings and to allow voluntary school governors to continue the programme of replacement and improvement begun last year. This programme will be in addition to allocations for new school places in areas of growing school population and for the implementation of approved projects to remove surplus places. There will also be a small increase in allocations for further and higher education. LEAs already have plans for substantial expenditure from existing provision on projects which contribute to the improvement of the school building stock.

4. The additions announced today will mean that LEAs and voluntary bodies should be able to spend a total of more than £750 million over the next three years on projects to improve school buildings; and authorities will no doubt make use of the flexibilities open to them—for example, through the use of capital receipts—to increase spending on improvements still further where they consider it appropriate to do so. Provision for local authority current expenditure on repairs and maintenance is also being increased and in 1988-89 will be about £120 million or some 40 per cent. higher than spending in 1985-86.

5. Finally I am taking immediate steps to deal with the most serious problems. I am issuing special capital allocations totalling £9·4 million to provide for small school improvement projects and equipment purchases for schools and colleges which can be completed in the current financial year. The Government will also be considering the case for further special capital allocations to deal with storm damage to educational buildings.

Local authority current expenditure

6. The total provided for local authority current spending on education in 1988-89 in the Government's plans is £13,870 million a cash increase of 7·9 per cent. over the 1987-88 plans as set out in Cm. 56. It represents the likely level of spending by local education authorities collectively, on the basis that they constrain their costs within the level of cost increases in the economy as a whole. In addition, the education service will receive income from the MSC in respect of TVEI and work-related NAFE of some £185 million in 1988-89.

7. In the Government's view, there are areas of the service where authorities need not spend as much as provided for in the plans. The total used for determining the education component of the grant-related expenditure (GRE) has therefore been set at £615 million lower than the total for expenditure provision.

8. The Government's plans for local authority current spending on education provide for it to be held broadly constant in real terms in 1989-90 and 1990-91. Within the totals planned for local authority expenditure as a whole in both years the Government will review next year the distribution of provision between services, including education, in the light of local authorities' budgets, Government priorities and other factors. Appropriate transfers will be made from 1989-90 onwards for the polytechnics and colleges and for grant-maintained schools which will be funded from vote expenditure.

Schools

9. The plans assume that local authorities collectively will not increase teacher numbers as long as pupil numbers continue to fall. They allow for some further fall in the overall pupil: teacher ratio, which is currently at its lowest level ever of 17.3:1.

10. In addition to the provision for improving the conditions of school buildings, the plans allow for real increases in spending per pupil on books and equipment. As last year, the plans allow in full for the implications of equipping schools for the new GCSE courses, and an additional sum has been provided for secondary school libraries. As a step towards securing greater efficiency in the service, the Government expect local authorities to continue to rationalise school provision and remove surplus accommodation, and to cut the net costs of school meals provision.

Non-advanced further education

11. The overall student: staff ratio (SSR) for NAFE tightened a little in 1986 from 8.7:1 to 8.8:1, about 1 per cent. In reaching a view on the number of lecturers, I have taken into account the report of the joint efficiency study with local authority representatives which concluded that

there should be a national target SSR for NAFE of 10.2:1 by 1991-92. The plans assume a further tightening in the SSR to 9.2:1 in 1988-89 as authorities progress towards that target. The plans will also enable LEAs to improve levels of provision per student across the full range of non-teaching costs.

Advanced further education

12. Following consultation with the local authority associations, I intend to determine the AFE quantum in 1988-89 at £781 million. This represents an increase of £64·5 million or 9 per cent. over the 1987-88 quantum. I have proposed that up to £25 million should be distributed selectively in support of selected initiatives of high priority. The plans assume that polytechnics and other institutions will continue to increase efficiency and make full use of available capacity.

13. The National Advisory Body is considering how the basic quantum should be distributed between authorities and how up to £25 million might be allocated selectively. I shall decide on the allocation of both elements later in the year in the light of the NAB's advice.

Specific grants

14. Within the total of £13,870 million, education expenditure supported by specific grants is expected to amount to some £500 million in 1988-89. This figure includes £207 million which I have already announced will be supported under the in-service training grants scheme; a proposed £115·5 million of expenditure to be assisted by education support grants; section 11 grants for Commonwealth immigrants; and the urban programme.

VOTE EXPENDITURE

Universities

15. Last year I agreed with the University Grants Committee and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals a programme of improvements in the management of universities including selective funding, the rationalisation of small departments, better financial management and improved standards of teaching. I made it clear that the future funding of the universities would depend significantly upon the implementation of that programme.

16. Good progress has since been made. The 1987 academic pay settlement is another important development. The £56 million extra grant for 1988-89 already announced to help universities to meet the cost of that settlement will be released as soon as the Government are satisfied that the universities have sufficiently improved their arrangements for staff appraisal, probation and promotion. As I have already made clear, the Government will not provide funds for any further academic pay increase in 1988.

17. The Government have decided to provide the universities with an additional £61 million in 1988-89 and similar sums in later years. I shall be asking the University Grants Committee to allocate some £155 million of these extra funds to a targeted programme of restructuring including additional finance for early retirements, some "new blood" appointments, and the rationalisation of provision for a number of disciplines. In each case, I shall expect the UGC to authorise payments only where the expenditure is in accordance with the approved academic plans of the institutions concerned.

18. In 1988-89 the Open University will receive an extra £1·55 million and the Computer Board an extra £2 million.

19. Provision is also being made in 1988-89 and in later years for the extra cost to universities of the 1987 clinical academic pay settlement, and for an initiative in manufacturing systems engineering.

Science

20. The science budget for 1988-89 will be £696 million, an increase of £47 million over the plans published in Cm. 56. The planning figure for each of the following two years is now £729 million, providing for an 11 per cent. cash increase compared with the science budget this year. Within these figures special provision is being made for research in Antarctica, including a new research ship. There should also be scope for a worthwhile start in 1988-89 on the establishment of inter-disciplinary research centres, as recommended by the ABRC and to which I attach great importance. The Government will be giving further consideration in the next few months to policies for the strategic reshaping of the science base, taking account of restructuring within the universities, the ABRC's strategy advice and of our consultations on the board's recommendations. The totals I have announced for the science budget in 1988-89 and 1989-90 include provision for the MRC's special programme of research on AIDS; additional provision for this in later years will depend on the agreed evaluation of the programme but would not have to be found within the science budget baseline.

Voluntary Colleges

21. Following consultations with the Voluntary Sector Consultative Council I have determined the quantum of AFE expenditure at voluntary colleges grant-aided solely by my Department at £56·7 million. This recognises the special difficulties which these colleges have faced. It is expected to allow for some increases in student numbers; to contribute towards the maintenance of quality; and to enable the colleges to participate in selected initiatives of high priority.

Student Awards

22. Provision for student awards allows for a small increase in the number of mandatory award-holders. Details of the new rates of award and revised contribution scales will be announced later. Provision is also made for the basic tuition fee for courses eligible for mandatory awards to increase from £556 to £578. The review, chaired by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), of all aspects of financial support for students studying at first degree or equivalent level will complete its work next year, when a consultation document on future arrangements for student finance will be published.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The expenditure on press advertising over the past five years has been:

	£
1982-83	2,562
1983-84	27,208
1984-85	26,225
1985-86	28,569
1986-87	53,982

Prices include production costs and VAT.

Note:

(1) Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in national newspapers and that in the press generally.

(2) Information about expenditure in individual newspapers is commercially confidential and cannot be given in the form requested.

Management Information

Sir John Farr asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now able to make available the 1987 returns of his top management information systems.

Mr. MacGregor: A copy of the 1987 MINIM returns which cover the objectives and resources used by the Ministry's programmes, has been placed today in the Library of the House.

Storm Damage

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the provision of financial assistance to those farmers, horticulturists, owners of private woodlands and others who suffered loss and damage to their property as a consequence of the hurricane in the early hours of 16 October which is uninsurable and whose costs are not being met by local authority funds.

Mr. MacGregor [*holding answer, 2 November 1987*]: I have every sympathy with those who have suffered as a result of the storm but see no reason to depart from the longstanding position that the Government do not pay compensation for the effects of bad weather, particularly where risks are insurable. I am, however, consulting the European Commission about the possibility of increasing the rates of some grants under the agriculture improvement scheme to help with work needed on shelterbelts, hedges and traditional walls. I am also assessing the losses suffered by fruit farmers in consultation with the NFU and others. I will consider the position when this assessment is complete.

As regards woodlands, the Forestry Commission has set up a forest wind blow action committee which will, amongst other things, assess the scale and nature of the damage, provide a service to promote the orderly marketing of fallen timber and issue both general and individual advice to owners of woodlands through its wind blow task force at Alice Holt, near Farnham, in Surrey. Financial help is available from the Countryside Commission for replanting small areas of woodland under arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 21 October. For the restocking of larger areas the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme provide assistance.

When we have made a considered assessment of the damage and of the work that has to be done, I will decide whether further financial assistance is needed.

CORRIGENDUM

Official Report, 29 June 1987:

The following question and answer should have been printed at c. *19*:

Benefits

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Leeds, West constituency are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit, *(c)* housing benefit, *(d)* sickness benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance and *(f)* maternity benefit and how many people have received single payments in the current financial year.

Mr. Scott: The Leeds, West constituency is covered by two of the Department's local offices at Leeds, West and Leeds, North West, but their boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the number of people receiving benefit from those offices on the latest date for which information is available:

	At 5 May 1987	*At 2 June 1987*
Supplementary Benefit	[1]727,739	—
Invalidity and Sickness Benefit	—	5,549
Maternity Benefit	—	379

[1] Source 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

In the period from 8 April 1987 to 2 June 1987 there have been 22,209 awards of single payments.

I regret that information about mobility allowance is not available and that the only available information on housing benefit relates to the entire Leeds city council area, and cannot be disaggregated by constituency.

DEFENCE

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the recent refit of the Royal Yacht Britannia; what proportion of the expenditure was met from public funds; and under what vote the expenditure from public funds was incurred.

Mr. Sainsbury: Subject to final negotiation, the cost of the current refit of HMY Britannia, due to complete today, will be in the order of £19 million. The cost will be wholly met from the Defence vote.

Zimbabwe and Mozambique Forces (Training)

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the percentage change for each year in the number of *(a)* Zimbabwe and *(b)* Mozambique armed forces trained in the United Kingdom since 1980, showing the 1980 figure as 100.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 28 October 1987, at column *241*.

Armed Forces Houses (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the last date of occupation by members of the armed forces of each of the 16 houses owned by his Department at Mansfield place, Moorside, Newcastle upon Tyne; and if he will give the date on which a written offer of sale was made to Newcastle upon Tyne city council.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence occupied 15 houses at Douglas terrace and Mansfield place, Moorside, on a ground lease from the Newcastle upon Tyne city council. these properties were formally offered to the council for sale on 1 October 1987.

The last date of occupation of each of the premises is as follows:

Numbers	*Date*
Douglas Terrace	
1	15 May 1987
3	28 July 1987
5	7 November 1986
7	29 June 1987
9	17 March 1987
Mansfield Place	
10	21 November 1986
12	2 June 1987
14	14 March 1987
16	30 July 1987
18	18 February 1987
20	4 June 1987
22	30 June 1987
24	12 March 1987
26	22 January 1987
28	2 December 1986

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Freeman: The total amount spent on national press advertising in each of the past five financial years is as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	3·5
1983-84	4·5
1984-85	5·65
1985-86	6·8
1986-87	6·7

It is not the Government's policy to disclose the sums paid to individual organisations.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for Transport how many collisions have occurred on the M1 in areas affected by roadworks during each of the last five years for which records are available; how many drivers and how many passengers have as a result been killed and injured, respectively; and how many and what percentage of such injuries and deaths were at or near areas where contraflow traffic systems were in operation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information readily available is as follows:

Number of injury accidents and casualties on the M1 at roadworks: 1982 to 1986

Year	*Accidents*	*Casualties*					
		Drivers/Riders			*Passengers*		
		Killed	*Injured*	*Total*	*Killed*	*Injured*	*Total*
1982	179	5	139	144	2	137	139
1983	148	3	119	122	5	160	165
1984	129	4	98	102	6	119	125
1985	82	3	60	63	4	87	91
1986	146	0	99	99	0	131	131
TOTAL	684	15	515	530	17	630	647

The accident report form records only whether roadworks "were present" where the accident occurred. Accidents occurring near to roadworks (eg in tailbacks) would not be recorded as "roadworks present".

The number of casualties at or near contraflow systems is not available due to disproportionate cost. The presence of contraflow systems is not recorded on the accident report form STATS19. The regional office of the regions through which the M1 passes were unable to supply directly the locations and times that contraflow systems were in operation on the M1 over the last five years. It would be costly, if possible, to obtain this information from the agent authorities.

Public Transport (Operators' Mileage)

Mr. Morley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total of public transport operators' route mileage in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: Data for railways are published in table 3.9 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain: 1976-1986", copies of which are available in the Library. Information is not available on route mileage of road transport but my Department is aware that local bus mileage increased by 12 per cent. between November 1986 and November 1987.

Shipping Regulations

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Transport what mechanism is available for shipowners whereby certain minor exceptions to the new regulations, the Merchant Shipping (Closing and Opening in Hulls and Watertight Bulkheads) Regulations 1987, could be given, taking into account the type of operation, its geographical area of employment and the quality of its on-board training.

Mr. David Mitchell: Applications for exemption from any of these particular regulations should be made in writing directly to the chief surveyor at the nearest marine office of the Department of Transport. Such applications should always include a reasoned case for seeking exemption.

Petrol Tankers (Braking Systems)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider making anti-lock braking systems mandatory for petrol tanker road vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are working to get the relevant European Community directives amended so that we can require anti-lock braking systems on all new heavy vehicles with trailers. That will include articulated petrol tanker vehicles.

M6-M61 Junction

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take urgent steps to seek to improve motorway vehicle flow in the vicinity of the M6/M61 junction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Vehicle flow at this point can only be improved by increasing the capacity of the junction. A scheme to deal with this problem and to widen and improve the M6 between this junction and junction 32 (Broughton) was added to the national trunk road programme by "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" (Cm. 125). Consultant engineers have been appointed and this scheme will be progressed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will urgently consider installing additional motorway hazard warning lights in the vicinity of the M6/M61 junction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. We are considering the installation of signals on the sign gantries on the approaches to the junction.

Stimulants

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been conducted by his Department into the use of stimulants and their affect on the performance of drivers; and if he will seek to ban the sale of stimulants at motorway service stations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Limited research suggests that fewer than 1 per cent. of road accidents are attributable to drugs or medicines. Further work is needed. The transport and road research laboratory is carrying out further studies in this field. I have no plans to ban the sale of stimulants at motorway service areas. The sale of alcohol is banned.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secreatary of State for Transport how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Channon: Expenditure on press advertising[1] by my Department in each of the past five years was as follows:

	£
1982-83	816,000
1983-84	334,000
1984-85	475,788
1985-86	1,034,441
1986-87	4,367,555

[1] Including production costs and VAT.

The information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in national newspapers and that in the press generally.

It is not the policy of Her Majesty's Government to publicise the sums paid to individual organisations.

Southampton and Bristol (Road Links)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve existing road links between Southampton and Bristol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Our comprehensive programme of schemes for the improvement of the A36/A46 trunk road between Southampton and Bristol is set out in the White Paper "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" published in April this year. (Cm. 125-II).

ENVIRONMENT

Docklands

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the progress of the London Docklands development corporation in developing London's docklands.

Mr. Trippier: Since its creation in 1981 the London Docklands development corporation has achieved notable success in securing the regeneration of its 2,065 hectare area. In the six years to 31 March 1987, the corporation reclaimed 370 hectares of land for new purposes and carried out extensive infrastructure works throughout its area. In the same period private sector development commitments of over £2·2 billion were secured, giving a gearing ratio of private investment to public capital investment of 9:1.

About 660 companies, many of them new enterprises, have moved into docklands premises. About 10 million sq ft of non-residential floor space is being developed or is already completed; an estimated 10,000 jobs had been attracted to the area by 1986; and about 12,000 new homes had been completed or were under construction. In addition, the more recent commitments to build the Canary wharf scheme represent a major new success for the corporation.

The LDDC has part funded the docklands light railway which opened earlier this year and which is being extended westwards to Bank. It is now funding a major extension of the railway eastwards into the Royal docks area, using the increase in the value of their disposable land as the source of finance. Major road schemes have been constructed and further ones are planned.

The growing momentum of development continues. This is being complemented by initiatives which aim to improve community facilities or help local residents take advantage of the new opportunities available to them. For example the Corporation is funding the provision of community centres and is sponsoring training initiatives to help the unemployed.

Loft Insulation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of *(a)* owner-occupied homes, *(b)* private rented homes and *(c)* local authority rented homes have not been brought up to the standard of loft insulation recommended by his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following are estimates from a sample survey conducted by Audits of Great Britain Ltd.

Loft insulation, England: December 1986
Percentage of households

	Owner occupiers	*Council tenants*	[1]*Other tenures*
Some insulation	92	89	65
Four inches or more of insulation	50	34	32

[1] Private tenants, housing association tenants, housing provided with job, etc.

Note: Percentages are of those households with access to loft spaces.

There is no general recommendation on loft insulation. Homes insulation scheme grants provide assistance where lofts are not already insulated to a depth of 30 mm or more.

Hyde Park (Stables)

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to permit the construction of stables in Hyde park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am currently considering a proposal by the Rotten Row tercentenary committee to be allowed to build a civilian riding school near the White Horse Gate in Hyde Park. I will write to my hon. Friend when I have reached a decision on the policy implications for the management of the park.

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total number of people employed by authorities to which the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 applied in their direct labour organisations at the time at which that Act became law; how many are now so employed; and how many people are currently employed by contractors contracted by those authorities under the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act to do work won through tendering under the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act;

(2) if he will list by local authority the number of full-time equivalent jobs that have been lost in each local authority subject to the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, and if he will give a total figure for each financial year since the Act became law;

(3) how many people have been made redundant by authorities subject to the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980; and if he will give this figure both as a total since the Act became law and as a figure for each financial year since that time.

Mr. Chope: In October 1980 local authorities and new towns in Great Britain are estimated to have directly employed 156,606 people on construction and maintenance work covered by part III of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. By October 1986 the number had fallen to 116,806. It is not possible to estimate the extent to which the change resulted from the operation of the Act.

The other information requested is not available.

Local Labour Clauses

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what legal advice his Department has received from outside Her Majesty's Government on the implications of EC public works directive 71/305/EEC and public contracts directive 77/602/EEC for local labour clauses; if he will place a copy of this advice in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is not normal Government practice to publish details or sources of legal advice offered to Ministers. Nevertheless, I am advised that EC public works and supplies directives set out the criteria on which the contracting authority shall base the award of contracts. These criteria do not include the area of residence of the work force, and any such criteria would constitute an obstacle to equality of treatment of contractors tendering from other parts of the Community.

Easington District Council

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by what percentage the housing investment programme for Easington district council has been reduced since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest estimate of housing capital investment for 1987-88 by Easington district council is 94 per cent. in cash terms of the authority's 1979-80 expenditure.

Peterlee

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total investment in industrial development in the new town of Peterlee during the period 1970 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: This information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Sewerage

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of significant sewer collapses in 1985-86 for each water authority; whether this represents an increase or a decrease over the previous year for each authority; and if he will indicate the difference between the two figures for each authority as a percentage for the total figure for each authority for the previous year.

Mr. Moynihan: The numbers I can give the hon. Member relate to sewer failures from all causes, not only from collapses. These numbers can change considerably from year to year for any one authority, and may in part be due to changes in the extent and quality of reporting.

The number of significant sewer failures for each regional water authority in 1985-86, and the percentage change from 1984-85 are:

	Number	*per cent.*
Anglian	286	+4
Northumbrian	232	+43
North West	1,136	+14
Severn Trent	423	−12
Southern	515	+101
South West	220	−4
Thames	649	+18
Wessex	285	−19
Yorkshire	1,340	−1

Nature Conservation

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current position as regards his Department's circular "Nature Conservation and Planning".

Mr. Moynihan: Consultations with interested bodies and other Departments have taken longer than expected. The circular is however now in the final stages of preparation, and I expect to issue it soon.

Sport (Schools)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what liaison there is between his Department, local educational authorities and the Sports Council over the promotion of team sport in schools; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what inquiries are currently being undertaken by his Department concerning the promotion of sports in school.

Mr. Moynihan: In November 1986 the Department of the Environment and the Department of Education and Science convened a seminar to exchange views about sport in schools, including team sports, to inform Government, sporting bodies and educational interests. Since the seminar, a new forum led by the Sports Council with representatives from local authorities, sports governing bodies and educational bodies has been set up to study issues, recommend courses of action and report by 1 January 1988. The DOE and DES jointly funded a review of research and information on school sport which was completed in May last.

Departmental Land (Chelmsford)

Mr. Burns asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of land in the Chelmsford borough council area that belongs to Government Departments and is surplus to requirements; and if he will break down the total acreage by each Department.

Mr. Chope: There is no land over 1 acre in area in the Chelmsford borough council area belonging to Government Departments which is surplus to requirements. Some 91 acres (37 hectares) of such land is owned by the local authorities, nationalised industries and statutory undertakers, most of which is awaiting disposal.

Sport (Drugs)

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in the inquiry he has conducted into the problems of drug taking in British sport; in how many sports he found evidence of drug taking; in which sports he found such evidence; what action he intends to take to disclose the identities of sportsmen or women who take drugs in order to enhance their performance and what action he has taken to ensure that disciplinary procedures or police investigation will follow in each of these cases.

Mr. Moynihan: I undertook with Sebastian Coe, vice-chairman of the Sports Council, a review of drug abuse in sport this summer. We published our report in September, copies are available in the Library. Investigations and discussions held during the review were confidential. We were concerned to assess the effectiveness of present controls, not to pursue individual cases of drug abuse. The report identified the need for a revised, independent testing regime and invited the Sports Council to submit detailed proposals. The report was endorsed by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs and by the Sports Council.

The Sports Council agreed detailed proposals at its meeting on 2 November. These involve:

(1) all testing to be undertaken by independent officials

(2) the selection of competitors for testing to be on a random basis

(3) testing out-of-competition to be introduced
(4) adverse findings and follow-up action by governing bodies to be publicised.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many sports he has found no evidence of drug taking; and what action he proposes to take publicly to exonerate all those sports which were found to be clean of any malpractice.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him today. In the course of the review into the misuse of drugs in sport we sought the views of 213 governing bodies about their current policies and programmes. I was pleased at the welcome extended to the review and grateful to the governing bodies for their co-operation and contributions. The issue of exonerations for those sports where drug abuse is not a problem does not arise. I have not received any representations on this matter from the governing bodies.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been achieved as a result of the Sports Council's inquiry into drug taking in sport; what has been the cost of this investigation; and why the Minister for Sport has established his own further inquiry into this subject.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council has not undertaken an inquiry into drug-taking in sport. I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him today.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken in the light of recent evidence concerning the incidence of drug taking by British sports competitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the right hon. Member to the answers I gave him today.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money is to be allocated for drug testing purposes in British sport; what percentage of the Sports Council budget this represents; and upon what evidence concerning the extent of the problem the present trend of this expenditure is based.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council's 1987-88 budget provision for combatting the misuse of drugs in sport is £365,000 representing ·08 per cent. of the total budget. The council's planned provision for 1988-89 is £445,000—likely to be some 1 per cent. of the budget. Annex A of the report on the misuse of drugs in sport, copies of which are available in the Library, gives details of the number of tests each year since 1979 and the incidence of banned substances.

Football Supporters (Breathalysing)

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Football League clubs have responded to the Minister for Sport's initiatives on breathalysing football spectators prior to Football League matches; what consultations took place with police authorities before this announcement was made; and what advice they have given about the feasibility of such tests minutes before kick off.

Mr. Moynihan: At a meeting on 19 October with representatives of the football authorities and the police, the Football League agreed to inquire into the possibility of stewards inside grounds having breathalysers available to test those suspected of excessive drinking. This may be an effective additional deterrent against hooliganism and would best be tried as an experiment in a small group of clubs, subject to police advice. I await a report from the Football League following their discussions with the police. The police response to this initiative at the meeting on 19 October was encouraging.

Electrical Safety

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received about standards of safety in electrical installation in buildings for which he is responsible and in property owned by local authorities; if he is considering recommending the use of circuit breakers to prevent accidents; if he will introduce mandatory measures for controlling electrical installations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received about standards of safety in electrical installation work in domestic and commercial buildings; if he will consider a system of registration of those undertaking this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has received representations about standards of safety in electrical installation work from the Institute of Electrical Engineers, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the Electrical Cable Makers Confederation in response to the technical review of the building regulations.

I accept that circuit breakers can play an important part in guarding against the misuse of normally safe installations and the hazards of faulty appliances. The IEE wiring regulations, which require the installation of circuit breakers in circumstances where a traditional method of earthing would not be appropriate, are very widely observed throughout the United Kingdom wherever new houses are constructed or rewiring undertaken. The representations made on electrical safety are being carefully considered but I do believe there is a case for leaving it to be covered by the IEE regulations rather than by introducing further legislation.

Council House Sales

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. E. Collins of his home at 18 Priory court, Cheltenham road, London, S.E.15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. F. Sullivan of their home at 4 Priory court, Cheltenham road, London, S.E.15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. G. Stout of his home at 17 Bromleigh court, Sydenham hill, London, S.E.23, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. W. J. Colville of his home at 15 Ruskin Park house, Champion hill, London, S.E.5, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. James Whitwell of his home at 7 Grove court, Camberwell grove, London, S.E.5, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. S. Morton of their home at 13 Seeley drive, London, S.E.21, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. J. Wand of their home at 7 Goodwin house, Nunhead crescent, London SE15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement.

(8) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mrs. M. Miles of her home at 85 Ruskin Park house, Champion hill, London SE5, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. D. McClean of his home at 1 Deventer crescent, London SE22, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(10) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. F. G. Frankham of his home at 10 Princes court, 156 College road, London SE19, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(11) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mrs. B. T. Szydlowski of her home at 11 Monteagle way, Consort road, London SE15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(12) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. F. Lloyd of his home at 19 Gylcote close, Denmark hill, London SE5, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(13) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. W. Lush of his home at 69 Delawyck crescent, Half Moon lane, London SE24, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(14) what information he has as to the reasons for delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. M. Crook of their home at 66 Delawyck crescent, Half Moon lane, London SE24, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(15) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. and Mrs. Ewart of their home at 27 New James court, Nunhead lane, London SE15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement;

(16) what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Miss B. Thompson of her home at 46b Limesford road, London SE15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department is monitoring closely the right-to-buy performance of Southwark borough council and has taken up with it the cases of the tenants mentioned.

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for the continued delay in the purchase by Mr. W. Crabb of his home at 99 Scylla road, London S.E.15, from Southwark council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that Mr. Crabb claimed to exercise his right to buy in 1981. I am extremely concerned to hear of the unacceptable delays he has suffered. I am seeking a full explanation from Southwark council and will write to my hon. Friend.

Local Authority Grants

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the proposed methodology for constructing the assessments of need for the new local authority grant system envisages a negative outturn.

Mr. Howard: We do not envisage negative assessments for any individual authority.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the separate needs of subheadings used by him at present for local authority grants and referred to in paragraph 15 of the Yellow Paper "The New Grant System", indicating those which will not be required under the proposed system.

Mr. Howard: The needs subheadings used for 1987-88 are listed in the document "Grant-Related Expenditure 1987-88" which is available in the Library. The details of the new arrangements will be decided after discussion with local authority representatives, but there are likely to be significantly fewer subheadings than at present.

Rating Reform

Mr. Marland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide illustrative figures for each local authority of the effect of implementing his proposed local government finance reform in the form of a banded community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Illustrative figures for a banded charge would depend on the details of the scheme proposed—for example, the bands of income and the relationship between bands. Such a scheme would involve all the disadvantages of a local income tax with, additionally, considerable poverty trap effects on running from one band to another.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the proposed needs assessment for local authorities under the new grant system proposed for the introduction of the poll tax will be open to challenge.

Mr. Howard: The needs assessment methodology will, after discussion with the local authority associations, be set out in a distribution report which will require the approval of the House. After approval, it will, like other decisions, be open to challenge by application for judicial review.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the 1987-88 poll tax exemplifications using safety netted figures in the same form as those published for 1986-87.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 28 October 1987]*: Not yet, because the transitional arrangements are presently being reconsidered.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he is having with Age Concern in relation to the introduction of the poll tax and its effect on retirement pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 October 1987]*: The Department has consulted Age Concern on the Government's proposals for rates reform and Age Concern has expressed its views in detail. I fully expect to continue discussions with Age Concern about the impact of our proposals on retirement pensioners.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Ridley: For each of the past five years the total of press advertising expenditure (other than on recruitment, tendering and statutory notices) by my Department, including the Property Services Agency, was:

Year	*Press advertising* £
1982-83	688,538
1983-84	19,184
1984-85	679,690
1985-86	543,527
1986-87	338,000

The information available does not distinguish between the use of national and local newspapers. The sums paid to individual organisations is a matter of commercial confidentiality.

Cash Limits

Mr. Patnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of outturn in the current year on cash limit DOE/LA1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: DOE/LA1 covers capital expenditure and receipts by local authorities in England on education, housing, transport, personal social services, and other services. The first quarter's returns indicate that there is likely to be an underspend this year of a substantial amount. I have already announced that some additional allocations may be made to cover expenditure in the current year in making good storm damage. But in view of the size of the prospective underspend, I and my colleagues responsible for the services within the cash limit in addition propose supplementary allocations of up to £75 million to cover expenditure on worthwhile schemes which will be incurred in the remainder of this financial year.

As far as my own services are concerned, up to £44·7 million of the extra resources will specifically be made available for additional housing schemes. I intend to direct these resources at well-targeted and cost-effective schemes to tackle homelessness, housing defects, renovation and homes insulation.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans any changes in his public expenditure programmes.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has today announced the Government's public expenditure plans for the next three years. The following tables give details of the major changes in my Department's programmes. Because of increased receipts I have been able to provide for significant increases in gross expenditure, particularly for housing, the inner cities and the environment without increasing net expenditure.

Housing

There is a substantial increase in gross provision for housing capital expenditure in 1988-89. At £3,827 million, this is £384 million (11 per cent.) higher than previously planned and £159 million higher than the estimated outturn for 1987-88. In 1989-90 there will be an increase of £284 million on previous plans. Increases on this scale have been made possible by the continuing success of the right to buy, and by disposals of new towns land for housing. Capital receipts are now expected to yield more than £2 billion in each of the next three years.

Within the total available for capial investment I have allocated resources in accordance with the priorities outlined in the White Paper "Housing: the Government's proposals" (Cm. 214). Gross provision for the Housing Corporation will increase by nearly £50 million in 1988-89, and by 1990-91 will be £145 million higher than expected outturn in 1987-88. I hope that these extra public resources will increasingly be augmented by private finance under mixed funding arrangements.

While housing associations will have an increasing share of the provision of new social housing for rent, I have made substantial additional provision for local authorities to enable them to spend more on renovation of their existing stock. Gross provision fot local authority capital spending in 1988-89 will be £3,048 million, an increase of £313 million on previous plans and of £128 million on estimated outturn for 1987-88.

As local authority spending power from receipts continues to increase, the borrowing consent represented by capital allocations declines in importance. Nevertheless, basic housing investment programme and homes insulation scheme allocations will remain at a high level in 1988-89: at £1,150 million they will stand at around 90 per cent. of this year's.

Additional allocations will again be made to local authorities to revitalise rundown estates under the Department's estate action programme. The resources available will nearly double, to £140 million.

Additionally, over the three survey years I am making available a total of £125 million for housing action trusts so that they can renovate some of the worst estates of rundown local authority housing, and pass it on to new forms of ownership and management.

Housing investment by new towns is increasingly confined to the servicing of sites for development by the private sector. Gross provision in each of the next three years has been increased to support this activity, and is more than financed by increased proceeds from disposals.

Because of the continuing high level of receipts it will be possible to achieve the higher levels of gross provision for capital investment I have outlined without any increase in the overall net housing programme totals already planned. The figures are given in the following table. Compared with expected outturn in 1987-88 the overall planned level of net expenditure in 1988-89 shows an increase of £498 million (20 per cent.).

Other environmental services

I continue to give very high priority to the inner cities. The urban development corporations have proven their worth in bringing effective help to the areas of greatest need, drawing on the resources and expertise of the private sector, and I am increasing planned resources by £65 million in 1988-89, and £68 million in 1989-90. Total resources for UDCs will now be more than £200 million in each of the next three years. This will enable us to maintain the momentum of the corporations in London and Merseyside, to secure the successful launch of the four new UDCs established this year (in Trafford Park, Teesside, Tyne and Wear and the Black country) and to press ahead with further initiatives.

Despite the increased emphasis on UDCs I am still continuing to provide substantial resources, nearly £300 million a year, for the other parts of my urban group: the urban programme (including urban development grant and urban regeneration grant) and derelict land grant.

I am also increasing resources for the countryside, environment, recreation and heritage. The Development Commission, Nature Conservancy Council, Countryside Commission and Sports Council will receive increased financial support. In addition the National Heritage Memorial Fund will receive an additional £20 million capital injection in 1987-88.

Provision for gross capital expenditure in 1988-89 on local environmental services has been increased by £60 million to £627 million.

The increases in gross expenditure in the other environmental services programme in 1988-89 have been more than offset by substantial increases in forecast receipts to local authorities and the new towns. This reflects in particular the success of the new town bodies' programme of disposals as the private sector takes an increasingly prominent role in the future of the towns.

Water

I am reducing slightly the borrowing limit for the water authorities by £9 million in 1988-89. Water authorities continue to reduce real operating costs and this, taken with increased profitability, will enable them to finance large increases in investment proposed in their 1987 corporate plans. Capital expenditure has already grown in real terms by 40 per cent. since 1980-81 and is currently running at about £1 billion. Further major growth is now assured in programmes to improve water and sewage treatment and to renew underground assets.

The British Waterways Board external financing limit is to increase by £1·6 million in each year.

Property Services Agency

PSA's civil accommodation programme in net terms is planned to decrease by £22 million in 1988-89 and by £59 million in 1989-90. But because disposal and Property Repayment Services receipts are expected to increase substantially, expenditure is planned to increase by £63 million and £78 million respectively in the next two years. After meeting increases on rents to be paid to landlords and other unavoidable expenditure, the agency should be able to allocate sufficient funds to the maintenance of the civil estate in 1988-89 to prevent further build up of the backlog of work. In the following year the Agency should be able to make inroads into this backlog.

Overall Local Authority Expenditure, England

I proposed on 23 July that provision for local authority relevant current expenditure for 1988-89 should be increased by £838 million to £27,538 million and that aggregate Exchequer grant should be £13,775 million, an increase of £750 million compared to 1987-88. I am consulting local government about my proposals for the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement.

As regards local authority capital expenditure overall, gross provision for the main local authority cash limit DOE-LA1 in 1988-89 has been increased by £500 million. Because of authorities' continuing success in increasing their capital receipts, this has not required an increase in net provision. The revised plans allow for gross spending on the five services covered by the cash limit (housing, education, transport, personal social services and other services) of nearly £5·2 billion.

The very high level of receipts being generated by authorities in 1987-88, which is leading to an underspend against the net cash limit, will add to the growth in accumulated receipts and hence will lead to a further increase in the spending power from receipts next year. Despite this, the increase that has been agreed for gross provision means that the allocations available for the services across the cash limit in 1988-89 should be broadly equal to allocations issued for the present year.

Department of the Environment—Housing

	1987-88 Estimated outturn	*1988-89 Previous plan*	*1988-89 Revised plan*	*1989-90 Previous plan*	*1989-90 Revised plan*	*1990-91 Plan*
Capital						
Gross Expenditure						
Central Government						
Housing Corporation	705	686	735	682	775	850
Other Central Government	3	5	4	5	5	5
Local Authorities	2,920	2,735	3,048	2,779	2,908	2,808
Public Corporations						
Housing Action Trusts	0	0	5	0	50	70
New Towns	41	18	35	18	30	30
Total Gross Expenditure	3,668	3,444	3,827	3,484	3,768	3,763
Receipts						
Central Government						
Housing Corporation	−71	−70	−80	−71	−80	−90
Other Central Government	−3	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2

	1987-88	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91
	Estimated outturn	Previous plan	Revised plan	Previous plan	Revised plan	Plan
Local Authorities	−2,315	−1,581	−1,876	−1,581	−1,915	−1,923
Public Corporations						
New Towns	[illegible]2	−29	−110	−29	−80	−70
Total Receipts	−2,501	−1,682	−2,068	−1,683	−2,077	−2,084
Net Capital						
Central Government						
Housing Corporation	634	616	655	611	695	760
Other Central Government	0	3	2	3	3	3
Local Authorities	605	1,154	1,172	1,198	993	885
Public Corporations						
Housing Action Trusts	0	0	5	0	50	70
New Towns	−72	−11	−75	−11	−50	−40
Total Net Capital	1,167	1,762	1,759	1,801	1,691	1,679
Total Current	1,353	1,271	1,259	1,306	1,312	1,364
Total DOE housing	2,520	3,032	3,018	3,107	3,003	3,043

DOE other environmental services

£ million (sums may not total due to rounding)

	1987-88	1988-89		1989-90		1990-91
	Forecast Outturn	Previous Plan	Revised Plan	Previous Plan	Revised Plan	Plan
1. Urban Group						
(1) Urban Programme[1]	227	231	221	230	221	222
(2) Urban Development Corporations of which:	133	138	203	147	215	223
(a) LDDC/MDC	111	108	108	147	215	223
(b) New UDCs	22	30	95			
(3) Derelict land reclamation	81	81	76	81	76	76
2. New Towns						
Gross[2]	87	61	81	50	65	60
Receipts	−335	−131	−311	−134	−175	−150
Net	−248	−70	−230	−83	−109	−90
3. Countryside, Recreation and Environment						
(1) Development Commission and support for industry	28	27	32	27	33	32
(2) Countryside, Recreation, and Environment Bodies	105	105	110	106	112	114
(3) Environmental Research	26	30	31	32	32	33
4. Heritage						
(1) Royal palaces, royal parks and Royal Armouries	41	41	44	42	46	45
(2) Historic buildings, ancient monuments and national heritage[3]	93	73	74	75	75	77
5. Water						
(1) British Waterways Board EFL	45	45	47	46	48	49
(2) Regional Water Authorities EFLs	3	−11	−20	−58	−74	−94
(3) Civil Defence	2	3	3	4	4	4
(4) Other Water Services	2	2	1	2	1	1
6. Departmental Administration	113	116	128	119	123	122

	1987-88 Forecast Outturn	*1988-89 Previous Plan*	*1988-89 Revised Plan*	*1989-90 Previous Plan*	*1989-90 Revised Plan*	*1990-91 Plan*
7. Local Environmental Services						
(1) Capital						
Gross	890	567	627	581	627	627
Receipts	−550	−390	−542	−399	−542	−542
Net	340	177	85	182	85	85
(2) Current[4]	2,841	2,694	2,800	2,762	2,898	2,984
8. Other local authority current						
(1) Local authority rate collection	176	177	185	182	191	197
(2) Records and registration of births, deaths and marriages	17	17	25	18	26	27
Programme total	4,025	3,876	3,815	3,914	4,004	4,107

[1] Includes capital and current expenditure, DOE element only. Total UP provision (all departments) for 1988-89 is £314 million.
[2] Includes £4 million for Letchworth Garden City Corporation in 1987-88.
[3] Includes £20 million additional funding for NHMF in 1987-88.
[4] Excludes Urban Programme current expenditure.

PSA Civil Accommodation

	1987-88 Forecast outturn	*1988-89 Previous plan*	*1988-89 Revised plan*	*1989-90 Previous plan*	*1989-90 Revised plan*	*1990-91 plan*
Expenditure[1]	500	476	539	486	564	598
Receipts[2]	−575	−575	−660	−587	−724	−758
Net	−75	−99	−121	−101	−160	−160

[1] Capital expenditure, maintenance, rents and administration.
[2] PRS and disposal receipts.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many buildings have been downgraded from grade II* listed to grade II in each year since 1979;

(2) how many buildings have been downgraded from grade II* listed to unlisted in each year since 1979.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not readily available.

Storm Damage

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show in the *Official Report* the lastest estimates of dealing with storm damage incurred by local authorities on the night of 15 and 16 October both in total and for each authority, showing *(a)* the total expenditure incurred, *(b)* expenditure up to the Bellwin scheme threshold, *(c)* grant lost by the authority for expenditure up to the Bellwin scheme threshold and *(d)* expenditure above the Bellwin scheme threshold, gross and net of specific grant.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: I do not yet have sufficiently reliable information to provide the detailed figures requested.

Households

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the numbers of households comprising *(a)* one adult, *(b)* two adults, *(c)* three adults, *(d)* four adults and *(e)* five or more adults in (i) England, (ii) each economic planning region and (iii) each local authority.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Numbers of households estimated from the 1985 labour force survey for England and the standard regions are shown in the table.

Households: by number of persons aged 18 or over: by region

thousands

Region	*Number of persons aged 18 or over* 1	2	3	4	*5 or more*	*Total*
North	315	665	140	35	10	1,170
Yorkshire and Humberside	515	1,060	215	70	10	1,875
East Midlands	390	870	160	45	10	1,475
East Anglia	185	460	80	20	5	750
South East						

Region	Number of persons aged 18 or over					Total
	1	2	3	4	5 or more	
Greater London	825	1,375	295	115	35	2,645
Rest of South East	995	2,320	440	135	25	3,915
South West	450	1,045	180	50	10	1,730
West Midlands	505	1,085	240	70	20	1,915
North West	690	1,320	275	90	25	2,405
England	4,870	10,200	2,025	635	145	17,880

Note: Estimates are subject to sampling errors.

The 1981 census county reports, available in the Library, show the numbers of households with 1, 2 and 3 or more persons aged 16 or over in each local authority area (table 39). Analyses of the 1981 census data on the basis of people aged 18 or over could be produced only at excessive cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement as to the future of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Fowler: The Employment Bill which I introduced in the House on 22 October, at column 944, includes provision to amend the law with respect to the constitution and functions of the Manpower Services Commission and for it to be known as the Training Commission. Together with the creation of an integrated employment service within my Department the purpose of these changes is to help the unemployed back into work and to enable the Training Commission to concentrate on the key task of meeting the nation's skill needs.

The employment service, which is directly operated by my Department, now provides a full range of services for unemployed people, including the payment of benefit, help and advice to unemployed and other job-seekers and job placement. It is the gateway to the whole range of programmes that we have developed or are developing for unemployed people.

The Training Commission will be at the heart of our efforts to harness the resources of Government, industry, commerce and individuals to the crucial task of meeting our present and future skill needs. To this end it will continue to develop its existing provision for the vocational education and training of young people and adults including the youth training scheme and the job training scheme. It will also run the community programme, community industry and the voluntary projects programme. I also attach great importance to the commission's role in encouraging employers and individuals to grasp the opportunities that training offers to sharpen industrial competitiveness and improve career opportunities.

In pursuing their respective roles I expect the employment service and the commission to work closely together where a joint effort is necessary to meet key objectives such as our commitment for 16 and 17-year-olds and the long-term unemployed.

Interviews (Travel Assistance)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the current guidelines on eligibility for assistance under travel to interview on Manpower Services Commission-sponsored schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The travel-to-interview scheme, which includes provision for participants on certain schemes sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission, is at present being reviewed following its first year of operation, and I will write to the hon. Member when the results are known.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people in *(a)* Leeds, West constituency and *(b)* Leeds metropolitan district council area have received financial assistance to attend interviews on Manpower Services Commission-sponsored schemes in the past 12 months; and what proportion of total applications for such finance this represents.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: For the year ending September 1987, 318 people applied for help under the travel-to-interview scheme in the jobcentre areas which approximate to the Leeds, West constituency. Of these, 79 per cent. received assistance. The corresponding figures for the area approximating to the Leeds metropolitan district were, 356 applications, 77 per cent. of whom received assistance. Information about the numbers of these applicants attending interviews for places on Manpower Services Commission schemes is not available.

Contracts of Employment (Disputes)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will exercise his powers under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and transfer to industrial tribunals disputes concerning contracts of employment.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Prohibition and Improvement Notices

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many prohibition and how many improvement notices have been served in Leicester during each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the information for the years 1981 to 1986-87. Data for other years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Enforcement notices served under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act and associated legislation in Leicester

Year	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*[4]	*1986-87*[1 3]
By HSE Inspectorates and HSC Agencies							
Prohibition notices	7	12	15	20	16	10	17
Improvement notices	42	42	57	74	65	15	53
By Leicester City Council							
Prohibition notices	15	7	3	[2]16	16	n/a	4
Improvement notices	439	267	284	529	234	n/a	181

[1] On 1 April 1986 the basis of HSE's statistics changed from calendar to planning (1 April to 31 March) years.
[2] For Leicester City Council, 1984 data are for the year 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985.
[3] Provisional.
[4] January to March.
n/a Not available.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will increase the number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive; and whether he has any proposals to change the annual budget of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission, acting within its grant-in-aid provision. The planned provision for 1988-89 and future years is currently under consideration.

Training (Safety)

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest notifiable accidents to *(a)* YTS trainees, *(b)* community programme workers and *(c)* job training scheme workers.

Mr. Lee: Table *(a)* provides accident figures for YTS trainees by quarter for fatal, major and minor injuries for the period 1 April to 30 September 1987.

Participants in the job training scheme (JTS) and new job training scheme (new JTS) are trainees. Table *(b)* provides fatal, major and minor accidents by quarter to trainees on the job training scheme for the period 1 April to 30 September 1987.

Table *(c)* provides fatal, major and minor accidents by quarter for trainees on the new job training scheme (new JTS) period 1 April to 30 September 1987. Accident statistics for community programme workers are not available. Accidents to these workers are, however, reportable to the Health and Safety Executive.

YTS Accidents 1 April-30 September 1987
Table (a)

Period	*Fatalities*	*Accidents*[1] *Major*[2]	*Minor*
1 April 1987 to 30 June 1987	[3]1	108	513
1 July 1987 to 30 September 1987	1	109	606

JTS Accidents 1 April-30 September 1987
Table (b)

Period	*Fatalities*	*Accidents*[1] *Major*[2]	*Minor*
1 April 1987 to 30 June 1987	Nil	1	19
1 July 1987 to 30 September 1987	Nil	Nil	26

New JTS Accidents 1 April-30 September 1987
Table (c)

Period	*Fatalities*	*Accidents*[1] *Major*[2]	*Minor*
1 April 1987 to 30 June 1987	Nil	Nil	2
1 July 1987 to 30 September 1987	Nil	1	11

[1] MSC accident figures are for trainees on YTS, JTS and new JTS have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the commission's figures will include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.
[2] Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
[3] This fatality was a road traffic accident in scheme time.

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors' working hours are spent each week on average inspecting or monitoring premises and conditions at work for *(a)* YTS, *(b)* community programme schemes and *(c)* job training schemes.

Mr. Cope: The information as requested is not available. When carrying out inspections, health and safety inspectors examine the health and safety conditions of all persons, regardless of whether they are engaged on Government schemes or not. Therefore, no distinction is made between those premises at which people are engaged on YTS, community programme schemes and JTS, and those where they are not.

Community Programme

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total nationally of the numbers of workers on community programme schemes who lost unemployment benefit under the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness, and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1987; and if he will give totals on a similar basis for each unemployment benefit office in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Lee: Statistical records are not kept of unemployment benefit claims disallowed for this reason.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for 30 September 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 the total number of unemployment benefit claimants allowed to sign quarterly; and if he will give the totals on a similar basis for each unemployment benefit office in Newcastle.

Mr. Lee: The figures requested are set out in the following tables:

1—Unemployment benefit claimants signing quarterly: Great Britain (shown to the nearest thousand)

September	*Number*
1984	255,000
1985	285,000
1986	298,000
1987	266,000

2—Unemployment benefit claimants signing quarterly: Selected unemployment benefit offices

Unemployment benefit offices	*September 1984*	*September 1985*	*September 1986*	*September 1987*
Newcastle West 1	270	306	344	314
Newcastle West 2	272	304	336	296
Newcastle City 1	292	307	326	305
Newcastle City 2	318	336	289	319
Newcastle City 3	282	328	350	300
Newcastle East	374	472	542	509
Blaydon	370	382	374	380
Newburn	195	207	211	187
Hexham	103	117	121	83

Disabled People

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Employment what provision will be made to accommodate disabled people who are not able to cope with the demands of full-time work into the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There are many part-time jobs available on the community programme for those unable to work full-time. Improvements to be introduced next year will focus the programme more closely on the individual training needs of participants, and final details have still to be settled.

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from disabled groups regarding the change in eligibility to join the community programme to one year's unemployment for everyone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There have been no such changes to eligibility rules as far as these affect disabled people. Disabled people may still join the programme after six months unemployment.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people, by sex, work full-time and part-time in the Dundee, West constituency for the latest available date; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many people in the Dundee, West constituency are employed in the service industries on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(3) how many people in the Dundee, West constituency are employed in manufacturing industry on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

Mr. Lee [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: The available employment estimates for parliamentary constituencies are from censuses of employment taken in September 1981 and September 1984 and are as follows. A breakdown by industry and by full and part-time status is not available for the earlier year.

Employees in employment[1]

	September 1981	*September 1984*
Dundee West constituency[2]		
All industries and services	56,500	54,000
Males		
full-time	N/A	24,500
part-time	N/A	1,400
all	27,500	25,900
Females		
full-time	N/A	15,900
part-time	N/A	12,100
all	29,000	28,100
Service industries	N/A	41,300
Manufacturing industries	N/A	9,800

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

[2] To facilitate comparisons over time, the figures for the constituency are aggregates of frozen wards (ie, ward boundaries as at 1981).

N/A = Not available.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of job vacancies in the Dundee, West constituency for the latest available date.

Mr. Lang [*holding answer 26 October 1987*]: I have been asked to reply.

Vacancy statistics are not available on a parliamentary constituency basis. However, the number of vacancies notified in the Dundee jobcentre area and remaining unfilled on 4 September 1987 was 579 (including 84 community programme vacancies). It is estimated that only around one third of all vacancies nationally are notified to jobcentres. This information is available in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Census

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is planning to hold a census in Northern Ireland in 1991.

Mr. Tom King: Yes. The need for information on the population and alternative ways to gather it have been examined, and it has been concluded that in line with England, Wales and Scotland, a census should be held in Northern Ireland in 1991. The registrar general has arranged for consultations about the census to be held with users of census statistics and submissions to him from any source are welcome. Proposals for the content of the census will be announced next year.

ENERGY

Retired Miners

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate how many retired miners there are in *(a)* the Durham area and *(b)* the Northumberland area.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This information is not available.

Coal Reserves (Ponfeigh)

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is British Coal's assessment of the coal reserves in the townhead area of the village of Ponfeigh.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a management matter for the British Coal Corporation. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Parkinson: Figures for expenditure on press advertising for 1982-83 to 1983-84 were given in the answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) at column *267* on 8 May 1984, those for 1984-85 were given in the answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North West at column *359* on 6 December 1985 and those for 1985-86 were given in the answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) at column *231* on 19 November 1986. The figure for 1986-87 was £11,830,000 including the British Gas flotation. All figures include production costs.

Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in national newspapers and that in the press generally. The sums paid to individual organisations are commercially confidential.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Macdonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Western Isles;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Western Isles in the financial year 1989-90, calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Doran asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Aberdeen, South constituency;

(2) if he will publish a tale showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Aberdeen, South constituency in the financial year 1989, calculated (i) 100 per cent. collection, (ii) 95 per cent. collection, (iii) 90 per cent. collection, (iv) 85 per cent. collection, *(v)* 80 per cent. collection, (vi) 75 per cent. collection and (vii) 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish the predictions level of the personal community charge in the constituency for 1989-90 calculating a basis of (i) 100 per cent. (ii) 80 per cent. collection;

(2) if he will estimate how many applicants will be required to enforce the poll tax in Cunninghame, North.

Mr. Lang: No. These are matters for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the predicted level of the personal community charge in the Monklands, West constituency in the financial year 1989-90 calculated on the basis of *(a)* 100 per cent. collection, *(b)* 95 per cent. collection, *(c)* 90 per cent. collection, *(d)* 85 per cent. collection, *(e)* 80 per cent. collection, *(f)* 75 per cent. collection and *(g)* 70 per cent. collection.

Mr. Lang: No. This is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to make regulations to provide that where a sum is paid by a tenant being within a designated premises within the meaning of section 11 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, in respect of a community charge *(a)* that any payment made in excess of the number of days of his residence in that provision is returned to him without delay and *(b)* that any records made with section 11(14) of the Act is open to investigation by any tenant who has made a payment under section 11.

Mr. Lang: No. Section 11(16) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 provides for the reimbursement of sums paid by way of collective community charge contributions where these sums are not due. Records kept under section 11(14) of the Act will be available to the community charges registration officer when he sets the multiplier determining the level of the collective community charge and multipliers will normally be available for public inspection under section 20(2)(*a*) of the Act.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to make any regulations in order to define those persons who come within the scope of section 8(7) and section 8(8) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987.

Mr. Lang: The draft Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were recently issued for consultation with interested bodies, define certain classes of premises—nursing homes, residential care homes and certain hostels providing an equivalent level of care—which will remain in rating after 1 April 1989. Persons soley or mainly resident in these premises (except resident staff) will be exempt from personal community charge liability under section 8(8)(*d*) of the 1987 Act. Draft regulations will shortly be brought forward dealing with the criteria to be taken into account by the community charges registration officer in designating premises as liable to the collective community charge: residents in these premises will be exempt from personal community charge liability under section 8(8)(*c*) of the Act, but will be required to pay to the landlord collective community charge contributions at the same daily level.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to make regulations to require that where a tenant pays rent that indicates an element in respect of domestic rates that any such rent payable after 1 April 1989 is reduced by such amount as was payable in respect of domestic rates.

Mr. Lang: No. Domestic rates will be abolished on 1 April 1989 and rents which now include an element of rates will therefore no longer do so.

Closures and Redundancies

Mr. MacDonald asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all factory closures that have resulted in 20 or more redundancies in the Western Isles in each year since 1979.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures and redundancies in Cunninghame, North constituency since 1978.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures that have resulted in 25 or more redundancies in the Monklands, West constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested cannot be provided since details of closures and redundancies confirmed by individual companies are provided to the Manpower Services Commission in confidence.

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many current occupants of National Health Service and unit beds in Scotland have a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis; what those figures are as percentages of *(a)* mental and *(b)* all hospital beds in Scotland; and how these figures compare with each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Patients with main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis shown as percentage of all psychiatric hospital beds and all hospital beds

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Patients	4,156	3,913	3,762	3,575	3,526
Percentage of all psychiatric beds	17·8	17·0	16·5	15·8	15·9
Percentage of all beds	7·2	6·8	6·6	6·3	6·3

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the admissions by diagnosis and order of admission including percentage change in numbers and rates per 100,000 population, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Scotland for the years 1984 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Admissions to psychiatric hospitals with schizophrenic psychosis

	Number			*Percentage change*
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-86*
First admission	400	384	374	−6·5
Other admission	2,813	2,907	2,756	−2·0
Total	3,213	3,291	3,130	−2·6
Rate per 100,000 population				
First admission	7·8	7·5	7·3	−6·4
Other admission	54·7	56·6	53·8	−1·6
Total	62·4	64·1	61·1	−2·1

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the discharges and deaths by length of stay, including percentage change in numbers and percentage distribution, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in Scotland for the years 1984 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is in the table.

Discharges (including deaths) from Psychiatric Hospital showing—Year and length of stay 1984-1986

	1984	*Percentage of all discharges*	*1985*	*Percentage of all discharges*	*1986*	*Percentage of all discharges*	*Percentage numbers change 1984-86*
1 week	361	10·3	385	10·7	425	12·8	+17·7
1-4 weeks	1,108	31·5	1,058	29·4	1,039	31·2	− 6·2
4-8 weeks	777	22·1	824	22·9	738	22·2	− 5·0
8-12 weeks	294	8·4	351	9·8	293	8·8	− 0·3
12-26 weeks	386	11·0	353	9·8	329	9·9	−14·8
26-36 weeks	97	2·8	92	2·6	73	2·2	−24·7
36-52 weeks	57	1·6	63	1·8	62	1·9	+ 8·8
52-78 weeks	73	2·1	61	1·7	52	1·6	−28·8
78 weeks-2 years	24	0·7	30	0·8	21	0·6	−12·5
2-5 years	93	2·6	80	2·2	65	2·0	−30·1
5-10 years	59	1·7	50	1·4	52	1·6	−11·9
10-15 years	27	0·8	35	1·0	36	1·1	+33·3
15-20 years	22	0·6	33	0·9	24	0·7	+ 9·1
20 years plus	139	4·0	184	5·1	119	3·6	−14·4
Total	3,517	100·0	3,599	100·0	3,328	100·0	− 5·4

High Court of Justiciary

Mr. Menzies Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people who stood trial in the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland on charges of murder and of those how many where convicted of *(a)* murder or *(b)* culpable homicide in the last three years for which such information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available is given in the table:

		Year of result	*Scotland*
	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Persons called to court in cases initially recorded by the police as murder	102	116	91
of whom:			
Number convicted of murder	36	25	28
Number convicted of culpable homicide	31	45	27

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Menzies Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the number of occasions on which applicants in Scotland for *(a)* shotgun certificates and *(b)* firearm certificates who have had their applications refused appealed against refusal to the sheriff court and the results of any such appeals in the last three years for which such information is available;

(2) what was the number of occasions on which applicants in Scotland for *(a)* shotgun certificates and *(b)* firearms certificates had their applications refused in the last three years for which such information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of applications refused is as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Firearms certificates	12	31	30
Shotgun certificates	88	52	85

Note: The 1986 figures exclude the number of renewal applications refused by Lothian and Borders police in respect of which statistics are not available.

Information about appeals to the sheriff court against refusals to grant or renew certificates is not available as such appeals are not recorded separately.

Buses

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the total bus mileage operated by *(a)* private companies and *(b)* companies owned by local authorities and other public sector bodies since the operation of the Transport Act 1985 in each regional council area in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total bus mileage registered by private operators, public transport companies owned by local authorities and the Scottish Bus Group as at January 1987 are as follows:

Region	*Private operators*	*Public transport companies owned by local authorities*	*Scottish Bus Group*
Borders	0·80	—	2·50
Central	0·54	—	7·15
Dumfries and Galloway	1·06	—	1·51
Fife	1·17	—	8·21
Grampian	1·59	5·85	7·30
Highland	2·47	—	4·30
Lothian	1·06	17·10	15·61
Strathclyde	13·33	24·61	52·95
Tayside	2·70	3·29	5·12
Orkney	1·06	—	—
Shetland	0·56	—	—
Western Isles	0·20	—	—

Note: Mileage shown in millions.

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the total bus mileage operated in each local authority area in Scotland *(a)* before 7 pm and *(b)* after 7 pm each day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This question cannot be answered without disproportionate cost.

Gaelic

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in favour of Gaelic being included in the curriculum of schools in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend receives representations from time to time about the place of Gaelic in the curriculum.

Courses and examinations are currently available for both Gaelic learners and native speakers at the ordinary grade and higher grade of the Scottish certificate of education; there is a certificate of sixth year studies in Gaelic. Standard grade courses for learners and native speakers are planned for introduction in 1988 as part of the Government's standard grade development programme.

Under section 1.5(iii) of the Education Scotland Act 1980, education authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide for the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas.

Housing

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it is proposed that Scottish Special Housing Association tenants will suffer any diminution of their existing rights as a result of legislation to follow the consultative document on Scottish housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. Suggestions that this might be the case are wholly without foundation. My right hon. and learned Friend has already taken steps to ensure that reassurance is available to tenants who have been caused unnecessary anxiety by those who have irresponsibly sought to mislead them.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to enforce the improvement of conditions in the private rented housing sector.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's proposals for the future development of housing policy, including provisions relating to the private rented sector, will be set out in full in a White Paper which it is intended to publish shortly.

YTS

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage of employers in Scotland who are paying YTS trainees *(a)* the basic rate, *(b)* topping up payments by less than £5 per week and *(c)* topping up payments by more than £5 per week.

Mr. Lang: This information is not collected. I understand, however, that many YTS trainees, particularly those with employed status, receive topping up payments.

Drunken Offenders (Designated Places)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase the number of designated places available for drunken offenders under section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of designated places is a matter for voluntary organisations, which may be eligible for grant under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, or local authorities.

School Boards

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if as a result of the consultation process he has any plans to alter his proposals on school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The consultation period has not yet ended. The purpose of consultation is to elicit views on a proposal and then to consider the responses before reaching a decision. That is what we intend to do.

Nurses

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* the number of nurses in post at Eastern general hospital and *(b)* the Lothian health board established figure for nurses at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 31 March 1987 the number of nurses in post and the nursing establishment at the Eastern general hospital was 292·4 and 299·2 (whole-time equivalents) respectively.

National Health Service

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979, *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Lothian and in Scotland, respectively, and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff in terms of full-time equivalents in Lothian and Scotland, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Average available staffed beds in NHS hospitals at 30 September		*NHS staff[3], [4] whole time equivalent at 30 September*	
	Lothian	*Scotland*	*Lothian*	*Scotland*
1979	8,374	58,501	17,543·0	115,736·6
1980	8,389	58,208	17,940·5	118,651·7
1981	8,397	58,028	18,488·9	122,207·6
1982	8,452	57,440	19,075·6	123,753·9
1983	8,522	57,294	19,237·2	124,491·3
1984	8,451	57,216	18,843·0	123,496·8
1985	8,279	56,334	18,722·3	123,894·5
1986	[2]7,820	[2]55,360	18,888·6	123,732·0
1987[1]	[2]8,047	[2]55,349	18,882·8	123,673·5

[1] At 31 March.

[2] Provisional.

[3] Excludes General Practitioners.

[4] The conditioned hours for nurses changed from 40 in 1979 to 37·5 thereafter.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of people on hospital waiting lists in the Lothian region health board area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested, which relates to 30 September, follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	13,007
1980	10,834
1981	9,715
1982	16,953
1983	14,717
1984	13,845
1985	13,381
[1]1986	14,189

[1] Provisional.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the revenue expenditure allocated to Lothian health board for each year since 1979, expressed in cash terms and in real terms at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board's revenue expenditure allocation for hospital and community health services in each of these years was as follows:

£ thousands

	Cash	*At 1986-87 prices*
1978-79	98,543	191,732
1979-80	119,359	198,701
1980-81	154,874	217,465
1981-82	172,268	220,302
1982-83	186,197	222,125
1983-84	194,570	221,907
1984-85	207,238	226,390
1985-86	217,546	224,114
1986-87	235,056	235,056

Health Boards

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the actual total populations in each health board area, broken down by age and sex, and percentage share of revenue allocations for each health board, as calculated under the SHARE scheme for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on health boards' population, analysed by age and sex, is contained in

"Scottish Health Statistics", which is produced annually by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service. Copies are held in the Library.

Each health board's share of the total provision for revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services, in each year since 1979-80, is shown in the table.

Health Boards	*1979-80 Per cent.*	*1980-81 Per cent.*	*1981-82 Per cent.*	*1982-83 Per cent.*	*1983-84 Per cent.*	*1984-85 Per cent.*	*1985-86 Per cent.*	*1986-87 Per cent.*	*1987-88 Per cent.*
Argyll and Clyde	7·28	7·27	7·29	7·33	7·33	7·12	7·28	7·27	7·20
Ayrshire and Arran	4·43	4·54	4·67	4·87	4·97	5·94	5·21	5·29	5·34
Borders	1·38	1·39	1·41	1·45	1·46	1·56	1·49	1·52	1·56
Dumfries and Falloway	2·53	2·56	2·56	2·58	2·59	2·69	2·61	2·59	2·60
Fife	4·51	4·59	4·65	4·75	4·79	5·16	4·88	4·95	5·01
Forth Valley	4·52	4·59	4·62	4·69	4·71	4·85	4·75	4·74	4·78
Grampian	8·56	8·63	8·66	8·78	8·82	9·23	8·94	9·05	9·19
Greater Glasgow	27·76	27·34	27·28	26·80	26·66	25·27	26·31	26·07	25·82
Highland	3·73	3·76	3·73	3·74	3·74	3·78	3·75	3·74	3·79
Lanarkshire	7·93	8·00	8·01	8·14	8·19	8·59	8·30	8·27	8·30
Lothian	16·29	16·28	16·23	16·07	16·03	15·71	15·94	15·98	15·93
Orkney	0·24	0·25	0·26	0·26	0·26	0·30	0·27	0·28	0·28
Shetland	0·30	0·31	0·32	0·32	0·33	0·38	0·34	0·34	0·33
Tayside	10·09	10·04	9·84	9·73	9·62	8·82	9·42	9·39	9·35
Western Isles	0·45	0·45	0·47	0·49	0·50	0·60	0·51	0·52	0·52
	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00	100·00

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of cross-boundary in-patients for each health board since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The material requested is lengthy. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the members of each health board, stating the date of their original appointment, the date of their present appointment, and when their current term of office expires.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The information requested is as follows:

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mrs. E. M. Cockburn, OBE	1 April 81	1 April 85
Dr. R. Erskine	1 April 77	1 April 85
Mrs. M. A. Foggie	1 April 85	1 April 85
Mr. J. H. Gillougley	1 April 81	1 April 85
Dr. Anne M. Kelly	1 April 85	1 April 85
Mrs. J. C. Le Roux	1 April 81	1 April 85
Dr. J. Moffat	1 April 81	1 April 85
Mr. E. T. F. Spence, MBE	1 April 83	1 April 85
Rev. J. Young	1 April 85	1 April 85
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. John D. Barnett	1 April 87	1 April 87
Mr. A. H. Brabender	1 April 83	1 April 87
Mr. J. Campbell	1 April 83	1 April 87
Mr. L. Capaldi	12 January 78	1 April 87
Mr. J. Cattanch	25 January 78	1 April 87
Mr. George M. Deuchars	1 April 87	1 April 87
Dr. S. G. McAlpine	1 April 83	1 April 87
Mrs. Leila C. McKichan	1 April 87	1 April 87
Mr. George McMillan	1 April 87	1 April 87
Mr. R. R. Reid	1 April 83	1 April 87
Mrs. Elspeth W. Riddell	1 April 87	1 April 87

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. J. Cahill	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mrs. A. M. Campbell	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. T. Dickie, JP	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. J. W. G. Donaldson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. M. W. Gallie	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. J. J. Morrow	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. I. B. Valentine	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mrs. A. B. Wilson	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Dr. W. M. Wilson	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. K. Blair	6 May 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. D. Brown	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. R. Campbell, JP	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. A. Dunbar	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mr. P. Hunter	1 April 1975	1 April 1987
Mrs. N. M. Lambie	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mr. B. A. Murphy	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Miss J. Ross	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. T. Sinclair	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. D. Watts-Russell	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. J. P. Wiltshire	1 April 1983	1 April 1987

Borders Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Dr. W. B. Aitken	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. P. S. Elliot	1 April 1975	1 April 1985
Mr. R. W. Jack	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. A. C. Purves, MBE	13 April 1973	1 April 1985
Lady F. E. Sanderson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. R. A. Stewart	13 April 1973	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. A. P. Dorward	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. Forster	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. I. G. Houston	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. Millican	1 April 1983	1 April 1987

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Mrs. F. M. Nisbet	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Scott, CBE	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. W. M. S. Thom	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. S. Watt	1 April 1979	1 April 1987

Dumfries and Galloway Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. W. D. Beck	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. I. S. F. Brown	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. M. D. Dick-Smith	15 April 1986	15 April 1986
Miss A. C. Kelly	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. A. R. Murdoch	16 January 1986	16 January 1986
Mr. M. J. Pumphrey	15 April 1986	15 April 1986
Dr. T. S. R. Train	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. G. Willacy	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. W. I. Wilson	18 May 1973	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mrs. M. H. Bonn	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. A. U. G. Harper	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mr. J. S. Kerr	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. H. S. McFadzean	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Seright	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Service	18 December 1973	1 April 1987
Mrs. J. D. Tulloch	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Dr. A. P. D. Wilkinson	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Fife Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. J. I. M. Burns	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. J. S. Edmiston	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. H. C. Forwell	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Dr. J. B. Gallacher	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Dr. A. A. H. Lawson	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. G. H. D. Mackie, OBE	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. J. Marshall	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Miss M. M. Nelson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. G. Reid	30 June 1978	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mrs. S. L. Aitken	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Clarke	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. C. Haddow	3 May 1973	1 April 1987
Mr. J. H. Henderson	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Dr. C. G. Ingram	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. A. A. Marr	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. I. A. McCrone	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. J. McMurdo	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. R. P. Strugnell	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. C. Whitlock	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. E. A. Young	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Forth Valley Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. J. Cross	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. A. B. Cruikshank	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. T. Downs	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. L. Dunbar	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. J. Isbister	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Professor P. McEwen	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. W. J. A. Macfarlane	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. A. D. McNeill	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. J. S. Young	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. J. F. C. Armstrong	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. F. J. Bell	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. E. T. M. Bell-Scott	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. R. Ferguson	26 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. H. M. Garland	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. K. Harding	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. E. D. Kennedy	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. D. M. Leithead	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. I. M. Mullen	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Grampian Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. P. S. Cook	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Captain C. A Farquharson	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Dr. J. G. Henderson	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mrs C. Houldsworth	12 August 1982	1 April 1985
Professor M. C. Meston	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. G. S. Peterkin, JP	1 April 1983	1 April 1985
Mr. J. Ramage	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Miss E. A. Sheldon, MBE	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mrs. V. A. Stevenson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. A. J. Taylor	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Professor A. G. M. Campbell	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. H. D. Cochran	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. D. Davidson	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mr. N. Donald	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. R. Kemp	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. Muirson	1 April 1975	1 April 1987
Dr. E. A. Smith, CBE	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. J. Sorrie	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Professor E. A. Tait	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. J. G. A. Wisley, JP	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Greater Glasgow Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Lady Goold	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. J. Jackson	1 April 1983	1 April 1985
Mrs. A. Jarvis	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Professor A. C. Kennedy	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Rev. J. T. Lang	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. J. MacKay	7 May 1973	1 April 1985
Mr. B. A. Maan	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. L. Turpie	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. C. Williams	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. F. S. Berkley	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. J. E. Cameron, JP	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Miss E. Donnachie	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Professor A. T. Florence	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. D. Garland	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. A. Gilchrist	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. P. W. Holst	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. A. J. Mack	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. McGarry	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Professor R. M. Mackie	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. A. Peel	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Highland Health Board

	Date of first appointment	Date of present appointment
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mrs. H. E. Betts-Brown	1 April 1985	1 April 1985

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Mr. R. J. B. Bryson MBE	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. R. S. C. Ferguson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Miss M. T. Hadden	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Rt. Hon. Lord G. J. Macdonald of Sleat	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. A. I. MacDonald	7 May 1986	7 May 1986
Mr. B. A. Merchant	22 June 1981	1 April 1985
Dr. W. D. Murray	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. S. M. C. South	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. G. Bruce	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. M. Cumming	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. C. B. Fraser	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. C. A. S. Galloway	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. G. Johnston	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. V. MacIver	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. K. Robertson	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. C. Thomson	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. R. M. Tulloch	26 April 1983	1 April 1987

Lanarkshire Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Dr. G. A. Bell	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. T. M. Bennet	16 January 1986	16 January 1986
Mr. A. Braidwood	16 January 1986	16 January 1986
Mrs. N. Cochrane	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. A. S. Hinshalwood	18 December 1973	1 April 1985
Mrs. J. H. Holmes	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mrs. D. C. McGirr	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. A. E. McIlwain, CBE	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. G. McIntosh	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. A. Mathewson	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. J. Thomson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Miss J. E. Jarvie	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. R. J. Logan	18 December 1973	1 April 1987
Mr. D. McClymont	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Dr. P. K. Mukherjee	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. J. O'Brien, JP	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. H. Porter, OBE	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. T. S. L. Reid	26 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. J. P. Robinson	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Miss J. Rutherford	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Traynor	1 April 1983	1 April 1987

Lothian Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mrs. P. Bell	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. I. Capperauld	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. A. T. Clark, MBE, MVO	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mrs. W. E. Donaldson	19 April 1973	1 April 1985
Sir J. D. Fraser	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. W. B. Herald	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. A. R. Milne	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. J. F. Wilson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Professor J. Williamson	1 April 1983	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mrs. G. Barton	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Dr. J. W. Baynham	1 May 1987	1 May 1987
Miss J. A. Brown	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. E. Burnett	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Mr. J. Campbell	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. B. Dunlop	26 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. J. Ferguson	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. D. R. Findlay	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. Jessie Gray	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. R. I. Kennedy	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. M. MacNeill, CBE	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. G. S. Millar	2 November 1984	1 April 1987

Orkney Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. B. M. Clark	30 October 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. F. J. Groundwater	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mrs. J. Marwick	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. J. W. R. Moor, MBE	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mrs. M. Porteous	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Dr. J. S. Walker	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. A. H. Bevan	18 December 1973	1 April 1987
Mr. A. Bullen	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. J. B. Crichton	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. Flett	18 December 1973	1 April 1987
Mr. J. M. F. Groat	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mrs. G. M. Leslie	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. Leslie	24 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. E. M. Street	18 June 1980	1 April 1987

Shetland Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. A. G. Coutts	16 April 1986	1 April 1985
Dr. M. D. Hunter	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. R. Leask	1 April 1983	1 April 1985
Mr. D. M. Sinclair	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Captain G. Walterson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mrs. M. Williamson	12 February 1982	1 April 1985
Mr. W. A. Smith, BEM	18 April 1973	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Mr. R. R. Bentley	18 December 1973	1 April 1987
Mr. C. A. Cumming	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. G. Flaws	26 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. A. H. George	26 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. M. E. Irving	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. A. T. Leslie	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mr. A. J. R. Tait	6 May 1987	1 April 1987

Tayside Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. E. W. Cameron, OBE	12 August 1982	1 April 1985
Mr. J. Campbell-Smith	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Mr. J. W. Duncan, MBE	8 August 1974	1 April 1985
Mrs. S. D. R. Kydd	1 April 1983	1 April 1985
Dr. A. G. R. Law	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. E. C. Lowson, MBE	1 April 1977	1 April 1985
Professor D. G. McDevitt	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Miss S. D. Moncur	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. I. W. Stevenson	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Miss A. Allan	31 March 1987	1 April 1987
Dr. P. G. Aungle	27 July 1984	1 April 1987
Professor J. S. Beck	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. R. J.T. Bolton	26 April 1983	1 April 1987

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Rev. K. Campbell	1 June 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. G. S. Cargill	31 March 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. S. Fair	27 July 1984	1 April 1987
Mr. A. H. Lynch	31 March 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. C. MacFarlane, OBE	1 April 1983	1 April 1987
Mrs. D. M. Munro	1 June 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. W. Stewart	27 July 1984	1 April 1987

Western Isles Health Board

	Date of first appointment	*Date of present appointment*
Appointed to 31 March 1989		
Mr. D. A. Maclean	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. K. Maclennan	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Mr. J. McIntyre	12 February 1982	1 April 1985
Mr. M. Mcleod	1 April 1981	1 April 1985
Mr. A. D. Millar	16 January 1986	1 April 1985
Mr. I. D. Sutherland	1 April 1985	1 April 1985
Appointed to 31 March 1991		
Dr. N. W. Beresford	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. J. H. Downie	1 April 1979	1 April 1987
Mr. A Matheson	19 April 1973	1 April 1987
Rev. M. A. McLeod	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. C. R. Macaskill	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mr. A. A. McDonald	1 April 1987	1 April 1987
Mrs. G. N. MacKillop	1 April 1987	1 April 1987

Hospital Waiting Lists (Clydesdale)

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the complaints affecting patients on the Clydesdale waiting lists of 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: Information relating to the conditions from which patients on hospital in-patient waiting lists are suffering is not available centrally on a constituency basis. No complaints about waiting lists have been received by the Secretary of State from patients in Clydesdale.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps substantially to reduce waiting lists in Clydesdale.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: I regard reduction of the length of time patients have to wait for treatment as one of the most urgent tasks facing the Health Service and I am looking urgently at the steps that can be taken to improve the situation. Health boards are already making considerable efforts to achieve reductions; the recommendations made in the recent report on the management of orthopaedic services in Scotland will assist them with their objective.

Radioactive Fallout

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to deploy portable detectors or mobile equipment to monitor radioactive fallout in Argyll and Bute; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the event of a nuclear accident overseas affecting the United Kingdom, or an accident at a United Kingdom nuclear installation with off-site effects requiring the implementation of the monitoring arrangements proposed under the national response plan, the monitoring of the Argyll and Bute area, so far as this might be necessary, would be undertaken by monitoring teams from such sites as the Hunterston nuclear power station or the Ministry of Defence installation at Faslane.

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will identify the nearest monitoring stations for radioactive fallout to Argyll and Bute; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The nearest sites currently capable of monitoring radioactive fallout are situated at Hunterston and Faslane. Under the national response plan for nuclear incidents overseas which is currently being developed, it is proposed to have a chain of fixed monitoring stations around the United Kingdom, in addition to the existing nuclear installations, and sites at Machrihanish and Oban are being considered.

Cash Limits

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits for 1987-88 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be making the following changes. As announced on 23 July 1987, (*Official Report* columns 434-438) the cash limit for class XVI, vote 3: regional and general industrial support, Scotland was increased by £853,000; from £124·787 million to £125·640 million, to reflect the carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end year flexibility scheme. This cash limit will be further increased, by £1·389 million, to £127·029 million. The additional expenditure is mainly for land reclamation projects. I shall also be seeking parliamentary approval for a cash limit of £370,000 for a new vote, class XVI, vote 26: Privatisation of the electricity supply industry, Scotland. This makes provision for preliminary expenses, largely advisers' fees.

The limit for the SO/LA2 cash block—which covers mainly housing capital expenditure by public sector agencies in Scotland—is at present £581·166 million. The limit is to be decreased by £62,000 and is the net effect of two changes. The first is an increase in provision of £308,000 as a result of some district councils budgeting below the limit for rate fund contributions to their housing revenue accounts, thereby releasing additional resources for capital expenditure on housing. The second is a reduction of £370,000 from net new towns expenditure, which, subject to parliamentary approval of a Supplementary Estimate for class XVI, 9—New Towns, Scotland—will be used to offset increased requirements for housing deficit and accumulated deficit grants on that vote.

Provision remains within the totals shown in Cm. 56 and none of these changes will increase the planned total of public expenditure.

Parliamentary approval for the changes in voted expenditure will be sought through Supplementary Estimates.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cervical cancer smear tests have been carried out in each of the past five years by each health board; how many patients were recalled; and how many tests proved positive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The available information is set out in the table. The figures relate to the health board in which the examining laboratories are located, which is not necessarily the health board in which the cervical smears were taken.

Health Board Examining Laboratory	*Number of Smears*					*Number of Smears Re-examined*					*Number of Positive Results*				
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1982*[1]	*1983*[1]	*1984*[1]	*1985*[1]	*1986*[1]	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Argyll and Clyde	23,829	27,151	28,946	35,195	33,554	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42	53	[2]65	79	92
Ayrshire and Arran	18,497	21,218	22,827	29,219	30,098	3,795	4,254	4,190	22,947	7,909	72	71	39	69	84
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	11,710	12,235	12,164	13,661	14,331	9,488	9,862	9,711	11,056	11,823	20	22	13	16	18
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	12,784	15,074	15,925	19,509	19,353	5,864	7,066	7,853	10,108	10,499	46	38	45	60	103
Greater Glasgow	49,752	54,276	51,916	59,990	56,068	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	[2]222	[2]199	[2]213	[2]393	[2]264
Grampian	32,726	35,164	37,783	43,539	45,077	22,834	24,681	25,923	30,915	33,380	404	428	578	690	677
Highland	17,094	19,174	18,671	21,577	21,016	12,264	13,574	13,009	15,604	15,001	3	2	6	4	8
Lanarkshire	25,949	28,423	27,274	34,250	33,966	n/a	n/a	18,273	n/a	n/a	261	306	217	320	348
Lothian	64,408	70,713	74,668	63,272	72,122	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	289	250	287	307	462
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	28,356	31,616	32,310	36,535	36,041	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	23,387	260	325	199	164	274
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Notes: n/a = Not available.

1982

[1] Out of 19 laboratories in Scotland 11 did not provide this information.

[2] Estimated.

1983

[1] Out of 17 laboratories in Scotland 10 did not provide this information.

[2] Estimated.

1984

[1] Out of 18 laboratories in Scotland 9 did not provide this information.

[2] Estimated.

1985

[1] Out of 18 laboratories in Scotland 10 did not provide this information.

[2] Estimated.

1986

[1] Out of 18 laboratories in Scotland 9 did not provide this information.

[2] Estimated.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the total number of job vacancies in *(a)* Dundee, East and *(b)* Dundee travel-to-work-area, for the latest available date.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 October 1987, *c33*.]: I have been asked to reply.

Vacancy statistics are not available on a parliamentary constituency or travel-to-work area basis. However, the number of vacancies notified in the Dundee jobcentre area and remaining unfilled on 4 September 1987 was 579 (including 84) community programme vacancies). It is estimated that only around one third of all vacancies nationally are notified to jobcentres.

This information is available in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue

Mr. Raison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to how many individuals the Inland Revenue sends tax returns forms to their home addresses.

Mr. Lawson: Between 7 million and 8 million.

Tobacco

Mr. Holt asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual income from taxation on tobacco and tobacco product to the Exchequer in each of the past eight years.

Mr. Brooke: Receipts from the taxation of all tobacco products were as follows (figures in £ million):

	Excise	*VAT*[1]	*Total tax*
1979-80	2,583·7	450	3,033·7
1980-81	2,820·6	630	3,450·6
1981-82	3,420·4	720	4,140·4
1982-83	3,445·8	770	4,215·8
1983-84	3,805·5	810	4,615·5
1984-85	4,140·0	860	5,000·0
1985-86	4,459·4	910	5,369·4
1986-87	4,767·6	970	5,737·6

[1] Estimated VAT receipts based on consumers' expenditure data.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Redwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the net revenue cost to the Exchequer if both husband and wife were to enjoy mortgage interest relief on £30,000 of mortgage.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue cost in a full year, at 1987-88 levels, of allowing both a husband and wife to claim relief for mortgage interest paid on a loan of upt to £30,000 each is estimated to be about £350 million. The cost of the increase in the mortgage interest relief ceiling for married couples at 1988-89 levels would probably be significantly higher than the estimate above, both because the number of new loans at £30,000 has been increasing recently and because an increase in the ceiling for married couples might stimulate additional borrowing.

Mr. Redwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what extra revenue would result to the Exchequer if mortgage interest relief were limited to the standard rate of tax only.

Mr. Lamont: The direct revenue yield in a full year, at 1987-88 levels, from restricting relief to the basic rate is estimated at £340 million. This makes no allowance for the effect of any consequential changes to the distribution of outstanding mortgages.

Cash Limits

Mr. Key asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is proposing any change to the Central Office of Information's cash limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XIX, vote 1, will be increased by £29,905,000 from £111,127,000 to £141,032,000. The increase will be offset by reimbursements by the clients of the Central Office of Information and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit and the running cost limit for the Inland Revenue for 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit class XIX, vote 7, will be increased by £28,914,000 from £1,013,831,000 to £1,042,745,000 and the running cost limit for the Inland Revenue will be increased by £33,000,000 from £977,736,000 to £1,010,736,000. The changes reflect an increased provision for dealing with work loads in the taxes and collection networks, a revised estimate of amounts received for the cost of collecting national insurance contributions and the amount agreed for the Department under the end-year capital flexibility scheme. The net increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there will be any changes to the Treasury's running costs limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Lawson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the Treasury's running costs limit for 1987-88 will be increased by £803,000 from £65,561,000 to £66,364,000. This increase will be offset by a corresponding decrease on the running costs limit for the central management of the Civil Service etc —Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (Cabinet Office) vote (class XX, vote 1) and results from the changes in the distribution of functions between the office of the Minister of the Civil Service and the Treasury announced by the Prime Minister on 7 August 1987.

BP Share Offer

Mr. Ward asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Government's sale of shares in British Petroleum.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The offers for sale of 2,194 million shares in BP were concluded on 30 October 1987 and provide for total proceeds of £7,017 million. Of this total, proceeds of some £2,552 million are being paid immediately, with the balance spread equally over two instalments in August 1988 and April 1989. £1,513 million has been paid to BP in respect of nearly 459 million new shares which it had issued for subscription by the Treasury.

There were 270,234 applications for nearly 71 million shares at the fixed offer price of 330p each. These applications included 18,008 from existing BP shareholders with entitlements to purchase in the offer and 886 from BP employees. All valid applications have been accepted in full.

A further 2,055 million shares were taken up, at the underwritten price of 330p, by underwriters and sub-underwriters in the following markets (share numbers to the nearest million):

	Million shares
United Kingdom	1,179
United States of America	506
Japan	160
Canada	105
Europe	105

The remaining 68 million shares were reserved by the Treasury to meet entitlements to share bonuses and were not underwritten. Some of these shares will be reserved for the approximately 250,000 applicants who are eligible to receive free shares (one for every 10 they hold continuously until 31 October 1990, subject to a maximum of 150 bonus shares). The Government will sell the remaining shares in due course and the proceeds will be additional to those noted above.

The costs of the sale to the Government will be announced as soon as the full details have been worked out.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced on 29 October, at column 540, arrangements, to be operated by the Bank of England, to ensure that there are orderly aftermarkets in BP shares.

Further details of the bank offer will be announced this week.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of his decision to stabilise the market by instructing the Bank of England to purchase BP shares, he intends to extend such arrangements to any other sizeable rights issues to give other companies the same benefits.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the contract or any other agreement with Rothschilds for the flotation of BP allows Rothschilds the right unilaterally to withdraw from the contract or suspend the flotation.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*holding answer 30 October 1987*]: No.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Sackville asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what stamp duty relief will be available to licensed dealers when the relief provided by section 42 of the Finance Act 1920 comes to an end.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is proposed that the Treasury should make regulations extending the stamp duty and reserve tax exemptions for market makers provided by sections 81 and 89(1) of the Finance Act 1986 to authorised dealers carrying out transactions in securities which cannot be dealt in on a recognised investment exchange. A draft of the proposed regulations is being placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Burns asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in a full financial year of abolishing stamp duty on the purchase of houses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £670 million, at forecast 1987-88 levels, for residential property of all kinds.

Phicom plc

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of the reasons given for instructing the Bank of England to repurchase BP shares, he will instruct the Bank of England to make a similar arrangement to purchase shares in Phicom plc at a discount to the placing price comparable with that allowed on BP.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

EC (Finance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the new proposals from the European Economic Community Commission about the financing of the Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's position remains as set out in the statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the House on 1 July, at columns 493-94, following the last European Council: there must be agreement on effective and binding control of Community spending, particularly agricultural spending, before the question of additional resources can be addressed.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the amount which the European Economic Community will actually spend in the 12 months of 1987 in excess of its budget, disregarding the savings made by the Community in demanding early payment of contributions and delaying payments due to member states.

Mr. Brooke: The 1987 Community budget allows expenditure of up to 36,168 mecu. The Commission's limited discretion to seek overdraft facilities for cash flow reasons must be unwound during the budgetary year, so total spending cannot exceed this figure.

On the question of the budgetary savings agreed in 1987, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend for Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 3 July, at columns 178-79.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Schizophrenic Psychosis

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research projects his Department has landed to test the effectiveness of community care for people suffering from schizophrenic psychosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Three research projects directly commissioned by the Department and specifically relevant to the examination of the effectiveness of community care for schizophrenia sufferers are currently in progress:

1 Early brief treatment versus sustained neuroleptic treatment in the maintenance phase of schizophrenic illness (Charing Cross hospital).
2 Assessment of the needs of chronic schizophrenics living in the Harrow health district (clinical research centre, Northwick Park hospital).
3 The management of schizophrenia in the community (Institute of Psychiatry, London).

In addition, a number of research projects directly commissioned by the Department in the mental illness field are relevant to the treatment of schizophrenia in the community, as well as to other diagnostic groups. The annual DHSS handbook of research and development, which is in the Library, gives details of all the Department's directly commissioned research.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the latest progress of the Government's efforts to co-ordinate their response to the AIDS crisis and the precise measures taken to this end.

Mr. Newton: We have a four-part strategy for dealing with AIDS which comprises:

Public health measures, such as screening blood donations and a system of monitoring the spread of AIDS and HIV;

Public education, so that people can learn how to avoid HIV infection;

Research into vaccines against HIV infection and anti-viral therapies for those who are infected; and

Development of services for those who are infected with HIV or who have AIDS itself.

As my right hon. Friend made clear when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly on 20 October, we are also laying stress on the need for international co-operation in this field.

Specific measures taken or in prospect include:

On 2 September we launched a campaign focusing on the drug-related risks of HIV infection.

New educational work will be carried forward by the Health Education Authority and an initial allocation of £4·1 million has been made to meet the cost of this in the current financial year.

The United Kingdom Government and the World Health Organisation are jointly organising the world summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention, to be held in London in January 1988.

On 23 October in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) at column 906 I announced an extra allocation of £7·8 million as a further contribution this year to the three health regions facing special additional pressures from AIDS and for surveillance work carried out by the public health laboratory services. This brings total extra allocations arising from AIDS this year to £16·4 million.

The Social Services Committee made detailed recommendations in its report on problems associated with AIDS, and we expect to respond by Christmas.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific consideration is given to heating costs when calculating the level of the retirement pension; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Scott: Fuel prices are included in the retail price index which is used as a basis for the uprating of pensions. Changes in heating costs are therefore taken into account automatically when pensions are increased to reflect the overall rise in the cost of living. Help with heating costs is given to supplementary pensioner householders throughout the year and extra payments may also be made during periods of exceptionally cold weather. This help will continue to be available following the social security reforms next April.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in total and in each health authority are currently known to suffer from cystic fibrosis;

(2) how many of the total number of people in England and Wales who currently suffer from cystic fibrosis are over the age of 16 years; and what this figure is as a percentage of sufferers;

(3) what information he has about the recent survey conducted by the British Paediatric Association concerning the percentage of adult cystic fibrosis sufferers who also suffer from diabetes;

(4) how many adult cystic fibrosis sufferers are currently entitled to free prescriptions because they also have the secondary condition of diabetes; and how many adult cystic fibrosis sufferers this leaves who are liable to pay prescription charges for their medication;

(5) what information he has concerning the finding of the recent survey by the Association of Cystic Fibrosis Adults as to the numbers of adult cystic fibrosis sufferers who are in employment and the numbers unemployed who are exempt from prescription charges;

(6) if he will estimate the total number of cystic fibrosis patients who are currently paying prescription charges.

(7) what information he has concerning the average prescription charge paid annually by adult cystic fibrosis sufferers who are liable for such charges;

(8) if he will estimate the total annual revenue generated by prescription charges paid by cystic fibrosis sufferers;

(9) what action he proposes to take in the light of the conclusion of Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust about the number of cystic fibrosis sufferers who currently pay prescription charges and about the total revenue generated;

(10) if he has any plans to exempt cystic fibrosis sufferers from prescription charges.

Mr. Newton: Only a limited amount of information is available and none is collected centrally. From information on the number of children identified as having cystic fibrosis, together with data on survival it can be estimated that there are about 5,600 people with cystic fibrosis in the United Kingdom of whom about 2,400 (40 per cent.) are over 16. In a study of 316 cystic fibrosis patients seen at the Brompton hospital between 1965 and 1983, 36 (11.5 per cent.) developed diabetes mellitus, 13 of whom were insulin-dependent and would therefore be exempt from prescription charges. Patients seen at the Brompton hospital are not necessarily representative of the cystic fibrosis population as a whole, but the figures do provide some indication of the prevalence of diabetes among cystic fibrosis sufferers.

This information is not sufficient to estimate the numbers of people suffering from cystic fibrosis who have to pay prescription charges, or the revenue generated by charges paid by them, though I understand that the Association of Cystic Fibrosis Adults (UK) believes about 800 cystic fibrosis adults are liable to pay prescription charges at an estimated total annual cost of £51,000.

Although the cost of extending the present arrangements for exemption from prescription charges to include cystic fibrosis patients would be small, it would be unfair to single out one group from others who seek an extension of exemption on medical grounds. We therefore have no plans to change the existing arrangements.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the practice with regard to cystic fibrosis patients receiving replacement therapy due to a deficiency state; and if such treatment qualifies for exemption from prescription charges.

Mrs. Currie: Patients who suffer from cystic fibrosis are not automatically exempt from prescription charges. They may, however, qualify for exemption by reason of their age, their financial circumstances or on other medical grounds.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the changes in housing benefit taper rates since the introduction of housing benefit in 1983, together with the taper rates proposed for April 1988; and if he can estimate the rate of withdrawal of benefit for each additional £1 of income for *(a)* a non-taxpayer and *(b)* a taxpayer at the standard rate.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows the tapers above the needs allowance since November 1982 when housing benefit was first introduced on a partial start basis, together with the marginal tax rate (MTR) for a non-taxpayer and someone paying standard rate income tax only, assuming they are getting help with both rent and rates. There have been no adjustments to the tapers below the needs allowance since the introduction of housing benefit.

The proposed tapers of 65 per cent. (for rents) and 20 per cent. (for rates) under the reformed scheme next April cannot be directly compared with the current ones because they will operate net rather than gross income. For someone paying standard rate income tax only, the proposed tapers are equivalent to approximately 47 per cent. (for rents) and 15 per cent. (for rates) on gross income, giving a total MTR of approximately 89 per cent.; for a non-taxpayer the total MTR would be 85 per cent.

Housing Benefit: tapers and tax rates since 1982

	November 1982 Per cent.	*April 1983 Per cent.*	*April 1984 Per cent.*	*November 1984 Per cent.*	*November 1985 Per cent.*	*April 1987 Per cent.*
Rent taper	17	21	26	29	29	33
Rates taper	6	7	9	9	13	13
MTR for a non-taxpayer	23	28	35	38	42	46
MTR for a taxpayer	53	58	65	68	72	73

Notes:

1. The tax rate prevailing at the time has been used. No account has been taken of national insurance contributions or other benefits.

Diet Additions

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for basic food costs for children, as expressed in the deductions from diet addition claims in clause 4736 of the 'S' manual; and if he will express those deductions for children aged under 11 years, 11 to 15 years, and 16 to 17 years as a percentage of the deductions for adults.

Mr. Scott: The figure for an adult in paragraph 4736 of the S Manual (£11·30) represents the average expenditure on food as originally derived from certain data in the 1979 family expenditure survey and subsequently uprated in line with the food element of the retail price index. The figures for children represent approximately 30 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale rate. The figures were last uprated in November 1985. The figures are as follows:

Age of child	*S 4736 figure* £	*As percentage of adult figure (£11·30)*
Under 11	3·00	26·5
11–15	4·40	38·9
16–17	5·50	48·7

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many child dependants of supplementary benefit claimants were claiming diet additions in November 1985, November 1986, and September 1987; and if he will give those figures for each age band.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information is not available. Statistical data on supplementary benefit dietary additions do not show to which member of the assessment unit the award relates.

Unemployment Benefit Claimants

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants on a quarterly basis successfully claimed under regulation 6 of the Condition of Entitlement Regulations in the 12 months 1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985, 1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986 and 1 October 1986 to 30 September 1987; and if he will give the figures on a similar basis for each unemployment benefit office in Newcastle.

Mr. Portillo: Regulation 6 lists all the categories of persons whose entitlement to supplementary benefit is not subject to the condition of being available for employment. Generally the fact that a claimant falls within one of these is recognised by an officer dealing with the case, usually in the Department but sometimes in the Department of Employment (for example at a restart interview); but the claimant or someone on his behalf may of course raise the question himself.

I regret that no information is available about the number of people required to be available who have been signing on quarterly and have subsequently come within the terms of regulation 6. Such information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drug Safety

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to ensure that when considering the safety of drugs, the effect of drug overdoses is brought within the scope of the Medicines Act.

Mr. Newton: When assessing an application for a product licence under the Medicines Act, the licensing authority and the Committee on Safety of Medicines are concerned primarily with the safety, quality and efficacy of the medicinal product when taken at recommended doses for the relevant indications. Where appropriate, however, close account is taken of the adequacy of warning statements, including guidance in the event of overdosage, in the data sheets, product particulars and labelling of medicinal products. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that consultation takes place between the Committee on Safety of Medicines and drug companies before notices are formally issued under section 28 of the Medicines Act.

Mr. Newton: Before seeking the compulsory revocation or variation of a product licence under section 28 of the Medicines Act, it is normal practice for the licensing authority to consult the licence holder with a view to obtaining agreement to a voluntary change. Where the licensing authority proposes to take formal action under that provision to suspend, revoke or vary a product licence in relation to safety, quality or efficacy, the provisions of schedule 2 to the Medicines Act 1968 will apply. These include the right of the licence holder to make oral or written representations to a section 4 committee, such as the Committee on Safety of Medicines, and, if necessary, thereafter to the Medicines Commission before action is taken. The licensing authority can, however, suspend a product licence with immediate effect for up to three months in the interests of safety, further suspension being subjected to the process described in schedule 2. Informal consultation may not be possible in such circumstances.

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to reduce delays in the processing by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, of applications by drug companies that will lead to the introduction of new and available treatments for a variety of conditions.

Mr. Newton: The special study of the medicines division of the Department by Dr. J. Evans and Mr. P. Cunliffe, which I announced in March this year, is considering ways of reducing the time taken in the processing of new drug applications. We hope to receive their report early in the new year. Increases have been made to the full-time professional staff which supports the Comittee on Safety of Medicines. We are also introducing more information technology. The recently introduced EC requirement for expert reports to be included in all applications should lead to improvements in the quality and comprehensiveness of applications by pharmaceutical companies and this will facilitate quicker processing.

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the benefit-risk ratio applied to the Committee on Safety of Medicines; if the same criteria will be applied to treatments for AIDS as for other conditions; and what groups of conditions qualify for fast-track processing.

Mr. Newton: The Committee on Safety of Medicines has to balance the risks and benefits on a case by case basis in the light of professional judgment. The level of acceptable risk will clearly vary according to circumstances, for example where conditions are life threatening, such as AIDS, compared with other less serious conditions. I am satisfied that the committee is well constituted to provide expert advice to the licensing authority on licensing decisions. Normally all licence applications are assessed in strict chronological order of the date of receipt. "Fast-tracking" means that the application is considered out of turn; it does not mean that normal standards are lowered. A product licence application may be fast-tracked when there are compelling reasons for believing that the product would provide a major therapeutic breakthrough in the treatment of patient for indicated conditions.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Moore: The amount spent by my Department on press advertising including national newspapers in each of the past five years is as follows:

	£
1982-83	1,600,000
1983-84	1,938,000
1984-85	3,662,000
1985-86	3,188,000
1986-87	5,570,000

It is not possible to distinguish between national advertising and all other press advertising. A breakdown by newspaper titles cannot be provided as the information is commercially confidential.

National press advertising has been an element in a variety of DHSS campaigns covering social security and health subjects including social security reformed benefits, the primary health care review, AIDS public education, drug prevention, blood donor and nursing recruitment.

National Insurance Contributions (Review)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet completed his review of national insurance contributions for 1988-89.

Mr. Moore: I have completed the annual review under section 120 of the Social Security Act 1975. The proposals will take effect from 6 April 1988.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his statement earlier today, I do not propose to raise the standard rate of contributions for either employees or employers, which remain at 9 per cent. and 10·45 per cent. respectively. 1988-89 will be the fifth successive year when these rates have remained unchanged.

In line with the requirements of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions is to be raised to £41 per week, which is just below the basic retirement pension rate for a single person, as announced to the House on October 27. The upper earnings limit is to be raised to £305 per week, which is a little less than 7½ times the new basic pension rate. The new earnings limits replace the current ones of £39 and £295 respectively.

The reduced contribution rates for the lower paid will continue unchanged. The reduced rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. for employees, and 5 per cent., 7 per cent. and 9 per cent. for employers will be extended further; they will now apply to weekly earnings which fall below the ceilings of £70, £105, and for employers only, £155 (the previous ceilings were £65, £100 and £150 respectively).

Not contracted-out employees and their employers

Neither the employee nor his employer will have to pay any contributions if his earnings are less than £41 per week. For people earning between £41 and £295 (the former upper earnings limit) there will be no increase for either the employee or the employer. In fact, owing to the increase in the earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates, some lower paid employees will pay a slightly smaller contribution, as will their employers. For those employees with earnings above £295 per week, the maximum possible increase will be 90p per week. There will be no corresponding increase for employers since there is no upper earnings limit for their contributions.

Contracted-out employees and their employers

Contributions payable by some contracted-out employees and their employers will rise slightly, partly as a result of the lower contracted-out rebate which Parliament approved in April, and which will take effect in April 1988. Where earnings are less than the former upper earnings limit of £295 per week, the increase will reflect both the reduced rebate and the fact that the increase in the lower earnings limit increases the band of earnings on which the non-contracted-out contribution rates are paid. Some lower paid contracted-out employees, and their employers, will in fact have their contributions reduced as a result of the higher earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates.

Contracted-out employees with earnings above the old upper earnings limit (£295) will pay a maximum of £1·12 a week extra, and their employers will pay 46p per week extra if they are earning £305 per week.

Self-employed people

The flat rate class 2 contribution will be raised to £4·05 per week.

The rate of class 4 contributions will not be increased. The annual limits of profits between which class 4 contributions are paid will be raised to £4,750 and £15,860 from £4,590 and £15,340 respectively.

For those self-employed people with profits between £4,750 and £15,340 (the former upper profits limit) class 4 contributions will be reduced by £10·08 per year in 1988-89 assuming an unaltered level of profits. For those self-employed people with profits at or above the proposed upper profits limit of £15,860 in 1988-89, annual class 4 contributions will be £22·68 higher.

Class 3 (voluntary) contributions

The rate of class 3 contributions be raised to £3·95 per week.

Treasury supplement

The Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund will be reduced from 7 per cent. to 5 per cent. with effect from April 1988.

Employment protection allocation

There will be no employment protection allocation for 1988-89. Currently the rates are 0·07 per cent. for employees and 0·06 per cent. for employers.

National Health Service allocation

The allocation to the National Health Service, currently 0·85 per cent. for employees and 0·7 per cent. for employers, will be increased to 0·95 per cent. and 0·8 per cent. respectively from April 1988.

The draft orders and the contributions amendment regulations, which are required to give effect to my proposals, together with the Government Actuary's report on their effect on the national insurance fund, will be laid before the House shortly.

Income-Related Benefits

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to lay regulations covering the new income-related benefit schemes from April 1988.

Mr. Scott: I have today laid before Parliament four sets of draft regulations: the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987; the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987; the Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987; and the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987.

Taken together, these regulations provide the detailed framework for the new system of income-related benefits which is to be introduced in April next year. They also include the rates which will apply to the new benefits. The benefit rates included in the regulations are the same as the proposed rates announced by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services, in his statement on 27 October at columns 179-81.

The benefit rates in the draft housing benefit regulations have been the subject of consultation with the local authority associations whose representatives have been taken into account.

I have also today placed in the Libraries of both Houses, draft copies of the proposed transitional regulations covering income support, housing benefit and family credit so that the income-related benefit regulations can be considered as a total package. The transitional regulations will be made and laid before the House as soon as the general regulations (with which they are linked) have been approved. They will provide transitional protection for existing recipients of supplementary benefit and family income supplement who remain eligible for income support or family credit.

Peto Institute, Budapest

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial assistance is available to patients from the United Kingdom attending the Peto Institute in Budapest.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 29 October 1987]*: There are no statutory powers to use Government funds to meet the costs of this type of treatment. Some United Kingdom social security benefits may continue in payment if a beneficiary goes abroad to seek treatment for a medical condition.

Doctors

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set a statutory limit on the number of hours worked by junior doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fearn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reduce the average working hours of junior doctors.

Mr. Newton *[holding answers 30 October and 3 November 1987]*: The Government have accepted that the excessive hours traditionally required of some junior doctors are neither in their interests nor those of their patients. We have agreed with the representatives of the medical profession that, while the impetus to reduce such hours has to come from the Department, changes in working practices can only be identified and implemented locally, with the full support and co-operation of all the practitioners concerned, rather than through statutory limitations. We have already instructed health authorities to eliminate regular rotas requiring a practitioner to be on duty, on average, for more than one night in two and one weekend in two, and we have asked them to aim for a target maximum commitment of one in three or better, where practicable. We estimate that the number of posts with rotas more onerous than one in three fell or was planned to fall between 1982 and 1985 from 5,000 to 3,500. There are currently some 1,520 posts, representing about 7 per cent. of the total, with weekly contracted hours of over 104, although the average figure has fallen in every year since 1979, from over 90 to 85·7. These are hours of duty, rather than work: independent surveys commissioned by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration show that the average weekly hours actually worked, as reported by juniors themselves, have also fallen, from 58·3 in 1981 to 57 in 1985. Officials will shortly be discussing with the profession's representatives how best to make further progress in this direction, in the context of the measures to reform the hospital medical staffing structure which I announced on 27 October at column *258*. These are principally designed to increase the involvement of consultants in direct patient care and supervision of juniors, to maintain necessary levels of support for consultants, and to improve juniors' career prospects and job security, thus in turn helping to solve the recruitment difficulties experienced in some specialties.

Kendal Hospital

Mr. Jopling asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest start and completion dates for the new Kendal hospital, the estimated cost, and the number of people who will eventually be employed there compared with those currently employed in the hospitals in the area, together with the number of beds which will be provided compared with the current situation.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Work on the site for the new Westmorland general hospital commenced on 7 September this year. The scheme is scheduled for completion in September 1990, at an estimate total cost of £21·5 million, and will provide 304 in-patient beds, some of which will replace existing outdated facilities.

The day-to-day running of the hospital will be the responsibility of the South Cumbria health authority; I understand that 575 people (whole-time equivalents) are expected to be required, which is a net increase of 173 (whole-time equivalents).

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 November 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of prisoners serving life sentences in prisons in 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. John Patten: The number of prisoners serving life sentences was 2,339 on 30 June 1987, the most recent date for which figures are available. Details of the average population for each of the previous 10 years are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales," at table 1.4 of the latest issue, for 1986 (Cm. 210) a copy of which is in the Library.

Children (Abduction)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of children being detained under the port stop procedures under the Child Abduction Act 1984 have been reported to him; and how many of these cases were instances where children had been abducted by those who were not related to them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The Home Office relinquished direct responsibility for port stop procedures on 2 May 1986; the responsibility now lies with chief officers of police and no statistics are kept centrally.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what liaison exists between British Police forces and those of other European countries relating to the abduction of children; and what machinery exists for reporting of the abduction of minors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Liaison between British police forces and those of other European countries is conducted through normal interpol channels. Within this country all police forces are alerted to the abduction of minors through the police national computer.

Special Constables

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take steps to bring special constables into the disciplinary and grievance procedure which applies to other police constables; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received seeking the right for special constables to have an appeal mechanism against chief constables' decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to introduce a discipline code for special constables since it would be difficult to apply such a code to voluntary unpaid officers. We have had no recent representations in favour of an appeal system other than from the hon. Member.

Private Investigators

Mr. Anthony Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government propose to introduce legislation to impose statutory controls on the private investigation industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Government continue to support and encourage non-statutory self-regulation for professional investigators as we do for the private security industry.

Nationality

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking in order to harmonise British nationality law with similar laws in European Community countries.

Mr. Renton: There are no Community proposals to harmonise nationality laws and we have no plans to amend the British Nationality Act 1981.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department for each year since 1979.

Mr. Hurd: The information is as follows:

Number of Operational Researchers as at 1 January

Year	*Number*
1979	[1]
1980	[1]
1981	33
1982	32
1983	30
1984	31
1985	35
1986	36·5
1987	32·5

[1] Figures not readily available.

Political Refugees

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the normal procedure with regard to extending the residence period granted to a person likely to be imprisoned for political reasons on return to his own country, on application, after an initial grant of 12 months' residence has lapsed; and what were the considerations made in the case of Mr. Safpar Hamdani, overseas co-ordinator to the Pakistan People's Party, currently in London.

Mr. Renton: An individual in this position would normally be granted leave to remain for an initial period of one year and then be granted further leave to remain for a period of three years, after which permanent settlement may be granted. Further leave to remain may however be granted for shorter periods than three years where, for example, there is a possibility of a change in the circumstances which led to the initial grant of leave to remain. The normal criteria have been applied in the case of Mr. Safpar Hamdani.

Self-Defence

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the acceptable degree of self-defence available to citizens threatened by criminal acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received numerous inquiries and representations from right hon. and hon. Members and direct from members of the public.

The law permits a person to use reasonable force to defend himself or to prevent crime. What is reasonable will depend on all the circumstances and, if a charge is brought, will be determined by the court in each specific case. The courts have held that, if a person defending himself against attack did what he honestly and instinctively thought necessary, that would be the most potent evidence that only reasonable defensive action had been taken.

The right of self-defence does not imply a right to the routine carrying by the public of weapons or articles intended for use as weapons; and we are concerned to reduce the number of weapons which are carried.

Trials (Video Technology)

Mrs. Golding asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will give the results of his consultations on the use of video technology at trials of alleged child abusers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend asked for views, first on the detailed implementation of our proposal to permit children to give evidence by closed-circuit television. We are still receiving helpful comments on this, and will bear these carefully in mind, together with observations made in this House and another place, when the time comes to implement proposals in the Criminal Justice Bill.

Secondly, we asked for views on whether video recordings of interviews with children should be more readily admissible at trials. The responses generally show enthusiasm for this, on grounds with which we have much sympathy. But there are serious problems. In particular, a video recording which is helpful for investigative purposes is likely to present at least part of the child's evidence in a form inadmissible as evidence at the trial. Further, the benefits for the child envisaged by most responses would not be realised unless the use of the recording at the trial meant that the child need not give oral evidence. We believe, however, that it is vital in the interests of justice for the right of the defence to cross-examine the alleged victim to be preserved.

As explained in the debate in another place on 22 October, we therefore feel that on balance easier admissibility of video recordings would not meet the twin tests of benefit to the child and interests of justice.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology College, Solihull

Mr. Anthony Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications and inquiries have been received for places at the new city technology college in Solihull.

Mrs. Rumbold: More than 700 inquiries have been received about admissions to the city technology college, Kingshurst. More than 300 applications have already been made.

Boarding Schools Association

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the recent meeting between the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and representatives of the Boarding Schools Associations.

Mr. Dunn: I had a useful meeting with the association on 1 October. The secretary of the association has since written to me with a comprehensive note of points raised at the meeting, to which I have now replied.

Expatriate Workers

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to support or assume responsibility for the education of children of expatriate workers other than for Government employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have no such plans.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

	Number
1979	2
1980	2
1981	2
1982	2
1983	3
1984	3
1985	3
1986	4
1987	4

WALES

Tourism

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate when his response can be expected to the report of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on tourism in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I hope to respond shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

ICL

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister what investigations are currently going on into the affairs of ICL.

The Prime Minister: Investigations under the Companies Act are matters for the Department of Trade and Industry. Investigations in relation to defence issues are matters for the Ministry of Defence. Similarly, the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have responsibility for their own investigations. Most such investigations are of a confidential nature for obvious reasons.

Customs Barriers

Mr. Hood asked the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the advantages likely to accrue from the removal of all customs barriers on trade between the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Economic Community by 1992.

The Prime Minister: Customs barriers add to the costs of exporting and hinder the development of trade with the rest of the European Community. Tackling them and other barriers will increase opportunities for British business by creating a single market of 320 million people.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Summary Cases

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General if his guidelines as to disclosure of previous inconsistent statements and unused material will apply in summary cases.

The Attorney-General: The guidelines issued by my predecessor in 1981 concern the disclosure to the defence of "unused material" in cases to be tried on indictment. There are not separate guidelines as to the disclosure of previous inconsistent statements. However, the term "unused material" includes all witness statements that have not otherwise been served on the defence, whether or not the maker of the statement is to give evidence for the prosecution. Thus, previous inconsistent written statements are covered by the 1981 outlines.

In addition to the obligations imposed by the 1981 guidelines, the general duty to be fair requires a prosecutor to disclose to the defence any materially inconsistent statement made by a prosecution witness, written or oral, of which the prosecutor becomes aware at any stage of the proceedings. That duty applies equally to summary proceedings and to proceedings on indictment.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions will prosecute Mr. Frank Larsen for possession of a forged Ministry of Defence police warrant.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on Monday 2 November 1987 at column *510*.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Winnick asked the Attorney-General if he will give a detailed breakdown of all the legal costs accorded in the United Kingdom and outside in taking action to stop the publication of "Spycatcher."

The Attorney-General: I shall break down the total amount of costs to public funds to date of the court action in Australia into two categories: the first, travelling and subsistence for officials, is approximately £65,000; the second, legal fees, is approximately £369,000.

Travelling and subsistence costs have not yet been incurred in respect of the actions in New Zealand and Hong Kong; nor have they been incurred in repect of the action here against *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*. The total costs to public funds to date of these actions remain as in my answer of 22 October to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Soviet Union

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of British-Soviet trade since the visit of the Prime Minister to the Soviet Union this year.

Mr. Alan Clark: I was very encouraged by the high level of interest in trade and industrial co-operation shown by both sides during my visit to the Soviet Union for the UK/USSR joint commission in mid-October. I was accompanied to Moscow by senior members of several United Kingdom companies and they were able to join me in calls on Soviet industrial Ministries which have now the right to engage in foreign trade directly. There is considerable potential which I hope that British companies will exploit energetically, with the full support of Her Majesty's Government, so that the increase in bilateral trade by 40 per cent. in 1990, as discussed by the Prime Minister with Mr. Ryzhkov in March, can be achieved.

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table of export and import trade between each of the member states of the European Economic Community and the Soviet Union during each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement on the trends indicated therein.

Mr. Alan Clark: The figures are in the following table. Exports from the Community have shown little variation in recent years (in dollar terms) while imports have declined in recent years mainly because of reduced oil imports and the fall in the price of oil. The Community's overall deficit with the Soviet Union is about half its level four years ago.

European Community countries' trade with the USSR

US$ million

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
			exports (fob)		
Bel./Lux.	536	665	547	632	496
Denmark	87	77	117	135	184
France	1,556	2,231	1,954	1,896	1,532
Germany	3,869	4,418	3,800	3,603	4,319
Greece	141	143	121	142	78
Ireland	43	60	22	36	61
Italy	1,510	1,877	1,586	1,528	1,618
Netherlands	424	534	303	342	334
Portugal	52	51	56	70	51
Spain	220	334	357	441	238
United Kingdom	623	675	982	696	791
E. C. 12	9,061	11,063	9,846	9,521	9,703
			imports (cif)		
Bel./Lux.	1,468	1,154	1,858	1,256	1,047
Denmark	328	271	331	286	205
France	2,858	2,811	2,550	2,453	2,647
Germany	4,473	4,444	4,894	4,630	4,204
Greece	221	247	508	532	284

	exports (fob)				
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Ireland	54	50	51	51	41
Italy	3,541	3,593	4,039	2,980	2,324
Netherlands	2,571	2,627	2,207	2,328	1,046
Portugal	101	84	61	55	51
Spain	493	495	537	383	299
United Kingdom	1,129	1,105	1,142	939	1,018
E. C. 12	17,235	16,882	18,177	15,893	13,166

Source: OECD Series 'A' (via I. P. Sharp).

British Caledonian and British Airways

Mr. Flynn asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will make it his policy to take into account the potential impact of a British airline industry dominated by one carrier operating from both Heathrow and Gatwick on Cardiff and other regional airports before making his decision on the proposed merger of British Caledonian and British Airways.

Mr. Sackville asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take into account the potential impact of a British airline industry dominated by one carrier, operating from Heathrow and Gatwick, on Manchester and other regional airports before making his decision on the proposed take over of British Caledonian by British Airways.

Mr. Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take into account the potential impact of a British airline industry dominated by one carrier, operating from both Heathrow and Gatwick, on Bournemouth International Airport and other regional airports in making his decision on the proposed take-over of British Caledonian by British Airways.

Mr. Cran asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, when he takes the decision on the British Airways/British Caledonian merger, he will take into account the potential effect of a large British carrier on smaller independent air lines and their employees.

Mr. Maude: The proposed merger is being investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Only if the commission concludes that a merger might be expected to operate against the public interest does my right hon. and noble Friend have the power to intervene to prevent or impose conditions on it. In such cases, he will take into account all relevant considerations in deciding what action, if any, may be appropriate.

Biodegradable Products

Mr. Beggs asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what incentive Her Majesty's Government are giving to industry to encourage the development of biodegradable products; and whether Her Majesty's Government have plans to introduce legislation to require that biodegradable products are introduced to replace plastic products where possible.

Mr. Butcher: The Government have no plans to introduce such legislation at this time.

Normal channels of Government funding are available to encourage work in this area. We support and are in discussions with the plastics industry about the use of degradable materials. They are being encouraged to employ them when it is commercially viable to do so.

In October 1986 a workshop was held on the recycling of plastics which was attended by the industry and other interested bodies. This has been successful in creating a more positive attitude towards recycling.

Regional Policy

Ms. Armstrong asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has completed his review of regional policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State and I have been reviewing all our Department's activities since we were appointed to our present posts and we will continue to do so. We have recently established new objectives for the Department and we are considering the best application of those objectives in the field of regional policy.

Toys (Safety)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to secure the safety of toys to be made available for sale during the pre-Christmas shopping period, and in particular to ensure that in future all toys sold within the United Kingdom should conform with BS 5665; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department plans to run a toy safety promotion campaign in November and December aimed at putting across an effective message during the Christmas peak buying period.

The Government have no plans to make compliance with BS 5665 mandatory. We are effectively prevented from doing so under the standstill provisions of article 9(2) of the EC directive 83/189/EEC because a proposal for an EC toy safety directive is now in the final stages of negotiation.

Toys supplied in the United Kingdom must comply with the requirements of the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1974, which cover the main hazards. The general safety requirement of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 applies to hazards not covered by the regulations. As a published standard BS 5665 is relevant for the purpose of the general safety requirement.

Trading Standards officers

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any proposals for the removal of trading standards officers and their delegated functions from local authority control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: There are no plans to remove trading standards officers and their delegated functions from local authority control. Local enforcement enables trading standards officers to respond quickly to the public, to take immediate action and to provide for the particular needs of local industry. There is no evidence that this can be achieved more efficiently or economically.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Hood asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the cases in which Her Majesty's

Government have withdrawn from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission mergers referred for its consideration, as from 1979;

(2) in what cases of proposed mergers a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission can be withdrawn.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend has no powers, under the Fair Trading Act 1973, to withdraw a merger or proposed merger from consideration by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission once he has referred it to the commission. However under section 75 of the Act, if, in the course of its investigations on a merger reference, it appears to the commission that a merger proposal has been abandoned it may, if the Secretary of State consents, lay the reference aside. Since 1979 the following merger references have been laid aside:

Proposed Merger	*Date of reference*
Grand Metropolitan Hotels Ltd./Coral Leisure Group Ltd.	17 October 1980
Argyll Foods Ltd./Linfood Holdings Ltd.	10 November 1981
Rowntree Mackintosh/Huntley and Palmer Foods plc	16 March 1982
Prosper de Mulder Ltd./Thomas Borthwick and Sons plc	16 September 1982
Redland plc/Ibstock Johnson plc	28 January 1983
Knoll International Holdings Inc./Sotheby Parke Bernet	4 May 1983
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc/J. W. Cameron and Company Ltd.	5 June 1984
Imperial Group plc/Permaflex Ltd.	10 April 1985
McCorquodale plc/Richard Clay plc	23 August 1985
Imperial Group plc/United Biscuits (Holdings) plc	11 February 1986
Guinness plc/The Distillers Company plc	14 February 1986
Cope Allman International plc/Firth Cleveland Strip	3 April 1986
Hillsdown Holdings plc/S and W Berisford plc	19 May 1986
London International Group plc/ Wedgwood plc	9 June 1986
Strong and Fisher (Holdings) plc/Garnar Booth plc	2 November 1986
Gulf Resources and Chemical Corporation/ Imperial Continental Gas Association	9 December 1986

Steel Industry

Mr. Hardy asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to make decisions or offer further opinion to the European Economic Community in regard to proposals to secure further contraction of the steel industry in the United Kingdom and in the other member states.

Mr. Atkins: The Commission's proposals on steel policy were considered by Ministers of the Twelve at the Industry Council on 21 September. The Council agreed to invite the Commission to appoint a group of three wise persons to advise the Council on how adequate commitments to the reduction of production capacity can be obtained. The wise persons have been asked to report by Mid-November. The next meeting of the Industry Council is scheduled for 8 December.

Mr. Hardy asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the proportion by which the steel industry has contracted both in terms of production volume and job loss in Britain and in the other member states of the EEC since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested can be found in the "Iron and Steel Statistical Yearbook 1986" and the "Iron and Steel Quarterly Statistics" published by Eurostat, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Third World

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total value of invisible exports, invisible imports and the invisible balance of trade, between Britain and the third World, broken down into oil-exporting countries and the rest of the world, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive annual data on invisibles relating to the areas mentioned are not available.

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the totals of new investment, reinvestment and disinvestment by Britain in the Third World and by the Third world from Britain, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The available information relates to overseas direct investment. The value of acquisitions and disposals of share capital by UK companies in the companies in the developing countries and the value of reinvested profits in the overseas concerns are given in Table 1. The value of acquisitions and disposals of share capital of UK companies and of profits reinvested in the UK by companies in the developing countries are shown in table 2. The data relating to outward direct investment will be published in approximately two months time in *Business Monitor* MA4 1985.

The net totals shown in tables 1 and 2 include only those items requested and hence exclude changes in the levels of current account and long-term loan balances and in branch/head office indebtedness, all of which are normally included in the published series for foreign direct investment in *Business Monitor* MA4.

Table 1

United Kingdom direct investment in developing countries[1]

£ million

	[2]1981	*[2]1982*	*[2]1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Acquisition of share and loan capital in companies in the developing countries	341	230	658	978	1,304
Disposal of share and loan capital in companies in the developing countries	25	613	148	101	202
Reinvested Earnings from direct investments in developing countries	590	540	605	1,158	761
Net Total	906	157	1,115	2,035	1,863

[1] Developing countries are defined as Asia, Africa (excluding South Africa), Caribbean, Central and South America, Oceania and Yugoslavia.
[2] Excludes oil companies.

Table 2
Direct investment by the developing countries[1] in the United Kingdom

£ million

	[2]*1981*	[2]*1982*	[2]*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Acquisition of United Kingdom companies' share capital by companies in the developing countries	238	87	87	71	—
Disposal of United Kingdom companies' share capital by companies in the developing countries	10	—	5	26	—
Re-invested earnings from developing countries direct investments in the United Kingdom	35	6	27	−2	102
Net Total	263	93	109	43	239

[1] and [2] See table 1.
—Not available.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The number of operational research specialists in this Department for each year since 1979 was as follows:

	Number
1979	6
1980	7
1981	11
1982	9
1983	9
1984	6
1985	6
1986	10
1987	11

Group Accounts

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in respect of the incorporation of the European Community's seventh directive on group accounts into British law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department is preparing detailed legislative proposals in the light of responses to a consultation document. The necessary legislation should be part of the next Companies Bill.

Company Accounts (Disclosure of Liabilities)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to introduce legislation to restrict the ability of companies not to make disclosure of liabilities through their accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department is considering the issues raised by the practice of keeping assets and liabilities off a company's balance sheet with the Accounting Standards Committee and other bodies with a close interest in this topic. This will be taken into account in drafting changes to company law which will be made to implement the EC seventh company law directive.

Semi-Conductors

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to assist the semi-conductor industry to play a part in joint European research initiatives, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Assistance to joint European collaborative research in semi-conductors will be available through the second phase of the European Community's ESPRIT programme, which is now in the final stages of preparation. The Department is active in providing advice to companies wishing to participate in the programme.

Electronics Industry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to extend financial aid to more process-based projects in the electronics industry, along the lines of the proposed scheme to replace the Alvey programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The IT86 report's recommendations are being considered as part of the review of priorities, in the field of research and development, for the Department of Trade and Industry.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Consumer Credit Act 1974

Mr. Grylls asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is in a position to make a statement on the future treatment of business lending and hiring under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Mr. Maude: As stated in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers" the Government have been studying the treatment of business lending and hiring under the Act. At present the Act regulates any credit or hire agreement, within the financial limits of the Act, where the borrower or hirer is not a body corporate. It has been strongly argued by major lenders that the application of the Act to some business credit is harmful both to lenders and to small businesses themselves and can give rise to anomalies. My Department has consulted organisations representing small businesses on a possible change to the Act to exclude all credit for business purposes and this proposal has been generally welcomed. We have therefore decided that the Act should be amended to exclude all credit and hire for business purposes and we will make this change to the Act, together with other changes to simplify and clarify the Act's provisions, as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

Telecommunications

Mr. Jack asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is central Government's spending on telecommunications with *(a)* British Telecom and *(b)* Mercury Communications.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

Records of expenditure on telecommunications products and services are not maintained centrally.

ENERGY

South African Coal Industry

92. **Mr. Hood** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the South African Government concerning the establishment of the office of the South African coal industry in London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

Coal (Imports)

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the level of coal imports during the years 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date, through the port of Seaham; and what are the origins of such imports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the purposes of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise's import statistics, Seaham is included within the port of Sunderland. Coal imports through Sunderland in 1985, 1986 and January-August 1987 (the latest period for which data are available), split by country of consignment, are shown in the table. The country of consignment is the place from which the coal was despatched to the United Kingdom and is not necessarily the country in which the coal was originally mined. No split of coal imports through Sunderland by country of origin is available.

Coal Imports through Sunderland by Country of Consignment
Thousand tonnes

	1985	*1986*	*Jan-Aug 1987*
Australia	—	13·6	2·3
Belgium/Luxembourg	—	11·0	—
France	—	—	1·2
German Democratic Republic	12·0	—	—
Federal Republic of Germany	15·4	10·7	16·3
Netherlands	47·6	157·0	38·5
Poland	10·6	42·3	14·6
Sweden	—	—	4·3
United States of America	2·5	8·3	1·3
Total	88·2	242·9	78·6

Total may not equal sum of constituents due to rounding.

Drax Power Station

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Energy when orders will be placed for the desulphurisation plant at Drax power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board expects to be able to place the main plant contracts for the Drax power station by the end of 1988.

Miners' Strike

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on how many miners in the north-east area who were dismissed during the 1984-85 strike have not yet been re-employed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Questions on the dismissal and re-employment of mineworkers are matters for the management of the British Coal Corporation.

Power Transmission Cables

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Energy what studies are currently taking place to determine the economic and practical feasibility of placing underground more rural electric power transmission cables.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The placing of electric power lines is in the first instance a matter for the electricity supply industry and I have therefore asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to my hon. Friend with the information he requested and to send me a copy of this letter.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: No operational research specialists have been employed in this Department since 1979.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the operation of the pesticide regulations of the Food and Environmental Protection Act insofar as they relate to the need of growers to register agro-chemicals which are off-label, with a view to suspending the regulations until such time as the applications before his Department have been cleared.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The requirements of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 are kept under constant review to ensure that they achieve their objectives in terms of protecting food and the environment. I also require to be satisfied that they do not impose unnecessary burdens on those who have to operate within them. I accordingly announced interim arrangements for off-label uses of pesticides in 1988 on 30 October, which give provisional approval for one year for additional uses of approved pesticides where safety considerations allow this. I believe that these arrangements will ensure that growers should have available to them appropriate products with which to treat almost all pest and disease situations. We are also giving priority to individual applications in those sectors which are not included in the interim arrangements, and I hope to be announcing definitive off-label approvals for those sectors within the next few weeks.

Hedgerows (Removal Subsidy)

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of subsidy paid to farmers in Easington district for the removal of hedgerows.

Mr. Gummer: Grants for hedge removal were abolished in 1976 except where the removal was ancillary to drainage work. Grants even of this restrictive kind were discontinued for all new commitments on 1 December 1983. Since 1985 grants of up to 60 per cent. have been available for the provision, replacement or improvement of hedges and hedgerow trees.

Forestry Planting Licences

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for forestry planting licences in England were objected to by local authorities and other statutory bodies, respectively, in each of the last five years and 1987 to date; and how many were refused as a result.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of applications object to*	*Number of objections from* *Local authorities*	*Number of objections from* *Other statutory bodies*	*Decisions taken on these applications*
1982	—	—	—	
1983		—	—	
1984	3	3	2	2 Refused 1 Approved
1985	—	—	—	
1986	4	3	1	1 Refused 3 Approved
1987	2	2	1	1 Refused 1 Pending

Dairy Inspection Charges

Mr. David Nicholson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has had since 1 July regarding the impact of dairy inspection charges on smaller farm units; and whether he will list the organisations making such representations;

(2) whether he has any plans to change the pattern or the administration of dairy inspection charges, insofar as these affect smaller farm units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received representations from individual farmers, from their Members of Parliament and from organisations such as the NFU and the MMB. The original proposals were modified to reduce the impact of charging on small producers, including those in the untreated milk sector. But the search for economies is continuing and any reduction in costs will be passed on to producers.

Trade Balance

Mr. Leighton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current United Kingdom trade balance with the rest of the European Economic Community in agricultural produce.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 October 1987]*: The latest available information is given in the following table.

Trade between the United Kingdom and other European Community countries—Agricultural products

	January to December 1986 £ million
Exports	3,003
Imports	5,706
Balance	−2,703

During the first eight months of 1987, exports have risen by 20 per cent. compared with the same period in 1986, and imports by only 8 per cent.

North Sea (Pollution)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has as to the amount of pollution in the North sea caused by sea dumping by Britain;

(2) what amount of waste and other materials Britain dumps in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The amount of waste and other materials disposed of in the North sea in 1986 by virtue of licences issued under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 was:

	Tonnes
Dredgings	17,776,000
Sewage sludge	5,540,000
Solid industrial waste	2,570,000
Liquid industrial waste	242,000

Sea disposal licences are not issued unless careful scientific examination shows the operation in question to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the marine environment, the living resources it supports, and human health, and unless it conforms to the relevant international conventions. The practical availability of alternative methods of dealing with the wastes is also taken into account. Monitoring of the marine environment indicates that the United Kingdom's sea disposal activities meet these criteria and the quality status report prepared for the ministerial North sea conference bears this out.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much is owed by his Department to the London residuary body in respect of unsettled Greater London council accounts.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 29 October 1987]*: I estimate that further grant aid of approximately £5 million may become payable to the London residuary body in respect of the Thames tidal defence scheme. The precise sum and the timing of payments are dependent upon the submissions to my Department of the information necessary for the verification of claims.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Training Scheme

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of trainee places occupied on the new job training scheme in the last month for which full figures are available, in Scotland, England and Wales.

Mr. Cope: At 25 September 1987, 1,966 people in Scotland, 19,258 people in England and 887 people in Wales were receiving training on the new job training scheme.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: My Department has never employed operational research specialists because of limited demand. When such expertise is required my officials engage outside specialists.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Bowis asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the future of the new workers scheme.

Mr. Lee: As announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his statement on 3 November, the new workers scheme will close on 31 January next year. Applications for support in respect of jobs starting up to and including that date will be considered, provided they are received within 13 weeks of the job start date. Payment of support in respect of applications already approved is not affected.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Bowis asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the job release scheme.

Mr. Lee: As announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the scheme will close on 31 January 1988. All existing applications will be considered, but new applications can be considered only if the proposed date of early retirement is no later than 31 January 1988, except that applications made between 3 and 17 November 1987 with a release date up to 31 March 1988 may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa (Sanctions)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any official information pertaining to the reported threats by Mr. Johnstone Makatini of the African National Congress that British companies with investments in South Africa may be subjected to attacks and full scale violence if Her Majesty's Government do not apply further sanctions against South Africa; if in the light of previous contacts between Ministers and the African National Congress he has conveyed any representations or comments about this to Mr. Oliver Tambo; and what is his policy towards the threats to British subjects contained in Mr. Makatini's remarks.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 22 October, at column 929, Mr. Makatini said in Vancouver that

> "violence could include attacks on British and other Western companies refusing to disengage and hasten the collapse of apartheid".—[*Official Report* 22 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 929.]

We take strong exception to such language. A central theme of our contacts with the ANC has been to condemn violence from whatever quarter it may come. We continue to take every opportunity to make our views widely known, and to call on the ANC and similar bodies to forswear violence.

Foreign Ministers Council

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects will be considered at the next meeting of the European Economic Community Foreign Ministers Council.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 30 October at columns *479-80*.

Nicaragua

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We have normal diplomatic relations with Nicaragua.

El Salvador

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the current human rights situation in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: We receive regular reports from various sources, including on the recent appalling murder of Mr. Herbert Anaya. The United Nations special representative's latest report indicates a further overall improvement in the situation, notes that the Government of El Salvador are doing what they can to combat the death squads and condemns killings, kidnapping and the indiscriminate use of landmines by the guerillas.

UNESCO

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reapply for the membership of the United Kingdom to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Eggar: We made it clear when we withdrew from UNESCO that we would require evidence of fundamental and far-reaching reforms before reconsidering our position. There is no sign that such reforms are likely to be implemented in the near future.

We welcome the prospect of the appointment of a new director general. This can be no more than one element in the task of tackling the formidable problems that face the organisation. Our fundamental concern remains UNESCO's programmes and administration. We shall continue to keep an open mind and monitor developments carefully.

Cross-border Trade (Ireland)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attitude has been taken by Her Majesty's Government to the restrictions imposed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland on cross-border trade, whose conditions have been declared illegal by the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 28 October at column *270*.

Survey Office, Hong Kong

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the work of the Survey Office in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: The Survey Office was established to invite, collect, collate and report on the response of the public to the Hong Kong Government's Green Paper "The 1987 Review of Developments in Representative Government". It submitted its report to the Governor on 29 October. The independent monitors who were appointed to oversee the work of the office submitted their report to the Governor on 30 October. Copies of the two reports were tabled in the Legislative Council in Hong Kong today. Copies have also been placed in the Library of the House. The reports will now be carefully considered prior to publication by the Hong Kong Government of a White Paper in the new year.

KMS Ltd

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to gather information on the activities overseas of KMS Ltd.

Mr. Mellor: No. It is not our general policy to investigate the activities overseas of British companies.

Middle East

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will sponsor an international conference to which representatives of the Israeli, Russian, and American Governments can be invited, with representatives of the Palestinian people to discuss the situation on the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: As reaffirmed by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve in July, we continue to believe that an international conference under UN auspices represents the best way to make progress in finding a solution to the Israeli/Arab conflict.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support Grant

12. **Mr. McCartney** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the rate support grant settlement details for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: I issued a consultation paper on 27 October setting out details of my proposals for the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement.

Rating Reform

13. **Mr. Fearn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any estimates as to the likely evasion levels of the proposed poll tax.

Mr. Howard: I have no reason to suppose that evasion will be significant.

31. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters he has received from the general public about the proposed introduction of a community charge.

Mr. Howard: A summary of responses received by my Department before 31 October 1986, when the consultation period on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) ended, was placed in the Library on 15 December 1986. 1,217 responses were received. Though opinions varied, twice as many people wanted to abolish domestic rates as wanted to keep them. The community charge received greater support than any other replacement for the rates. We continue to receive representations about specific aspects of our proposals as well as requests for further information.

44. **Mrs. Mahon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will grant a separate identifiable sum of money to local authorities to cover the cost of implementing the community charge.

Mr. Howard: The cost of implementing the community charge will be taken into account in the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90 and in the needs assessments which will be used to determine grant entitlements under the new system.

51. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any estimates as to the likely increase in administration costs incurred by local authorities if a poll tax is introduced.

Mr. Howard: Our preliminary estimate is that the cost per person liable of collecting the community charge may be broadly similar to the cost per person liable of collecting domestic rates.

65. **Mr. George Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses has he received

to his consultation paper "Non-domestic Rates, Amendments to the Rating Legislation in England and Wales" published in July.

Mr. Howard: A total of 281 responses to the consultation paper were received, of which five were from local authority associations, 16 from professional organisations, 56 from national and local commercial and industrial organisations, 101 from local authorities, 30 from firms of surveyors and 73 from other private sector firms and individuals. We are considering the proposals in the light of these responses.

66. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the impact of the poll tax on Bradford.

Mr. Howard: My Department received 1,217 responses before 31 October 1986 when the consultation period of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) ended. Two, about our proposals for a community charge were from respondents in Bradford. We continue to receive representations from all parts of the country about specific aspects of our proposals as well as requests for further information.

67. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the arrangement for phasing in the proposed poll tax.

Mr. Howard: The Government are considering the arrangements for introducing the community charge in England in the light of views that have been expressed. An announcement will be made in due course.

69. **Mr. Grocott** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those professional or academic organisations specialising in local government finance who are in favour of introduction of a poll tax.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

72. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have made representations to him in support of his poll tax proposals.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 24 July at column *722*.

73. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next be meeting the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance to discuss proposed changes to the rating system.

Mr. Howard: The annual cycle of meetings of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance should recommence in the spring of next year.

81. **Mr. Illsley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government's proposals for a community charge or poll tax will apply to tenants of tied housing in the agricultural or other industries.

Mr. Howard: Yes.

83. **Mr. Allen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses to the consultation document on the community charge he has received from the Nottingham area.

Mr. Howard: The booklet "Paying for Local Government — the Community Charge" was not a consultation document. Since it was published in December 1986, the Department has received several thousand letters from all over the country of all aspects of our rate reform proposals.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the Government's proposals to introduce a poll tax.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the factors outside the control of a local authority which can influence the relationship between levels of expenditure and poll tax; and if he will make a statement outlining how these factors have been taken into account in the Green and Yellow Papers relating to the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer, 3 November 1987]*: The amount of central Government grant and payments from the non-domestic rate pool will both be fixed in advance of that year. Changes in authorities' spending, in relation to that year, will be reflected directly in community charges. Payments of grant and non-domestic rates may vary between years. That is why our proposals for the payment of grant, published on 23 September, included proposals for substantially reducing instability in grant entitlements. Payments from the non-domestic rate pool will be proportionate to adult population and will reflect only changes in the income to the pool.

Private Rented Accommodation

14. **Mr. Riddick** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the supply of privately rented accommodation.

Mrs. Roe: We outlined our proposals in the recent housing White Paper, and described them in more detail in the consultation document on the private rented sector issued by the Department on 1 October. We will introduce measures in a new Housing Bill this Session to stimulate the supply of privately rented accommodation.

Inner Cities

15. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage investment in the inner cities.

Mr. Ridley: We have established five new urban development corporations and will be setting up a number of mini-UDCs, all of which will encourage investment. Urban development grant and urban regeneration grant generate substantial investment in inner cities. Our legislative proposals on the national non-domestic rate will remove a major obstacle to firms wishing to set up in those inner city areas which at present choose to have prohibitively high rates.

35. **Mr. Ian Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for stimulating new enterprise in the inner cities.

Mr. Trippier: A number of my Department's programmes are specifically aimed at stimulating new enterprise in the inner cities. Urban development corporations, which operate in some of the most rundown areas, use their powers to acquire, reclaim and service land and their development control powers to create a climate of confidence to attract businesses and encourage them to invest.

Urban development grants are paid through local authorities to bridge the gap between the cost of a project and its value.

Urban regeneration grants work in the same way as urban development grants, but are paid direct to the private sector for projects which bring very large sites and buildings back into use.

Urban programme support for local authority assistance to industry is aimed at removing or reducing the competitive disadvantages suffered by business in rundown urban areas.

Other programmes, which are wider in scope, also help to encourage businesses to invest in inner city areas.

Derelict land grant covers part of the net loss to the landowner as a result of carrying out reclamation work; and land registers bring to the attention of prospective developers details of unused and underused land owned by public authorities.

In addition, our legislative proposals on the national non-domestic rate will remove a major obstacle to firms wishing to set up in those inner city areas which at present choose to have prohibitively high rates.

50. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that in his Department's housing and financial policies for the inner cities, the needs of existing inner city residents are given priority.

Mr. Trippier: Improving the quality of life for inner city residents is a key part of the Government's strategy for urban renewal. My Department's plans for giving council tenants the opportunity to find another landlord when they are dissatisfied with the service their local authority provides, and the competition and enterprise this will stimulate, should lead to a major improvement in the quality of housing management and service to inner city tenants. The Government have made it clear that housing action trusts will regard the interest of those already resident in their area as central. Policies to strengthen local authorities' financial accountability, and extended competition in the provision of services will also benefit inner city residents. The urban programme places a strong emphasis on economic, environmental and social projects of direct benefit to local residents, complementing wider measures designed to regenerate the urban economy.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, for the purposes of tackling the inner cities crisis, he will make it his policy to consult church, environmental and housing organisations, local authorities and other members of the communities affected by such problems.

Mr. Trippier: The Department regularly discusses inner cities policy and the operation of existing programmes with a wide range of interested organisations and individuals including local authorities and representatives of the churches, business organisations, and other bodies concerned with economic, social, environmental and housing issues.

Water Authorities

16. **Mr. Hood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outstanding level of debt for each of Britain's 10 water authorities compared with the level of their water rates.

Mr. Moynihan: The outstanding debt of each of the English water authorities as a percentage of its annual turnover is as follows:

	Number
Anglian	264
Northumbrian	368
North West	239
Severn Trent	188
Southern	146
South West	131
Thames	42
Wessex	218
Yorkshire	199

The Welsh water authority is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. There are no water authorities in Scotland.

House Building

17. **Mr. Arbuthnot** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for private house building starts.

Mrs. Roe: In January to September this year 127,000 private dwellings were started in England, more than in those months of any other year since 1973.

Derelict Land

18. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for bringing into use publicly owned derelict land.

Mr. Ridley: I am empowered under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct certain public bodies to dispose of their underused land. Since 1984, the statutory procedures for directing owners to sell have been initiated on over 250 sites covering 1,300 acres. The Local Government Bill now before Parliament contains our proposals to streamline these procedures.

Westminster Council (Housing Policy)

19. **Dr. Moonie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he plans to take on representations sent to him about the housing policy of Westminster council.

Mrs. Roe: None. Local Authorities are responsible for their own housing policies, subject to legal requirements, including, where appropriate, the need to obtain consent from my right hon. Friend.

Rates

20. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of the impact on rate levels of the next statutory revaluation.

Mr. Howard: Information on the effects of the 1990 revaluation will not be available until the valuation office has analysed the rental information that it is now collecting.

30. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from business organisations in London and the home counties concerning the proposed establishment of a uniform business rate.

Mr. Howard: My Department received 1,217 responses before 31 October 1986 when the consultation period on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) ended. Of these, 45 were about our proposals for a uniform business rate and were from business organisations in the home counties. We continue to receive representations from all parts of the country about aspects of our proposals as well as requests for further information.

54. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: 542 responses were received about our proposals for a national non-domestic rate before 31 October 1986 when the consultation period on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) ended. We continue to receive representations about specific aspects of our proposals as well as requests for further information.

Mr. Riddick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the likely effects upon households in *(a)* the Colne Valley constituency and *(b)* the Kirklees Metropolitan district council and *(c)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region of proceeding with a rate revaluation of domestic properties; and what is his estimate of the number of gainers and losers under such a revaluation.

Mr. Howard: Detailed estimates of the effects of a domestic revaluation are not available; but a recent independent study has forecast that rate bills in the north would increase, especially for occupiers of terraced houses.

Dorset (Structure Plan)

21. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what contact he has had with Dorset county council confirming its proposed revision of the current structure plan.

Mrs. Roe: I have had no personal contact with Dorset county council. As is customary, my officials replied to the county council's consultative document of June 1986, but not on the merits of the proposals. They have also met the council's officers to discuss technical details, and to keep in touch with progress on the review of the structure plan.

National Rivers Authority

23. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about his proposals to establish a National Rivers Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: By the end of October, a total of 318 responses had been received to our policy and consultation paper. Of these, 160 expressed support, and 34 opposition, for the proposals to establish the National Rivers Authority; the remainder commented on details of our proposals, but expressed no view on the principle. I am pleased by the wide measure of support which the responses have shown for our proposals, both inside and outside the water industry itself. We are now considering the comments received, and we shall make known our decisions on the unresolved aspects of our proposals in due course.

34. **Dr. Reid** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered what mechanisms or criteria will be used by the National Rivers Authority for charging for water recreational activity and fishing, and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mrs. Wise** asked the Secretary of state for the Environment what he estimates the annual Exchequer grant-in-aid to the National Rivers Authority is likely to be.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on Monday 2 November 1987.

36. **Mr. Martlew** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made as to percentage increases in charges to industry for discharge consents that will be made by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have proposed that the National Rivers Authority should be empowered to charge for the costs which it reasonably incurs in setting, and monitoring compliance with, effluent discharge consents. Such costs may vary in relation to the scale and complexity of the discharge, but the average charge is unlikely to be substantial.

Rural Development Areas

24. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent evidence he has of the effectiveness of the policies pursued in rural development areas designated by the Development Commission.

Mr. Moynihan: The Development Commission's annual report for 1986-87 which was published on 14 October sets out the latest information on the commission's various achievements in rural areas. A detailed study of the effectiveness of the commission's economic programmes by the Joint Unit for Research on the Urban Environment is to be published shortly.

Hospitals

25. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following his announcement that there would be no change of use in respect of hospitals included on metropolitan green belt sites which are subject to relocation proposals.

Mrs. Roe: We have received several representations about detailed aspects of the guidelines on the alternative uses to which redundant hospital sites in green belts may be put.

Local Authority Services

26. **Mr. John Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on progress with contracting out local authority services by competitive tendering.

Mr. Howard: It is clear that despite the good example shown by a small number of authorities, the vast majority of local services will not be subjected to market tests of their efficiency without compulsion. Part I of the current Local Government Bill therefore fulfils our commitments to bring forward legislation so as to ensure that ratepayers are not denied the benefits of competition for much longer.

Rivers (Quality)

28. **Ms. Quin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals exist to reverse the decline in river quality over the last five years.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's proposals for protection and enhancement of the water environment were published last year in its consultation paper, "The Water Environment: The Next Steps." A copy is lodged in the Library of the House. We are considering, in the light of the recent report by the Environment Committee, whether any further measures may be appropriate.

Private Empty Property

29. **Mr. Robert Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for bringing into use privately owned empty properties.

Mrs. Roe: Our proposals to reform the private rented sector, outlined in the recent housing White Paper, should encourage many landlords to bring back into use properties which are currently empty.

Local Authority Expenditure

32. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to allow local authorities to spend more then 20 per cent. of their capital receipts from council house sales on housing needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities can use their capital receipts at any time to redeem debt or for non-prescribed expenditure such as capitalised repairs. The future use of capital receipts from the sale of council houses will be discussed in the Government's forthcoming consultation paper on a new financial regime for local authority housing.

House Prices

33. **Mr. Darling** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to deal with house price inflation in the south-east of England.

Mrs. Roe: House prices are determined by individual buyers and sellers, and the Government do not propose to intervene in private negotiations. The Government will continue to encourage initiatives such as shared ownership which can help to reduce the initial costs of home ownership.

Storm Damage

37. **Mr. Grant** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make funds available to local authorities to assist them in dealing with any long-term damage arising from the recent storms and floods.

Mr. Chope: The scheme of special financial assistance for dealing with storm damage in England announced by my right hon. Friend on 21 October applies only to immediate emergency-related expenditure incurred by local authorities. But, as my right hon. Friend announced, the Government are making limited additional capital allocations available to local authorities this year to assist with repairs to buildings; and additional funds for the Countryside Commission's tree-planting scheme, which extends to local authorities.

The flooding in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

40. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reimburse the London borough of Lewisham for costs incurred, within his area of responsibility, in meeting the emergencies resulting from the hurricane on 16 October.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, on 21 October. The London borough of Lewisham was invited that day by the Department to apply for assistance if it incurred eligible expenditure above the threshold in the Bellwin scheme.

"The New Grant System"

38. **Mr. Battle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to his consultation paper "The New Grant System" published in September.

Mr. Howard: Ten letters have been received. In addition, my officials have discussed the paper with officials of the local authority associations.

Council Houses

39. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were available for letting but vacant on 1 April; and what change this represents from April 1986.

Mrs. Roe: The latest estimates, based on figures reported by English local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns, is 25,000 dwellings vacant and available for letting at 1 April 1987, a reduction of 5,000 (16 per cent.) compared with April 1986.

48. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for increasing choice in housing provision for those living in council-owned accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend proposes a "tenants' choice" scheme, allowing most secure tenants of local housing authorities to invite a new landlord of their choice to apply to the council to buy, with their consent, the freehold of their home.

Local Government Finance

41. **Mr. Dunnachie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next proposes to discuss the reform of local government finance with the local authority associations.

Mr. Chope: My Department has established a number of working groups with the local authority associations to discuss our proposals for reforming the present system of financing local government in England. The annual cycle of meetings of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, which are chaired by my right hon. Friend, should recommence in the spring of next year.

74. **Mr. David Porter** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his detailed proposals to reform the present system of financing of local government.

Mr. Howard: The Government's proposals for changes to the local finance system were set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) published on 28 January 1986. Consultation on the proposals ran until 31 October 1986 and the Government subsequently published a document "Paying for Local Government: The Community Charge", confirming that they intended to proceed and setting out the proposed administrative arrangements, on 15 December 1986. Since then we have published further documents setting out the Government's proposals for amending the non-domestic rating system and for a new grant system. It was announced in the Gracious Speech that a Bill would be introduced in this Session of Parliament to reform the present rating system.

Housing Defects Act 1984

42. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to amend the Housing Defects Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to amend the housing defects legislation itself. However, we are currently considering whether the detailed rules, in section 538 of the Act, governing grant as against repurchase, might be made more flexible. These rules can be revised under secondary legislation.

Rate Capping

43. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he makes of the demand for services in a particular local authority when reaching his decision on whether to rate-cap that authority.

Mr. Chope: Under the Rates Act 1984, an authority may only be selected for rate limitation on the basis of certain common criteria determined by my right hon. Friend. For every year since the system was introduced, one of the criteria he has determined is the extent to which an authority's total expenditure is likely to exceed its grant-related expenditure, which itself is an objective assessment of what the authority would need to spend to provide a standard level of services.

Council House Sales

45. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of council home sales in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Roe: In the three months April to June 1987, English local authorities and new towns sold an estimated 21,900 dwellings.

79. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold since the right to buy was given to sitting tenants; and how many council houses have been built in the same period.

Mrs. Roe: From October 1980 to end June 1987, 765,000 dwellings were sold by English local authorities and new towns, while 214,000 were completed for them.

57. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make it possible for council house tenants to buy their homes where they are now prevented from so doing because of fittings therein for a disabled member of the family.

Mrs. Roe: It seems right that purpose-built and sheltered housing for the physically disabled should be excluded from the right to buy. In 1984 the Government proposed in the Housing and Building Control Bill to extend the right to buy to housing which had only been adapted for the disabled, but an amendment was carried excluding dwellings which had been the subject of certain major adaptations. There are no plans for further legislation.

Structure Plans

47. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of structure plans.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government published proposals for the future of development plans in September 1986, as a basis for consultation. One of the proposals put forward was that the present system of structure and local plans should be abolished, and replaced by a single tier of district development plans. There has been a very full response to that paper from a wide range of organisations and individuals and we are considering the action which should now be taken.

Urban Regeneration Grants

49. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to revise the criteria for urban regeneration grants.

Mr. Trippier: Urban regeneration grant was launched in April 1987 and has generated considerable interest. I shall review progress shortly.

Homelessness

52. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the increase in London's homelessness between 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1979, London boroughs accepted responsibility for securing accommodation for 16,650 households. In the first half of 1987, they accepted 14,820.

55. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to offer temporary accommodation to the homeless over Christmas and in periods of severe weather.

Mr. Waldegrave: The primary responsibility for assisting homeless people rests with the local authorities.

62. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the most recent previous year's cost to the London boroughs of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless people.

Mr. Waldegrave: From returns made by local authorities to the Department it is estimated that in 1985-86 the total net cost to London boroughs was £25·3 million.

85. **Ms. Primarolo** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to deal with the problem of homelessness.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Pollution

53. **Mrs. Walley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, as to the amount of pollution in the North sea caused by British rivers.

Mr. Moynihan: Controls on inputs of potentially polluting substances to rivers which discharge into the North sea are designed to reduce to a minimum their harmful effects, that is, pollution. The table shows the estimated levels (in tonnes per annum) of the main discharges via British rivers in 1985.

Rivers	N	P	CD	HG	CU	PB	ZN	CR	NI	AS
Forth	818	—	1·7	0·1	38·5	12·7	65·6	8·5	13·1	—
Tyne	876	190	1·3	1·4	9·4	6·9	490·4	3·3	5·0	8·6
Tees	1,752	219	0·6	0·6	5·9	8·8	20·5	0·6	1·1	2·9
Humber	41,537	584	3·4	0·7	114·2	122·0	355·6	60·7	123·9	20·2
Thames	31,280	110	1·5	1·1	21·7	40·5	58·0	13·0	32·4	1·6
Others	34,477	2,336	2·5	1·0	76·3	83·1	455·4	33·5	74·0	13·4
	110,740	3,439	11	4·9	266	274	1,445·5	119·6	249·5	46·7

Percentage of total riverine inputs to the North sea from British rivers: 11 4·5 22 23 20 28 20
Information from other countries is incomplete.

Local Government (Accountability)

56. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for improving the accountability to the community of local government.

Mr. Chope: Our proposed changes to the way local government is paid for, in particular the introduction of the community charge, will greatly enhance the accountability of local authorities to those who live in their areas.

Business Movement

58. **Mr. Moss** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for encouraging the movement of businesses into the poorer parts of the country.

Mr. Trippier: A number of my Department's programmes are aimed specifically at encouraging businesses to invest in inner city areas.

Urban development corporations, which operate in some of the most rundown areas, use their powers to acquire, reclaim and service land and their development control powers to create a climate of confidence to attract businesses and encourage them to invest.

Urban development grants are paid through local authorities to bridge the gap between the cost of a project and its value.

Urban regeneration grants work in the same way as urban development grants, but are paid direct to the private sector for projects which bring very large sites and buildings back into use.

Urban programme support for local authority assistance to industry is aimed at removing or reducing the competitive disadvantages suffered by business in rundown urban areas.

Other programmes help to encourage businesses to invest in other areas with economic difficulties.

Derelict land grant covers part of the net loss to the landowner as a result of carrying out reclamation work, and land registers bring to the attention of prospective developers details of unused and under-used land owned by public authorities. The assistance provided by the Development Commission and its agent COSIRA is given to small firms operating or wishing to set up in particularly needy rural areas.

Our legislative proposals on the national non-domestic rate will remove a major obstacle to businesses wishing to set up or expand in those inner city areas which at present choose to have prohibitively high rates.

"Paying for Local Government: the Need for Change"

59. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the latest yellow summary pamphlet of "Paying for Local Government: the Need for Change" cost his Department to produce and print; and how many copies have been printed to date.

Mr. Howard: 100,000 copies of "Paying for Local Government: the Need for Change" have been printed at a total cost of £16,200.

Nugee Report

60. **Mr. John M. Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding his Department's response to the Nugee report in relation to leasehold flats.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been a number of representations from interested organisations and members of the public about the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, which implemented the main findings of the Nugee report.

Local Authority Manual Workers

61. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the likely impact on the level of rates of the recent wage settlement for local authority manual workers.

Mr. Chope: If there is no increase in productivity, the 10·6 per cent. pay increase conceded by the local authority employers to their manual workers could cost over £330 million, which is equivalent to 2 per cent. on rates.

Housing (Inner-City Areas)

63. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on initiatives being taken in collaboration with the private sector to improve public sector housing in inner-city areas.

Mrs. Roe: We are undertaking a number of major initiatives to attract the skills and resources of the private sector into public sector housing, particularly in inner city areas. In 1985 we launched the estate action team to develop with local authorities packages of solutions for the difficult to let housing estates. A key aim is to involve the private sector wherever possible in these packages, for example through a housebuilder or developer refurbishing rundown empty properties for onward sale or renting. More than 20 of the 138 estate action schemes approved in 1986-87 include private sector investment which will provide up to 3,000 new or refurbished houses. We aim to improve this figure this year.

The estate action team's work is complemented by a range of financial incentives to include the private sector in housing initiatives generally, where an additional public sector input is needed. The unit itself has £75 million in 1987-88 (£50 million in 1986-87) to allocate in support of its packages. We have also made available £30 million to the Housing Corporation this year to allocate to projects, including homelessness schemes, which will draw in a further £70 million in private investment, and urban development grant (up to £30 million in 1987-88) continues to be available to enable a wide range of projects, including housing schemes, to go ahead in inner city areas.

In the forthcoming Housing Bill we will be taking two new initiatives which will build on estate action's work. First, in areas where social problems and housing disrepair are particularly serious, housing action trusts will be set up to carry out improvements using both public and private sector resources before transferring the stock to new owners and managers. Secondly, we are introducing in the Bill arrangements to allow council tenants to choose to transfer to other, private landlords. As well as creating greater choice and efficiency, this move will also lead to more private investment in rented housing overall.

Berkshire (Planning Appeals)

64. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of planning appeals in Berkshire he has allowed in the last 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: During the year 1 September 1986 to 31 August 1987, 46 per cent. of planning appeals decided in the Berkshire area were allowed.

Lead-free Petrol

68. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects lead-free petrol to be readily and widely available in Britain.

Mr. Moynihan: Encouraging progress is being made. As at 12 October 1987, 519 petrol stations, providing good geographical coverage, were offering unleaded petrol for sale. I expect further rapid expansion, but the precise scale and timing will depend on increasing uptake by the motoring public, and the response of the petrol companies. We are taking a number of measures to encourage motorists to switch to the cleaner fuel.

Housing Initiatives (Government Support)

70. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on central Government support for housing initiatives in the city of Manchester and the borough of Trafford.

Mr. Waldegrave: In Manchester, my Department's estate action unit approved additional capital allocations of £1,048,000 in 1986-87 and £915,000 in 1987-88 for work to the Miles Platting council estate; and £351,000 in 1986-87 to help the homeless. Urban programme grant for environmental work at Miles Platting has also been approved: £784,383 was available in 1986-87 and £1,270,232 this year.

Both Manchester and Trafford are expected to make bids shortly for estate action support for new schemes in 1987-88.

Local Government

71. **Mr. Simon Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the efficiency of operation of local government.

Mr. Chope: Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operation in local government are the responsibility of the locally elected councillors. The proposals now before the House to widen competitive tendering will improve value for money in the delivery of local government services. Our proposals on paying for local government will immensely strengthen the direct accountability of local authorities to their electorates for the efficiency of the services they provide.

Lambeth

75. **Mr. Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether in 1988-89 he proposes to increase resources in Lambeth which are directed at inner-city problems.

Mr. Trippier: I cannot anticipate public expenditure decisions for 1988-89. I will decide on Lambeth's allocation of urban programme resources, which are specifically directed to inner city problems, in the light of the borough's inner area programme.

Common Land

76. **Mrs. Ray Michie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to introduce legislation regarding common land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 22 October at column *871*.

Nuclear Waste

77. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the Government's proposals in relation to the storage of intermediate-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Moynihan: Intermediate-level radioactive waste is currently being stored at producing sites, pending the development of a deep disposal facility for both intermediate and low-level waste. Responsibility for evaluating the relative merits of techniques of deep burial and identifying a suitable location for a facility rests with UK NIREX Ltd. NIREX is planning to publish a discussion document shortly which will outline the options it is pursuing and invite comments from interested parties.

International Conference on the North Sea

78. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be attending the international conference on the North sea to be held in London in November, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Squatting

80. **Mr. Bendall** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the incidence of squatting in London and the impact that this has on those on the waiting list for council housing including the homeless.

Mrs. Roe: London boroughs reported in their latest housing investment programme returns that, at 1 April 1987, 6,900 of their dwelling, 0·9 per cent. of total council stock in London, were squatted. Information is not available on squatting in property not owned by the boroughs.

In most authorities the number of squatted dwellings is a very small proportion of their total stock. Three boroughs however, (Southwark, Lambeth and Hackney), accounted for 64 per cent. of all reported cases of squatting in London, with just under 3 per cent. of these boroughs' stock being used in this way, and the impact may well be felt on the homeless and those on council housing lists there.

Basildon (Rate-capping)

82. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about his decision to rate-cap Basildon district council.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State has received no representations about the selection of Basildon district council for rate limitation in 1988-89.

Rural Areas (Housing)

84. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to deal with problems of housing in rural areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposals in the White Paper "Housing: the Government's Proposals" (Cmnd. 214) will provide opportunities for improving housing in both rural and urban areas. I have had a useful discussion with interested groups on the implications for rural areas: and will take them into account as the new approach is developed.

Property Revaluation

86. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when was the last revaluation of properties in England and Wales; and what information he has as to the class of domestic properties whose value increased most as a result.

Mr. Howard: The last rating revaluation of properties in England and Wales was in 1973. I will write to my hon. Friend about the other part of his question.

Water Meters

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has estimated the cost of installing water meters in every home in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The cost will depend on where meters are sited and on the economics of scale a widespread metering programme will generate. The proposed compulsory metering trials will help to establish the sort of costs involved.

Runcorn

Mr. Butler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to consult new town tenants in Runcorn on their wishes with regard to future landlords after the wind-up of the new town development corporation.

Mrs. Roe: The Government believe that the interests of the development corporation's tenants are of vital importance, and we shall make sure that they have an opportunity to express their views before any change of landlord takes place.

Water Industry

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with progress on compliance with the terms of EC environment directives within the water industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: In general, yes. The United Kingdom makes every effort to comply with European Community directives and our record is a good one, both in terms of the formal implementation of directives' requirements and the quality of water in the environment which is achieved.

However, like other member states, we sometimes have difficulties in implementing or meeting the requirements of particular directives. Such problems, when identified, can usually be resolved either through discussions with the water industry or, where appropriate, with the Commission of the European Communities.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: Five currently. The information is not available for past years.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are used to assess the job creation effect of enterprise zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Regular annual monitoring of activity in the zones records changes in employment but does not distinguish between new jobs and those transferred from elsewhere. We therefore asked the consultants who have evaluated the enterprise zone experiment in Great Britain to assess changes in employment attributable to the zones. Their report will be published in the near future.

Golden Plover

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to remove the golden plover from the quarry species of birds included in schedule 2, part I, to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am advised that there is no conservation reason at present which would justify removal of the golden plover from part I of schedule 2 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of *(a)* notices and *(b)* orders applied for by each local authority under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for each year since its introduction; of those, how many (i) notices and (ii) orders were granted under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for each year since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Figures for the numbers of notices served by surveying authorities under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are not held centrally. Nor have we any information about the numbers of orders made except in cases where they are opposed and subsequently submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. The relevant annual figures for each authority that has so submitted such an order to date are as follows:

Surveying Authority	*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*		*Total*	
	Submitted	*Confirmed*	*Submitted*	*Confirmed*	*Submitted*	*Confirmed*	*Submitted*	*Confirmed*	*Submitted*	*Confirmed*
Avon	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	2	1
Berkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	1	5	1
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	3	—
Cleveland	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	2	1
Derbyshire	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	1
Devon	1	—	3	—	3	1	1	1	8	2
Dorset	—	—	1	—	3	2	1	—	5	2
Durham	—	—	—	—	10	1	—	6	10	7
Essex	—	—	—	—	2	—	5	—	7	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	3	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Isle of Wight	1	—	2	—	1	1	1	—	5	1
Kent	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Lancashire	—	—	1	—	1	1	2	—	4	1
Leicestershire	1	—	1	1	3	—	1	4	6	5
Lincolnshire	3	—	2	—	1	3	1	1	7	4
Norfolk	7	—	4	—	5	5	8	3	24	8
North Yorkshire	—	—	2	—	2	1	—	—	4	1
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Oxfordshire	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	3	—
Shropshire	—	—	1	—	12	—	2	5	15	5
Somerset	2	—	2	2	4	1	4	5	12	8
Surrey	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	1	3	1
West Sussex	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	1	4	3
Wiltshire	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	2	4	2
Greater Manchester	1	—	4	—	—	1	—	3	5	4
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	3	—
Wakefield MDC	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	2	—
Leeds City Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
Stockport MBC	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
Calderdale MBC	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—

DEFENCE

Search and Rescue

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each year since establishment the number of sorties involving the rescue of *(a)* military personnel, *(b)* merchant seamen and *(c)* civilians undertaken by the helicopter search and rescue flight stationed at RAF Brawdy, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics are readily available only from 1983, and in the following form. From 1 January 1983 until 30 September 1987 the following search and rescue sorties were carried out by helicopters based at RAF Brawdy:

Year	*Number of sorties*	*Number of persons recovered*			
		Military	*Civilians*		
			(A)	*(B)*	*Total*
1983	39	7	17	33	57
1984	50	—	29	68	97
1985	36	1	23	43	67
1986	46	8	34	45	87
1987	43	1	5	51	57

(A) Category includes merchant seamen and civilians on passenger vessels for example, ferries.

(B) Other civilians includes fishermen, pleasure craft and those rescued on land.

RNAD Milford and Trecwin

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many working days were lost as a result of industrial action in each of the past 13 years at *(a)* royal naval armaments depot Milford and *(b)* royal naval armaments depot Trecwin; and if he will list the reason for each industrial action.

Mr. Sainsbury: The available information is not held in the form requested. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Naval Mines

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of the role of the conventional naval mine in modern warfare as both a defensive and offensive weapon.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Recent events in the Gulf demonstrate the threat that can be posed to surface shipping by conventional naval mines. Additionally, the conventional naval mine can be employed as an anti-submarine weapon system with options for use in an offensive or defensive role.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list for each NATO country the estimated number of conventional naval mines held by each country;

(2) if he will list for each NATO country the estimated annual production of conventional naval mines in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice, for good reasons of security, to give details of stocks or production rates of munitions of this kind.

Goose Bay

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what use is made of the facilities at Goose Bay in Labrador for low-flying training; and whether there are any plans for an expansion of Royal Air Force activities there.

Mr. Freeman: The facilities at Goose Bay in Labrador are currently used for low-flying training by the Royal Air Force, as well as the air forces of Canada, the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Netherlands. Usage is governed by a multilateral memorandum of understanding, voluntarily entered into by all these Governments, including Her Majesty's Government. This limits the maximum number of aircraft and personnel to be stationed there. There are at present no plans to renegotiate this understanding. Goose Bay also remains one of the possible locations for the proposed NATO tactical fighter weapons training centre, on which a decision by NATO has not yet been made.

Swynnerton Training Area, (Radioactivity)

Ms. Walley asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will invite the local elected representatives responsible for public protection, hon. Members representing Staffordshire and a radiation monitoring expert of the county council's choice to visit the Swynnerton camp and satisfy themselves that there is no danger from radiation;

(2) if he will now publish the dates of all exercises involving the use of radioactive material at Swynnerton;

(3), what amount of topsoil was removed from Swynnerton following exercises involving radioactive material; to where; and where it now is.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to discuss details of nuclear accident response exercises. However, the precautions that we take to ensure the safety both of participants in nuclear accident response exercises and of the general public were fully set out in the reply that I gave to the hon. Lady and to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 23 July at columns 386-87. I see no valid reason for the suggested inspection of Swynnerton training area.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: Operational research specialists in the Ministry of Defence are not separately identified. Scientists from a wide range of scientific and mathematical disciplines can expect to be posted into operational research and assessment groups in the Department at various stages in their careers.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Empty Government Property

91. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Government-owned houses and flats have been empty for more than six months.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Tax Offices

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to improve the administrative efficiency and speed with which matters are dealt with by tax offices in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Generally, tax offices are working efficiently, but, where necessary, the Inland Revenue takes all possible steps to reduce arrears of work.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Henderson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many companies have registered an interest in the profit-related pay scheme;

(2) if he will list those companies which have registered an interest in the profit-related pay scheme.

Mr. Brooke: The mailing list held by the Inland Revenue of all those who have asked to receive information and guidance notes about profit-related pay contains over 26,000 names. I do not propose to publish this list.

Inland Revenue (Records)

Mr. Raison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many individuals are home addresses known to the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lawson: The Inland Revenue has records of the home addresses of some 31 million individuals. When—as in many cases—there has been no need for recent correspondence, the information may of course be out of date.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Redwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer in a full year if both husband and wife enjoyed a separate capital gains allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If husband and wife were each entitled to an annual exempt amount of £6,600, and if unused amounts were transferable to the other spouse, the cost would be of the order of £50 million to £100 million.

Mr. Redwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in a full year of raising the capital gains tax allowance to £10,000 per person, and allowing both husband and wife a separate allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £250 million to £350 million if annual exempt amounts unused by one spouse were transferable to the other.

Taxation

Mr. Hood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about present taxation policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations, which he is considering. It is not customary to make statements on taxation policy ahead of the Budget statement.

Third-World

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to grant tax relief to the banks in respect of their write-down of Third-world debt; and what will be the cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Lilley: Tax relief due to banks in respect of loans which cannot be recovered in full is governed by the ordinary tax rules which apply to any trader who gives credit in the course of his business. Insufficient data are available to estimate the notional amount of tax revenues forgone as a result of losses incurred by banks on irrecoverable loans.

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the lending to the Third world by British banks was to finance the servicing of existing loans, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: No comprehensive data are available for annual flows of gross lending by British banks to less developed sovereign borrowers which identify the purpose to which such lending has been put. However, end-year consolidated figures for United Kingdom registered banks' total claims on less developed countries for the period 1982-86 are as follows. British-owned banks account for around three quarters of the total. Firm figures for interest paid to British-owned banks are unavailable, but a rough calculation suggests that the annual amounts paid by less developed countries might have fallen by about a third between 1982 and 1986, the effect of an increase in the debt outstanding being more than offset by a decline in interest rates.

End-period	*Total $ billion*
1982	45·9
1983	47·8
1984	47·4
1985	48·0
1986	49·2

Notes:

(1) Changes between years reflect the effect of exchange rate movements as well as flows of lending.

(2) Many developing countries, included in these figures, have not experienced problems in servicing their debts.

HMSO

Mr. Trotter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 29 October, what specific problems are occurring in the Stationery Office which are resulting in some parliamentary questions continuing to appear on the Order Paper after an instruction has been given that they should be withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Her Majesty's Stationery Office very much regrets that problems have occasionally occurred as a result of errors in the checking procedure. Her Majesty's Stationery Office is working closely with the House editorial staff to introduce more robust procedures to avoid this happening in future.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details in the *Official Report* of the new printing equipment which has been purchased by Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the printing of Commons publications.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* The main items of equipment newly purchased by Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the printing of Commons publications are as follows:

> a computer typesetting system, comprising two independently working but interlinked systems, with a total of 26 terminals;
> three helium-neon laser typesetting machines, connected on-line to the typesetting system;
> two high-volume bromide paper developing units, with a third smaller unit;
> two projection platemaking systems comprising camera stations, film development unit and computer-driven platemaking unit;
> two plate processing units:
> three twin-unit web-fed offset lithographic printing presses;
> six sheet-fed offset lithographic perfecting presses;
> one flat-bed lithographic proofing press;
> one 16-station finishing line for automatic gathering, side-stitching and trimming;

one 6-station finishing line for gathering and saddle-stitching;
two plastic enveloping machines and one plastic shrink wrapping machine.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will name the manufacturers, suppliers and country of origin of the new equipment at Her Majesty's Stationery Office which has been involved in the recent delays in the printing of Commons papers.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: The manufacturers, suppliers and country of origin of the relevant new equipment at the Parliamentary Press are as follows:

(1) Miles 33 system 400 typesetting system. Miles 33 is a British supplier. Hardware was manufactured in the United States of America by Data General and Rank Xerox and in the United Kingdom by Linwood Ltd. Software was written in the United Kingdom.
(2) Wohlenberg Projekte Systeme GmbH. a West German Company, manufactured the majority of the 16-station flowline which was supplied by Pershke Price Service Organisation, a British firm.

EC (Finance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the gross contribution, before any rebates or refunds, which the United Kingdom will be required to make to the European Economic Community in respect of 1987; and what estimate he has made of the gross contribution under the proposals now made by the European Economic Community Commission for contributions by member states related to gross domestic product and value added tax had been in force.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Estimates of the United Kingdom's gross contribution before abatement to the 1987 Community budget, both under the current financing system and under the Commission's proposals for a new structure of own resources, are contained in table 10 of the Commission's report COM(87)101. These show a gross contribution of 6,660 mecu (£4,883 million at the exchange rates assumed by the Commission) under the present system, and 6,354 mecu (£4,658 million) which would have been paid under the new proposals. The estimates do not take account of the 1987 supplementary and amending budget, but the relative effects of the two financing systems are not significantly affected by this.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Fearn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce allowances against tax for stock appreciation within a business and company.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: No. Stock appreciation relief was abolished as part of the business tax reforms in 1984. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans to revive it.

Profits and Dividends

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the totals of profits and dividends repatriated to Britain from the Third world and to the Third world from Britain in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The available information relates to overseas direct investment. The value of branch profits and dividends remitted to the United Kingdom from affiliates of United Kingdom companies in the developing countries and the value of branch profits and dividends remitted from United Kingdom companies to their parent companies in the developing countries are given in the table.

The data relating to United Kingdom outward investment will be published in *Business Monitor* MA4 1985 in approximately two months' time.

	Remitted earnings from United Kingdom direct investment in developing countries[1]			*Remitted earnings from direct investment in the United Kingdom by the developing countries*[1]		
£ million	*Branch Profits*	*Dividends*	*Total*	*Branch Profits*	*Dividends*	*Total*
[2]1981	277	284	561	45	14	59
[2]1982	295	324	619	57	252	309
[2]1983	243	424	667	45	31	76
1984	402	896	1,298	11	41	52
1985	227	1,221	1,448	6	39	45

[1] Developing countries are defined as Asia, Africa (excluding South Africa), Caribbean, Central and South America, Oceana and Yugoslavia.

[2] Excludes oil companies.

SCOTLAND

Buses

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the total cost to each local authority in Scotland, excluding expenditure on concessionary travel *(a)* of providing bus services in 1985-86 and *(b)* of payments made to bus operators in the period from 26 October 1986 to 31 March 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amount of revenue support by each local authority for bus services shown in their final outturn for 1985-86 is as follows:

Regional/Islands Council	*£ million*
Borders	0·510
Central	1·271
Dumfries and Galloway	1·116
Fife	0·446
Grampian	−0·276
Highland	1·156
Lothian	3·736
Strathclyde	15·787
Tayside	1·504
Orkney	0·038
Shetland	0·244
Western Isles	0·416
Total	25·948

[1] Profit on local authority transport undertaking

Figures are not available for local authority expenditure on payments to bus operators in the period from 26 October 1986 to 31 March 1987, but estimates which have been made suggest that payments have been running at an annual rate of around £15 million.

Forestry

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all grants and tax exemptions currently available for the planting of forestry in Scotland; and if he will give the number of applicants and the total take-up of each in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Grant aid for forestry is provided under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme, and I am arranging for copies of leaflets giving details of these schemes to be placed in the Library of the House. As regards taxation, a copy of Forestry Commission leaflet No. 12 "Taxation of Woodlands" is already available in the Library. This leaflet is currently being revised and a copy of the new version will be placed in the Library as soon as it is published.

The information requested on grant scheme applications in Scotland is as follows:

Year ended 31 March (1)	*Number of applications received* (2)	*Area approved for entry to the scheme (hectares)* (3)	*Area of planting (including restocking) for which grants were paid (hectares)* (4)
Forestry Grant Scheme			
1983	513	34,419	5,959
1984	538	34,096	12,309
1985	590	33,267	13,648
1986	704	37,562	17,714
1987	992	41,833	17,411
Broadleaved Woodland Grant Scheme (introduced on 1 October 1985)			
1986	313	313	—
1987	599	2,408	336

Note: The areas shown in column 3
(a) include existing woodlands; and
(b) cover approvals for planting over a five-year period.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the total acreage of forestry in Scotland in each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

Year (as at 31 March)	*Hectares (thousands)*
1978	867
1979	883
1980	904
1981	921
1982	940
1983	978
1984	1,000
1985	1,017
1986	1,038
1987	1,067

Scottish Legal Aid Board

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the delay in payments to individuals by the Scottish Legal Aid Board of money paid to the board on their behalf and the refusal of the board to credit interest on the money to the individual concerned; what action he has taken in response; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This specific topic has not featured in the various representations which my right hon. and learned Friend has received recently about legal aid.

Doctors

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what special transport facilities he is giving to general practitioners who, in order to discharge their duties, must travel through very difficult terrain, or which requires the crossing of lochs and rivers in rural Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: General practitioners are responsible for making their own transport arrangements, and the costs which they incur in so doing are met from the generality of fees and allowances. In addition, for those doctors who, in the course of the discharge of their practice duties, encounter difficult terrain and water journeys, my right hon. and learned Friend makes compensatory payments through the Scottish rural practices fund. The operation of this fund takes account of particular factors, such as the distance of patients' homes from the practice, the use of footpaths and travel by water.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of new full-time doctors needed to cover the need for primary care in the rural parts of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of general medical practitioners practising in Scotland is kept under constant review by the Scottish medical practices committee whose duty it is to determine the adequacy of general medical services in each health board area. My right hon. and learned Friend has no evidence that the existing number of doctors is inadequate to meet the needs of patients in rural areas.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what urgent steps he is taking in order to solve the problems facing doctors in charge of primary care in rural Scotland, particularly in remote and low populated areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The position of general medical practitioners in rural areas is currently being considered by my right hon. and learned Friend in the course of the review of primary health care, which followed publication of the Government's consultative document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion". The conclusions reached on this review will be announced shortly in a White Paper.

Drinking Water

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he is satisfied with the quality of drinking water in Scotland;

(2) what is his policy towards drinking water quality in Scotland in the light of the recent European Community report which finds that the drinking water is not up to the required standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have not received such a report. The European Commission has written to the Government seeking clarification of a number of matters relating to the EC directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC). The Government are considering these matters and will reply to the Commission in due course.

Water authorities—the regional and islands councils—have a duty to provide a supply of wholesome water for domestic purposes. The quality of private water supplies is the responsibility of the owners, but the district and islands councils have powers and duties to ensure that such supplies are not a risk to public health.

My right hon. and learned Friend considers that the local authorities are discharging their duties satisfactorily. He also considers that the quality of drinking water is generally satisfactory and that where necessary improvements are in progress or are planned.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact on the Scottish fishing industry of freezer trawler operations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two freezer trawlers, based at ports in England, currently operate in the main herring and mackerel fisheries; the granting of licences for three further freezer trawlers (two based in England, one in Scotland) was announced in January, but these additional licences are unlikely to be utilised until 1988. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently pointed out, freezer trawlers have a part to play in ensuring that this country can fully fish its quotas. The existing freezer trawlers have not had any appreciable impact on the 45 purse seine vessels which make up the main component of the Scottish-based pelagic fleet but this is something which I am keeping under close review.

Visits

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is planning a visit to Clydesdale in the near future.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent in Scotland at 1986 prices, on *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* regional selective assistance for each year from 1979.

Mr. Lang: Total payments of regional selective assistance and regional development grant, at 1986 prices, to firms in Scotland between 1979-80 and 1986-87 are set out in the table below:

£ million

Year	*Payments of Regional Selective Assistance at constant (1986) prices*	*Payments of Regional Development Grant at constant (1986) prices*
1979-80	28·7	115·8
1980-81	30·9	157·2
1981-82	24·4	181·0
1982-83	23·7	339·0
1983-84	27·2	161·6
1984-85	34·5	117·6
1985-86	49·1	108·5
1986-87	35·1	166·8

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reconsider the exclusion of Glenrothes new town from the areas designated in Scotland for regional development grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My righ hon. Friend is aware of concern about the assisted area status of Glenrothes new town but no review of assisted area designation is planned at the present time.

British Rail (Scotland)

Mrs. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number and level of grants awarded by the Scottish Development Department to British Rail (Scotland) in each of the past five years, giving details of the projects for which such grants were allocated.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There were none.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* The total expenditure by my Department on advertising in Scottish national, regional and local newspapers for the past five years was:

	£
1982-83	334,860
1983-84	387,400
1984-85	455,850
1985-86	318,560
1986-87	394,000

These figures include production costs. A breakdown of expenditure in national and local newspapers could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Hospital and Community Health Service, Lothian

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the annual change in available resources, taking into account the inflation of hospital and community health service costs, in the provision of the hospital and community health service in the Lothian health board area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* No record is maintained of pay and price movements within the NHS in Scotland and it would not, in any event, be appropriate to apply a national index of pay and price movements to expenditure figures for individual health boards because the composition of that expenditure may differ substantially from the national average. The following table shows the year-on-year change in Lothian health board's revenue allocation for hospital and community health services; after adjustment for inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Change over previous year

	£ million (at 1986-87 prices)	*Per cent.*
1980-81	+18·764	+9·44
1981-82	+2·837	+1·30
1982-83	+1·823	+0·83
1983-84	−0·218	−0·10

	£ million (at 1986-87 prices)	*Per cent.*
1984-85	+4·483	+2·02
1985-86	−2·276	−1·00
1986-87	+10·942	+4·88
1987-88	+6·386	+2·72

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many convictions have been obtained, by sheriff court, under the monofilament banning order 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The order in question is the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986. Precise figures are not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. The indications are, however, that the number of cases is very small. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has reported only one case under the order which resulted in a conviction.

Rating Reform

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is in a position to estimate the number of service men who will have to pay the personal community charge in Scotland in its first year of operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimate. In 1986 about 19,700 United Kingdom service men were stationed in Scotland.

Factory Closures

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many factory closures have been reported to him in *(a)* Fife and *(b)* Scotland since June 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: Information is not available in the precise form requested. It is provisionally estimated that between July 1979 and September 1987, 810 closures in Scotland involving 10 or more redundancies in manufacturing industry were confirmed to Manpower Services Commission. Comprehensive figures for Fife on the same basis cannot be provided since records are not completely allocated to some regions for some of the earlier years of the period.

Education Statistics

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of PhDs awarded, by subject and institution, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The information is not readily available.

THE ARTS

Financial Provision

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister for the Arts what is the latest assessment his Department has made of the effect of the abolition of the metropolitan authorities on arts spending and arts provision in the areas concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Replacement expenditure in 1986-87 by the Arts Council, the British Film Institute and successor authorities in those areas affected by abolition was as follows:

£ million

	Performing arts		*Film*	
	Arts Council	*Successor Authorities*	*British Film Institute*	*Successor Authorities*
London	9·470	10·585	0·838	0·493
Greater Manchester	1·495	0·934	0·193	0·101
Merseyside	1·223	0·341	0·142	0·026
South Yorkshire	0·397	0·186	0·201	0·008
West Yorkshire	0·764	0·700		
Tyne and Wear	1·532	1·384	0·431	0·302
West Midlands	0·849	0·471	0·142	0·071
South Bank	8·758	—	—	—
Reserve	0·512	—	—	—
Administration	—	—	0·060	—
Total	25·000	14·601	[1]2·007	1·001

For comparative information on grants to museums I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 22 July 1987, at column 238.

Regional Arts Councils

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister for the Arts if he will provide figures for each of the last five years, and the estimates for 1987 and 1988, in real and cash terms, to show spending by each of the regional arts councils.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is as follows:

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[1] Of this total £1·3 million represents the net increase in expenditure, post-abolition.

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	[1]*1987-88 (Estimate)*
Greater London Arts						
Cash terms	1·464	1·487	1·584	1·791	7·858	7·910
Real terms	1·464	1·422	1·450	1·547	6·587	6·345
Northern Arts						
Cash terms	1·733	1·819	1·939	2·087	3·492	3·511
Real terms	1·733	1·739	1·776	1·802	2·927	2·816
West Midlands Arts						
Cash terms	1·035	1·100	1·222	1·558	2·232	2·276
Real terms	1·035	1·052	1·119	1·345	1·871	1·826
Yorkshire Arts						
Cash terms	0·717	0·738	0·842	1·339	2·050	2·068
Real terms	0·717	0·706	0·771	1·156	1·718	1·659
North West Arts						
Cash terms	0·865	0·932	1·032	1·494	1·958	1·995
Real terms	0·865	0·891	0·945	1·290	1·641	1·600
East Midlands Arts						
Cash terms	0·825	0·927	1·061	1·627	1·759	1·834
Real terms	0·825	0·886	0·972	1·405	1·474	1·471
Eastern Arts						
Cash terms	0·690	0·728	0·890	1·145	1·630	1·705
Real terms	0·690	0·696	0·815	0·989	1·366	1·368
South West Arts						
Cash terms	0·876	0·884	0·971	1·225	1·530	1·599
Real terms	0·876	0·845	0·889	1·058	1·283	1·283
Southern Arts						
Cash terms	0·850	0·884	0·995	1·172	1·274	1·329
Real terms	0·850	0·845	0·911	1·012	1·068	1·066
South East Arts						
Cash terms	0·540	0·582	0·629	1·086	1·223	1·278
Real terms	0·540	0·556	0·576	0·938	1·025	1·025
Lincs and Humberside Arts						
Cash terms	0·523	0·557	0·591	0·783	0·853	0·892
Real terms	0·523	0·533	0·541	0·676	0·715	0·716

[1] Estimate

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Minister for the Arts what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Luce: There have been no operational research specialists employed in the Office of Arts and Libraries since its establishment as a separate Department in 1983.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* My Department has spent nothing on advertising in national newspapers in the past five years.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many current occupants of National Health Service hospital and unit beds have a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis in each health region; what those figures are as percentages of *(a)* mental and *(b)* all hospital beds in each region; and how figures compare with each of the past five years.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks as it is not centrally collected. Statistics on the numbers of long-stay residents with particular mental illnesses will be available in the future following the implementation of new data collection systems throughout the National Health Service from April 1987.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the admissions by diagnosis and order of admissions, including percentage change in numbers and rates per 100,000 populations, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in each of the health regions for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The information is in the following table.

Admissions to Mental Illness hospitals and units in England of persons with diagnoses of Schizophrenic psychosis 1984, 1985 and 1986.

	Admissions			Percentage change in numbers		Rates per 100,000 population		
	1984	1985	1986	1984-85	1985-86	1984	1985	1986
All Admissions								
England	24,998	25,925	25,046	+3·7	−3·4	53	55	53
Northern	1,835	1,815	1,744	−1·1	−3·9	59	59	57
Yorkshire	2,218	2,210	2,237	−0·4	+1·2	62	61	62
Trent	2,036	2,130	1,950	+4·6	−8·5	44	46	42
East Anglian	712	766	756	+7·6	−1·3	37	39	38
North West Thames	2,272	2,287	2,316	+0·7	+1·3	65	66	66
North East Thames	2,473	2,583	2,551	+4·4	−1·2	66	69	68
South East Thames	1,939	1,994	1,860	+2·8	−6·7	61	63	60
South West Thames	1,707	1,680	1,597	−1·6	−4·9	58	57	54
Wessex	1,447	1,450	1,537	+0·2	+6·0	51	51	53
Oxford	670	813	773	+21·3	−4·9	28	33	31
South Western	1,228	1,267	1,178	+3·2	−7·0	39	40	37
West Midlands	2,362	2,422	2,417	+2·5	−0·2	46	47	47
Mersey	1,248	1,412	1,322	+13·1	−6·4	51	58	55
North Western	2,612	2,804	2,503	+7·4	−10·7	65	70	63
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley[1]	239	292	305	+22·2	+4·5	—	—	—
First Admissions								
England	2,742	2,687	2,523	−2·0	−6·1	6	6	5
Northern	227	199	186	−12·3	−6·5	7	6	6
Yorkshire	252	235	258	−6·7	+9·8	7	7	7
Trent	322	323	261	+0·3	−19·2	7	7	7
East Anglian	78	80	66	+2·6	−17·5	4	4	3
North West Thames	289	247	245	−14·5	−0·8	8	7	7
North East Thames	127	154	151	+21·3	−1·9	3	4	4
South East Thames	212	206	181	−2·8	−12·1	7	7	6
South West Thames	143	127	110	−11·2	−13·4	5	4	4
Wessex	150	158	172	+5·3	+8·9	5	6	6
Oxford	111	83	68	−25·2	−18·1	5	3	3
South Western	136	133	138	−2·2	+3·8	4	4	4
West Midlands	264	285	273	+8·0	−4·2	5	5	5
Mersey	98	122	118	+24·5	−3·3	4	5	5
North Western	294	298	244	+1·4	−18·1	7	7	6
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley[1]	39	37	52	−5·1	+40·5	—	—	—

The figures for this hospital have been included in the figures for South East Thames for the purpose of the rtes per 100,000 population.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the discharges and deaths by length of stay, including percentage change in numbers and percentage distribution, of patients suffering from schizophrenic psychosis in each of the health regions for the years 1984-86 inclusive.

Mrs. Currie: The information is in the following table.

Deaths, by length of stay, of persons from Mental Illness hospitals and units in England with diagnosis of Schizophrenic psychosis, 1984, 1985 and 1986

	Numbers			Percentage change in numbers		Percentage distribution		
	1984	1985	1986	1984-85	1985-86	1984	1985	1986
England								
All lengths	1,018	950	963	−6·7	+1·4	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	69	78	72	+13·0	−7·7	6·8	8·2	7·5
1 month	53	44	49	−17·0	+11·4	5·2	4·6	5·1
3 months	80	61	71	−23·8	+16·4	7·9	6·4	7·4
1 year	110	113	119	+2·7	+5·3	10·8	11·9	12·4
5 years	172	143	144	−16·9	+0·7	16·9	15·1	15·0
15 years and over	534	511	508	−4·3	−0·6	52·5	53·8	52·8
Northern								
All lengths	79	75	79	−5·1	−5·3	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	11	6	3	−45·5	−16·7	13·9	8·0	3·8
1 month	4	5	2	+25·0	−60·0	5·1	6·7	2·5
3 months	9	4	3	−55·6	−25·0	11·4	5·3	3·8

	Numbers			*Percentage change in numbers*		*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
1 year	11	15	15	+36·4	—	13·9	20·0	19·0
5 years	13	11	14	−15·4	+27·3	16·5	14·7	17·7
15 years and over	31	34	42	+9·7	+23·5	39·2	45·3	53·2
Yorkshire								
All lengths	77	84	79	+9·1	−6·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	6	8	6	+33·3	−25·0	7·8	9·5	7·6
1 month	2	6	7	+200·0	+16·7	2·6	7·1	8·9
3 months	8	4	7	+50·0	+75·0	10·4	4·8	8·9
1 year	11	10	15	−9·1	+50·0	14·3	11·9	19·0
5 years	16	13	6	−18·8	−53·8	20·8	15·5	7·6
15 years and over	34	43	38	+26·5	−11·6	44·2	51·2	48·1
Trent								
All lengths	70	81	72	+15·7	−11·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	7	8	8	+14·3	—	10·0	9·9	11·1
1 month	4	2	3	−50·0	+50·0	5·7	2·5	4·2
3 months	7	4	1	−42·9	−75·0	10·0	4·9	1·4
1 year	6	12	13	+100·0	+8·3	8·6	14·8	18·1
5 years	10	12	12	+20·0	—	14·3	14·8	16·7
15 years and over	36	43	35	+19·4	−18·6	51·4	53·1	48·6
East Anglian								
All lengths	32	19	38	−40·6	+100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	—	4	8	—	+100·0	—	21·0	21·1
1 month	3	—	3	—	—	9·4	—	7·9
3 months	2	3	4	+50·0	+33·3	6·3	15·8	10·5
1 year	3	4	8	+33·3	+100·0	9·4	21·1	21·1
5 years	7	4	8	−42·9	+100·0	21·9	21·1	21·1
15 years and over	17	4	7	−76·5	+75·0	53·1	21·1	18·4
North West Thames								
All lengths	98	72	80	−26·5	+1·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	4	1	4	−75·0	+300·1	4·1	1·4	5·0
1 month	5	2	6	−60·0	+200·0	5·1	2·8	7·5
3 months	7	5	10	−28·6	+100·0	7·1	6·9	12·5
1 year	9	9	8	—	−11·1	9·2	12·5	10·0
5 years	13	6	7	−53·8	+16·7	13·3	8·3	8·8
15 years and over	60	49	45	−18·5	−8·2	61·2	68·1	56·2
North East Thames								
All lengths	90	90	77	—	−14·4	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	5	10	5	+100·0	−50·0	5·6	11·1	6·5
1 month	4	4	6	—	+50·0	4·4	4·4	7·8
3 months	5	9	5	+80·0	−44·4	5·6	10·0	6·5
1 year	11	11	11	—	—	12·2	12·2	14·3
5 years	15	9	9	−40·0	—	16·7	10·0	11·7
15 years and over	50	47	41	−6·0	−12·8	55·6	52·2	53·2
South East Thames								
All lengths	92	73	68	−20·7	−6·8	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	7	3	4	−57·1	+33·3	7·6	4·1	5·9
1 month	9	6	4	−33·3	−33·3	9·8	8·2	5·9
3 months	8	4	12	−50·0	+200·0	8·7	5·5	17·6
1 year	8	8	8	—	—	8·7	11·0	11·8
5 years	17	16	10	−5·9	−37·5	18·5	21·9	14·7
15 years and over	43	36	30	−16·3	−16·7	46·7	49·3	44·1
South West Thames								
All lengths	104	111	125+6·7	+12·6	100·0	100·0	100·0	
Under 1 month	7	5	3	−28·6	−40·0	6·7	4·5	2·4
1 month	7	4	2	−42·9	−50·0	6·7	3·6	1·6
3 months	2	7	6	+250·0	−14·3	1·9	6·3	4·8
1 year	11	10	11	−9·1	+10·0	10·6	9·0	8·8
5 years	15	12	18	−20·0	+50·0	14·4	10·8	14·4
15 years and over	62	73	85	+17·7	+16·4	59·6	65·8	68·0
Wessex								
All lengths	61	60	55	−1·6	−8·3	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	3	5	4	+66·7	−20·0	4·9	8·3	7·3
1 month	3	4	1	+33·3	−75·0	4·9	6·7	1·8
3 months	6	3	—	−50·0	—	9·8	5·0	—
1 year	9	8	5	−11·1	−37·5	14·8	13·3	9·1
5 years	8	9	10	+12·5	+11·1	13·1	15·0	18·2
15 years and over	32	31	35	−3·1	+12·9	52·5	51·7	63·6

	Numbers			*Percentage change in numbers*		*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Oxford								
All lengths	27	32	19	+18·5	−40·6	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	4	5	3	+25·0	−40·0	14·8	15·6	15·8
1 month	3	4	1	+33·3	−75·0	11·1	12·5	5·3
3 months	4	4	4	—	—	14·8	12·5	21·1
1 year	2	2	2	—	—	7·4	6·2	10·5
5 years	4	—	1	—	—	14·8	—	5·3
15 years and over	10	17	8	+70·0	−53·0	37·0	53·1	42·1
South Western								
All lengths	68	54	53	−20·6	−1·9	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	4	6	11	+50·0	+83·3	5·9	11·1	20·8
1 month	3	4	2	+33·3	−50·0	4·4	7·4	3·8
3 months	8	1	6	−87·5	+500·0	11·8	1·9	11·3
1 year	8	6	6	−25·0	—	11·8	11·1	11·3
5 years	15	8	9	−46·7	+12·5	22·1	14·8	17·0
15 years and over	30	29	19	−3·3	−34·5	44·1	53·7	35·8
West Midlands								
All lengths	84	66	81	−21·4	+22·7	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	2	2	7	—	+250·0	2·4	3·0	8·6
1 month	2	1	3	−50·0	+200·0	2·4	1·5	3·7
3 months	8	7	5	−12·5	−28·6	9·5	10·6	6·2
1 year	10	5	7	−50·0	+40·0	11·9	7·6	8·6
5 years	19	19	16	—	−15·8	22·6	28·8	19·8
15 years and over	43	32	43	−25·6	+34·4	51·2	48·5	53·1
Mersey								
All lengths	66	53	53	−19·7	—	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	7	6	2	−14·3	−66·7	10·6	11·3	3·8
1 month	1	—	2	—	—	1·5	—	3·8
3 months	4	2	1	−50·0	−50·0	6·1	3·8	1·9
1 year	4	9	4	+125·0	−55·6	6·1	17·0	7·5
5 years	14	13	12	−7·1	−7·7	21·2	24·5	22·6
15 years and over	36	23	32	−36·1	+39·1	54·5	43·4	60·4
North Western								
All lengths	66	79	79	+19·7	—	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1	8	3	+700·0	−62·5	1·5	10·1	3·8
1 month	3	2	6	−33·3	+200·0	4·5	2·5	7·6
3 months	2	4	4	+100·0	—	3·0	5·1	5·1
1 year	4	4	6	—	−50·0	6·1	5·1	7·6
5 years	6	11	12	+83·3	+9·1	9·1	14·0	15·2
15 years and over	50	50	48	—	−4·0	75·8	63·3	60·8
Bethlem Royal[1] *and Maudsley*								
All lengths	4	1	5	−75·0	+400·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1	1	1	—	—	25·0	100·0	20·0
1 month	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	20·0
3 months	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	60·0
1 year	3	—	—	—	—	75·0	—	—
5 years	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15 years and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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[1] The figures for this hospital have been included in the figures for South East Thames.

Source: Mental Health Enquiry.

Discharges, by length of stay, of persons from Mental Illness hospitals and units in England with diagnoses of Schizophrenic psychosis, 1984, 1985 and 1986

	Numbers			*Percentage change in numbers*		*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
England								
All lengths	25,934	26,225	26,077	+1·1	−0·6	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	13,093	13,617	13,307	+4·0	−2·3	50·5	51·9	51·0
1 month	7,506	7,484	7,358	−0·3	−1·7	28·9	28·5	28·2
3 months	3,323	3,330	3,472	+0·2	+4·3	12·8	12·7	13·3
1 year	1,155	935	961	−19·0	+2·8	4·5	3·6	3·7
5 years	370	359	387	−3·0	+7·8	1·4	1·4	1·5
15 years and over	487	500	592	+2·7	+18·4	1·9	1·9	2·3
Northern								
All lengths	1,858	1,799	1,767	−3·2	−1·8	100·0	100·0	100·0

	Numbers			*Percentage change in numbers*		*Percentage distribution*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Under 1 month	944	940	947	—	+1·0	50·8	52·3	53·6
1 month	552	545	508	−1·3	−6·8	29·7	30·3	28·7
3 months	186	207	202	+11·3	−2·4	10·0	11·5	11·4
1 year	127	57	66	−55·1	+15·8	6·8	3·2	3·7
5 years	22	23	23	+4·5	—	1·2	1·3	1·3
15 years and over	27	27	21	+—	−22·2	1·5	1·5	1·2
Yorkshire								
All lengths	2,294	2,199	2,282	−4·1	+3·8	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,273	1,274	1,327	+0·1	+4·2	55·5	57·9	58·2
1 month	624	577	607	−7·5	+5·2	27·2	26·2	26·6
3 months	221	200	218	−9·5	+9·0	9·6	9·1	9·6
1 year	70	75	57	+7·1	−24·0	3·1	3·4	2·5
5 years	32	27	21	−15·6	−22·2	1·4	1·2	0·9
15 years and over	74	46	52	−37·8	+13·0	3·2	2·1	2·3
Trent								
All lengths	2,156	2,112	2,064	−2·0	−2·3	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,020	1,097	1,008	+7·5	−8·1	47·3	51·9	48·8
1 month	692	621	613	−10·3	−1·3	32·1	29·4	29·7
3 months	274	239	275	−12·8	+15·1	12·7	11·3	13·3
1 year	97	87	81	−10·3	−6·9	4·5	4·1	3·9
5 years	34	32	39	−5·9	+21·9	1·6	1·5	1·9
15 years and over	39	36	48	−7·7	+33·3	1·8	1·7	2·3
East Anglian								
All lengths	772	765	791	−0·9	+3·4	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	360	376	352	+4·4	−6·4	46·6	49·2	44·5
1 month	204	189	225	−7·4	+19·0	26·4	24·7	28·4
3 months	127	113	133	−11·0	+17·7	16·5	14·8	16·8
1 year	51	43	48	−15·7	+11·6	6·6	5·6	6·1
5 years	16	15	16	−6·2	+6·7	2·1	2·0	2·0
15 years and over	14	29	17	+107·1	+41·4	1·8	3·8	2·1
North West Thames								
All lengths	2,373	2,397	2,469	+1·0	+3·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,206	1,246	1,186	+3·3	−4·8	50·8	52·0	48·0
1 month	698	669	649	−4·2	−3·0	29·4	27·9	26·3
3 months	305	326	311	+6·9	−4·6	12·9	13·6	12·6
1 year	85	77	109	−9·4	+41·6	3·6	3·2	4·4
5 years	30	23	47	−23·3	+104·3	1·3	1·0	1·9
15 years and over	49	56	167	+14·3	+198·2	2·1	2·3	6·8
North East Thames								
All lengths	2,562	2,596	2,663	+1·3	+2·6	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,307	1,319	1,313	+0·9	−0·5	51·0	50·8	49·3
1 month	759	753	815	−0·8	+8·2	29·6	29·0	30·6
3 months	328	331	352	+0·9	+6·3	12·8	12·8	13·2
1 year	87	103	110	+18·4	+6·8	3·4	4·0	4·1
5 years	37	36	32	−2·7	−11·1	1·4	1·4	1·2
15 years and over	44	54	41	+22·7	−24·1	1·7	2·1	1·5
South East Thames								
All lengths	1,983	2,052	1,927	+3·5	−6·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	961	1,020	1,050	+6·1	+2·9	48·5	49·7	54·5
1 month	567	605	531	+6·7	−12·2	28·6	29·5	27·6
3 months	297	278	245	−6·4	−11·9	15·0	13·5	12·7
1 year	90	63	61	−30·0	−3·2	4·5	3·1	3·2
5 years	29	35	24	+20·7	−31·4	1·5	1·7	1·2
15 years and over	39	51	16	+30·8	−68·8	2·0	2·5	0·8
South West Thames								
All lengths	1,713	1,685	1,615	−1·6	−4·2	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	871	847	791	−2·8	−6·6	50·8	50·3	49·0
1 month	449	492	459	−9·6	−6·7	26·2	29·2	28·4
3 months	250	240	235	−4·0	−2·1	14·6	14·2	14·6
1 year	89	54	67	−39·3	+24·1	5·2	3·2	4·1
5 years	24	21	30	−12·5	+42·9	1·4	1·2	1·9
15 years and over	30	31	33	+3·3	+6·5	1·8	1·8	2·0
Wessex								
All lengths	1,452	1,443	1,551	−0·6	+7·5	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	790	805	849	+1·9	+5·5	54·4	55·8	54·7
1 month	386	358	385	−7·3	+7·5	26·6	24·8	24·8
3 months	168	180	184	−7·1	+2·2	11·6	12·5	11·9

	Numbers			Percentage change in numbers		Percentage distribution		
	1984	1985	1986	1984-85	1985-86	1984	1985	1986
1 year	74	57	62	−23·0	+8·8	5·1	4·0	4·0
5 years	11	16	26	+45·5	+62·5	0·8	1·1	1·7
15 years and over	23	27	45	+17·4	+66·7	1·6	1·9	2·9
Oxford								
All lengths	707	781	845	+10·5	+8·2	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	341	368	419	+7·9	+13·9	48·2	47·1	49·6
1 month	222	251	236	+13·1	−6·0	31·4	32·1	27·9
3 months	94	104	122	+10·6	+17·3	13·3	13·3	14·4
1 year	25	28	33	+12·0	+17·9	3·5	3·6	3·9
5 years	10	12	15	+20·0	+25·0	1·4	1·5	1·8
15 years and over	15	18	20	+20·0	+11·1	2·1	2·3	2·4
South Western								
All lengths	1,280	1,304	1,264	+1·9	−3·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	609	635	569	+4·3	−10·4	47·6	48·7	45·0
1 month	323	361	365	+11·8	+1·1	25·2	27·7	28·9
3 months	192	185	198	−3·6	+7·0	15·0	14·2	15·7
1 year	72	58	64	−19·4	+10·3	5·6	4·4	5·1
5 years	21	31	27	+47·6	−12·9	1·6	2·4	2·1
15 years and over	63	34	41	−46·0	+20·6	4·9	2·4	3·2
West Midlands								
All lengths	2,485	2,458	2,478	−1·1	+0·8	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,169	1,182	1,213	+1·1	+2·6	47·0	48·1	49·0
1 month	725	731	695	+0·8	−4·9	29·2	29·7	28·0
3 months	364	377	401	+3·6	+6·4	14·6	15·3	16·2
1 year	139	98	73	−29·5	−25·5	5·6	4·0	2·9
5 years	58	41	54	−29·3	+31·7	2·3	1·7	2·2
15 years and over	30	29	42	−3·3	+44·8	1·2	1·2	1·7
Mersey								
All lengths	1,377	1,488	1,412	+8·1	−5·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	725	782	740	+7·9	−5·4	52·6	52·6	52·4
1 month	365	405	378	+11·0	−6·7	76·5	27·2	27·8
3 months	168	171	202	+2·8	+18·1	12·2	11·5	14·3
1 year	64	60	49	−6·2	−18·3	4·6	4·0	3·5
5 years	23	23	19	—	−17·4	1·7	1·5	1·3
15 years and over	32	47	24	+46·9	−48·9	2·3	3·2	1·7
North Western								
All lengths	2,683	2,875	2,621	+7·2	−8·8	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	1,436	1,626	1,401	+13·2	−13·8	53·5	56·6	53·5
1 month	860	834	795	−3·0	−4·7	32·1	29·0	30·3
3 months	292	308	318	+5·5	+3·2	11·9	10·7	12·1
1 year	65	69	69	+6·2	—	2·4	2·4	2·6
5 years	22	23	13	+4·5	−43·5	0·8	0·8	0·5
15 years and over	8	15	25	+87·5	+66·7	0·3	0·5	1·0
Bethlem Royal[1] and Maudsley								
All lengths	239	271	328	+13·4	+21·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Under 1 month	81	100	142	+23·5	+42·0	33·9	36·9	43·3
1 month	80	93	97	+16·2	+4·3	33·5	34·3	29·6
3 months	57	71	76	+24·6	+7·0	23·8	26·2	23·2
1 year	20	6	12	−70·0	+100·0	8·4	2·2	3·7
5 years	1	1	1	—	—	0·4	0·4	0·3
15 years and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

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[1] The figures for this hospital have been included in the figures for South East Thames for the purpose of the rates per 100,000 population.

Source: Mental Health Enquiry.

Domestic Heating Standards

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the standard of heating in British homes, particularly in the case of elderly people and people on low incomes.

Mr. Portillo: No studies have been made by this Department of the standard of heating itself. However, help with the cost of heating for elderly people and those on low incomes is available through the weekly supplementary benefit scale rates and heating additions.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what was the total number of deaths among those aged *(a)* 60 to 69 years, *(b)* 70 to 79 years and *(c)* 80 years and over for the period 1 October 1986 to 31 December 1986.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Number of death registrations by age-group
1 October—31 December 1986, England and Wales.

	Age-Group *(a) 60-69*	 *(b) 70-79*	 *(c) 80+*
Number of deaths	25,108	45,108	50,357

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *115*, when he expects to process data relating to the numbers of deaths among those aged *(a)* 60 to 69 years, *(b)* 70 to 79 years and *(c)* 80 years and over for the period 1 January to 31 March.

Mrs. Currie: The data have been processed and are shown in the table:

Number of death registrations by age-group,
1 January—31 March 1987 England and Wales.

	Age-Group *(a) 60-69*	 *(b) 70-79*	 *(c) 80+*
Number of deaths	26,421	48,853	59,126

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of cases where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how many of each annual total were of people aged *(a)* 65 years and over and *(b)* 80 years and over.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Number of death registrations with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, all ages, aged 65 and over, and aged 80 and over, 1977 to 1986, England and Wales

Year	*All ages*	*65 and over*	*80 and over*
1977	613	509	280
1978	708	597	327
[1]1979	863	688	374
1980	596	497	237
1981	685	574	326
1982	664	541	319
1983	538	450	261
1984	555	462	257
1985	827	709	417
1986	848	708	443

[1] 1977-78 International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 8th Revision code 788·9 (pt). 1979-86 ICD 9th Revision 991·6 and 778·3.

Cranial Osteopaths

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which health districts in the United Kingdom fund the treatment of patients by cranial osteopaths.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not held centrally on the funding of individual forms of treatment provided through the National Health Service. General practitioners and hospital doctors are free to recommend any form of treatment which in their clinical judgment will benefit an individual patient's condition.

Doctors

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in the area of the Northern regional health authority, what was the average basic rate of pay for junior hospital doctor grades in the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; what was the average income from overtime pay in each of those years; and what were the average numbers of overtime hours worked expressed as an annual and an average figure for each working week.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member may wish to approach the Northern regional health authority for this information, which is not available centrally in the form requested. The basic rate of salary for junior hospital doctors is related to the first 40 hours of duty. They may receive payments additional to basic salary for each unit of medical time (UMT), being four hours of duty, which they are contractually required to perform in excess of 40 hours. The relevant rates are shown in the table. Practitioners may also receive additional earnings from duty performed outside their normal contracted hours for their own or another employing authority.

Grade	*Basic salary[1] £* *[2]1984-85*	 *[3]1985-86*	 *[4]1986-87*	*Units of medical time As a percentage of one tenth of basic salary: 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87* *[5]Class A*	 *[6]Class B*
House Officer	8,090	8,590	9,180	38	10
Senior House Officer	10,130	10,760	11,510	38	10
Registrar	12,270	13,030	13,950	34	10
Senior Registrar	14,710	15,630	16,750	30	10

[1] Scale maximum.

[2] With effect from 1 November 1984.

[3] With effect from 1 June 1985.

[4] With effect from 1 July 1986.

[5] For standing-by or working in hospital, or at home, where the practitioner's availability is such that he is as fully on stand-by as if he were on stand-by at the hospital.

[6] For availability on call.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific action he plans to take to reduce the hours worked by junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 3 November.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific steps he proposes to take to increase the number of hospital doctors.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to determine the number of hospital doctors they require to meet their service objectives, within broad national priorities, but taking account of local needs and circumstances. The Department's role is to ensure an adequate supply of doctors at all stages in the career progression to meet those needs. Decisions on the overall supply of doctors will be taken in the light of advice from an advisory committee on medical manpower planning, but a preliminary assessment is that the current supply is sufficient to sustain a steady growth in the number of hospital doctors. Decisions on the number of training programmes in individual specialties are taken in the light of advice from a joint planning advisory committee, and where necessary additional posts are set up. Finally, to help to ensure that hospital medicine continues to be an attractive career option for young doctors, health departments have held discussions with the medical profession and with regional chairmen culminating in the publication of "Achieving a Balance—Plan for Action", which I announced on 27 October in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) at column *258*. Among its provisions are a number of measures designed to increase the number of consultants, the introduction of a new intermediate-level staff grade, and a mechanism to relate the number of doctors in training to expected consultant opportunities.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of fully-trained speech therapists employed in each region of the National Health Service for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; and what was the rate of turnover of fully-trained speech therapy staff in each region for those years.

Mr. Newton: Staff in post figures are shown in the table. Information on turnover of staff is not held centrally.

National Health Service staff in post at 30 September
Speech therapists by regional health authority and England

	Whole time equivalent[1]		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Northern regional health authority	120	130	160
Yorkshire regional health authority	130	140	150
Trent regional health authority	200	220	250
East Anglian regional health authority	100	100	110
North West Thames regional health authority	180	190	210
North East Thames regional health authority	200	220	230
South East Thames regional health authority	180	190	210
South West Thames regional health authority	150	150	170
Wessex regional health authority	100	120	130
Oxford regional health authority	110	130	140
South Western regional health authority	150	160	170
West Midlands regional health authority	210	240	250
Mersey regional health authority	90	100	100
North Western regional health authority	210	210	220
London PGSHAs	20	30	30
ENGLAND TOTAL	2,150	2,340	2,510

Source: DHSS (SR7) Annual Census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.

St. Nicholas Mental Illness Hospital, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the light of the refusal on appeal of planning permission for a Fine Fare superstore in the grounds of St. Nicholas mental illness hospital, Newcastle, and the consequent loss of capital recession, if he will make a special capital allocation available to Newcastle district health authority to allow that authority's programme of transferring mental illness patients into the community to continue.

Mr. Newton: The allocation of capital moneys to Newcastle district health authority is the responsibility of the Northern regional health authority.

Social Fund

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the allocation of the social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 to individual local offices.

Mr. Scott: Allocations to each individual local office in Great Britain which will administer the fund, together with totals for each social security region, are listed as follows.

Scotland

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget* £
Aberdeen North	130,238	306,935
Aberdeen South	120,583	285,384
Airdrie	288,826	680,841
Arbroath	64,152	150,481
Ayr	314,942	742,833
Bellshill	212,846	502,285
Bathgate	225,938	534,854
Campbeltown	15,916	37,378
Clydebank	211,095	496,800
Coatbridge	212,523	500,040
Cowdenbeath	57,904	138,172
Cumbernauld	208,497	493,285
Dumbarton	204,769	483,231
Dumfries	93,110	219,563
Dundee East	187,158	444,827
Dundee West	152,386	358,252
Dunfermline	94,310	223,536
East Kilbride	123,682	292,085
Edinburgh City	221,992	531,168
Edinburgh East	203,829	479,643
Edinburgh North	176,386	418,697
Edinburgh South	185,364	438,095
Edinburgh West	189,633	448,939
Elgin	70,166	164,481
Falkirk	266,850	628,389
Fort William	32,385	76,606
Galashiels	67,829	156,770
Glasgow Anniesland	292,175	686,574
Glasgow Bridgeton	193,539	456,146
Glasgow City	260,770	615,137
Glasgow Craighton	371,601	871,348
Glasgow Cranstonhill	40,153	95,101
Glasgow Laurieston	379,954	895,959
Glasgow Maryhill	324,242	764,663
Glasgow Parkhead	406,292	954,260
Glasgow Partick	173,220	409,844
Glasgow Provan	270,577	643,194
Glasgow Rutherglen	464,887	1,095,068

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget £*
Glasgow South Side	381,691	901,200
Glasgow Springburn	395,717	932,252
Greenock	288,662	678,882
Hamilton	480,658	1,132,207
Inverness	134,166	320,284
Irvine	328,898	779,326
Johnstone	141,992	336,932
Kilmarnock	173,515	407,887
Kirkcaldy	174,478	411,697
Lerwick	9,583	22,101
Leven	63,093	148,678
Motherwell	288,079	679,608
Oban	21,139	49,859
Paisley	351,045	828,312
Perth	82,742	194,062
Peterhead	56,628	132,508
Port Glasgow	177,865	419,713
Stirling	161,863	383,415
Stornoway	31,632	71,384
Stranraer	37,457	88,531
Wick	37,224	88,072
Regional Total	11,328,849	26,726,872

Wales and South Western Region

	Grants Budget £	*Loans Budget £*
Aberdare	117,197	275,645
Abertillery	50,641	119,140
Aberystwyth	39,177	93,385
Ammanford (Group)	34,778	81,157
Anglesey	75,564	178,577
Bargoed	96,515	227,602
Barnstaple	72,262	167,689
Barry	81,593	192,302
Bath	82,299	190,490
Blackwood	57,198	134,412
Bournemouth	119,947	275,517
Bridgend	109,586	257,942
Bridgwater	53,673	124,208
Bristol Central	111,157	264,522
Bristol East	127,674	294,694
Bristol Horfield	70,147	163,315
Bristol South	165,248	387,447
Bristol West	53,453	123,971
Caernarfon	54,447	128,371
Caerphilly	140,479	330,381
Cardiff Central	125,774	295,462
Cardiff East	222,410	527,385
Cardiff West	159,245	375,336
Carmarthen	32,068	75,425
Cheltenham	80,905	187,987
Chippenham	31,537	71,182
Colwyn Bay	72,718	167,426
Cwmbran (Group)	139,281	327,430
Devonport	144,224	338,677
Ebbw Vale (Group)	86,850	202,441
Exeter	184,510	427,754
Gloucester	159,562	374,376
Haverfordwest	76,901	182,001
Launceston	36,494	83,778
Llanelli	100,610	233,417
Merthyr Tydfil	110,153	258,095
Morriston	132,632	311,339
Neath	66,025	153,854
Newport (Gwent)	277,682	654,525
Newtown (Group)	40,825	95,665
Pembroke Dock	49,832	118,380
Penzance	66,667	155,651
Plymouth	171,097	402,337
Pontypridd	95,829	225,699
Poole	98,595	225,616
Porth	54,991	128,661
Porthmadog/Dolgellau	33,013	76,957
Port Talbot	73,349	171,339
Rhondda West	96,644	226,921
Rhyl	122,755	287,363
St. Austell	81,926	193,435
Salisbury	49,875	114,881
Stroud	46,330	104,416
Swansea	247,674	581,965
Swindon	98,404	232,025
Taunton	81,473	188,053
Torbay	172,395	396,230
Trowbridge	35,511	81,648
Truro	100,896	236,533
Weston-Super-Mare	58,299	133,884
Weymouth	54,109	123,297
Wrexham (Group)	187,801	440,645
Yeovil	42,694	97,725
Regional Total	6,113,603	14,297,979

London (North) Region

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget £*
Acton	121,102	288,221
Aylesbury	57,972	131,876
Banbury	37,305	86,211
Barking	141,041	324,060
Barnet	43,185	98,387
Basildon	229,370	534,082
Bedford	108,308	250,546
Braintree	58,806	132,715
Bury St. Edmunds	65,889	149,884
Cambridge	111,346	257,259
Canning Town	121,895	286,661
Chelmsford	58,701	134,410
Clacton	48,309	110,157
Colchester	76,471	177,637
Cricklewood	108,399	259,916
Diss	15,402	33,758
Ealing	113,489	265,166
Edgware	71,329	164,154
Edmonton	97,956	223,480
Euston	108,899	260,425
Finsbury Park	221,419	531,819
Grays	100,781	236,225
Great Yarmouth	90,484	212,951
Hackney	292,693	696,055
Harlesden	195,419	464,020
Harlow	88,631	206,559
Harrow	85,571	196,522
Hemel Hempstead	52,767	122,409
Hendon	101,423	237,646
Hertford	48,508	108,799
Highgate	166,045	398,523
High Wycombe	72,202	166,392
Hoxton	169,167	400,152
Ilford	170,167	396,059
Ipswich	112,537	256,944
Kings Lynn	105,468	240,979
Leytonstone	145,316	342,936
Lowestoft	80,924	189,382
Luton	145,705	345,813
Milton Keynes	124,555	295,994
Neasden	178,624	423,135
Norwich Chantry	125,622	288,963
Norwich Mountergate	200,324	467,418
Notting Hill	101,960	242,597
Oxford	189,885	443,438
Paddington	166,919	396,585
Peterborough	281,325	662,310
Plaistow	161,562	379,156

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget £*
Poplar	155,965	369,437
Romford	93,310	212,988
St. Albans	51,842	118,851
Shoreditch	152,093	358,754
Southend	117,864	270,173
Southall	92,969	216,745
Stepney	81,965	193,956
Stevenage	86,766	199,706
Stoke Newington	136,188	323,962
Thames North	6,651	16,843
Tottenham	190,547	450,724
Uxbridge	52,900	119,993
Walthamstow	113,533	263,042
Watford	51,343	116,487
Woodgrange Park	264,083	625,103
Wood Green	86,626	205,699
Regional total	7,505,820	17,581,245

London (South) Region

	Grants budget (£)	*Loans budget (£)*
Aldershot	72,138	167,031
Andover	27,663	63,397
Ashford	44,118	102,425
Balham	181,897	430,857
Basingstoke	34,931	80,012
Battersea	189,529	449,418
Bexley	104,823	243,715
Bloomsbury	118,532	281,621
Bognor Regis	47,680	106,745
Bracknell	44,518	102,574
Brighton	152,681	356,539
Brixton	169,094	404,941
Bromley	67,726	155,665
Camberwell	186,487	442,473
Canterbury	50,942	116,818
Chatham	112,917	269,146
Chelsea	143,712	342,291
Chichester	27,514	61,375
Crawley	53,204	121,219
Croydon	148,225	350,139
Crystal Palace	178,572	422,185
Dartford	43,433	100,662
Dover	38,938	89,476
Eastbourne	75,895	170,230
Eltham	32,230	74,793
Epsom	23,994	53,215
Fareham	82,131	192,872
Folkestone	52,067	121,164
Gravesend	45,878	107,634
Greenwich Park	226,116	539,810
Guildford	52,246	117,604
Hastings	94,818	215,107
Havant	90,498	213,275
Hither Green	56,949	132,412
Hounslow	162,483	378,400
Hove	74,424	168,948
Isle of Wight	92,647	215,319
Kennington Park	158,672	377,078
Kensington	82,270	197,791
Kingston	64,878	149,762
Lewes	45,913	102,765
Lewisham	257,003	607,205
Maidstone	65,646	152,539
Mitcham	53,176	119,700
Newbury	42,614	98,077
New Forest	62,684	144,378
Orpington	37,846	86,420
Oval	166,030	400,572
Peckham	145,406	343,582
Portsmouth North	67,720	161,847
Portsmouth South	60,871	145,478
Reading	168,837	397,123
Redhill	44,214	98,703
Rochester	49,396	116,976
Sittingbourne	72,546	169,731
Slough	92,957	216,757
Southampton	202,403	478,883
Southwark	202,543	476,775
Streatham	159,823	378,345
Surbiton	27,887	63,279
Sutton	33,289	75,355
Thames South	10,289	26,107
Thanet	107,002	247,915
Tunbridge Wells	49,499	109,682
Twickenham	34,407	77,158
Wandsworth	91,654	215,295
Westminster	72,446	169,668
Wimbledon	72,651	169,497
Winchester	40,547	92,850
Woking	66,499	150,424
Woolwich	318,954	754,407
Worthing	67,597	150,277
Regional Total	6,697,838	15,683,907

North Western Region	*Grants budget £*	*Loans budget £*
Accrington	85,886	199,387
Ashton-under-Lyne	108,485	253,035
Barrow in Furness	64,234	148,393
Birkenhead North	263,077	621,681
Birkenhead South	123,136	291,034
Blackburn	146,823	346,212
Bolton	253,077	592,998
Bootle	222,411	525,821
Burnley	165,095	385,252
Bury	155,173	360,162
Buxton	10,426	23,533
Carlisle	73,671	173,657
Chester	96,105	228,840
Crewe	100,198	232,299
Crosby	167,536	394,861
Ellesmere Port	93,623	223,289
Failsworth	174,953	409,116
Farnworth	89,398	207,926
Fylde North	120,047	280,108
Fylde South	60,757	140,146
Huyton	275,382	651,000
Hyde	140,025	327,677
Kendal	14,218	32,215
Kirkby	289,314	687,182
Lancaster	142,738	336,407
Leigh	112,065	263,290
Liverpool Belle Vale	164,338	388,441
Liverpool Breckfield	269,344	636,501
Liverpool City	166,981	394,233
Liverpool Edge Hill	179,261	426,409
Liverpool Garston	138,674	327,373
Liverpool Norris Green	124,393	294,272
Liverpool Toxteth	346,814	822,695
Liverpool West Derby	150,053	355,108
Macclesfield	38,186	88,922
Manchester Central	84,502	202,008
Manchester Cheetham	160,122	377,651
Manchester Chorlton	148,534	353,731
Manchester Longsight	195,163	461,460
Manchester Openshaw	141,664	330,716
Manchester Rusholme	241,437	572,071
Manchester Wythenshawe	192,335	449,632
Middleton	103,517	243,491
Northwich	103,042	243,534
Oldham	178,907	418,274
Penrith	10,521	23,942

North Western Region	*Grants budget £*	*Loans budget £*
Preston North	127,692	301,291
Preston South	98,090	230,593
Rochdale	139,685	328,420
Rossendale	51,815	119,459
St. Helens	240,016	568,334
Sale	131,364	307,104
Salford North	159,064	371,699
Salford South	101,790	239,552
Skelmersdale	163,877	389,153
Southport	51,115	116,512
Stockport North	143,022	334,754
Stockport South	138,699	324,577
Wallasey	178,834	421,399
Warrington	187,134	442,915
Whitehaven	43,546	102,20[illegible]
Widnes	286,040	677,6[illegible]
Wigan	225,928	533,689
Wilmslow	24,675	57,262
Workington	65,658	153,686
Regional total	9,243,683	21,766,193

North Eastern Region

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget £*
Ashington	92,016	216,319
Barnsley East	263,378	622,401
Barnsley West	154,341	362,902
Berwick-on-Tweed	11,429	25,599
Bishop Auckland	166,522	389,184
Blyth	89,216	209,217
Bradford East	186,133	439,459
Bradford South	168,331	396,767
Bradford West	190,383	447,426
Bridlington	46,853	107,758
Castleford	79,579	187,435
Chester-le-Street	85,166	200,920
Darlington	195,327	458,994
Dewsbury	120,167	280,774
Doncaster East	144,479	342,852
Doncaster West	229,217	544,005
Durham	65,682	154,104
Eston	115,478	274,286
Gateshead	245,740	573,344
Goole	48,366	113,307
Grimsby	223,099	525,411
Halifax	193,893	451,068
Harrogate	65,621	150,699
Hartlepool	137,309	324,471
Hemsworth	63,930	151,202
Hexham	21,368	48,975
Houghton le Spring	67,240	158,631
Huddersfield	152,595	358,432
Hull East	281,143	661,746
Hull West	231,052	542,546
Jarrow	142,140	332,695
Keighley	81,852	188,214
Leeds East	248,808	583,349
Leeds North	303,814	715,148
Leeds North West	148,484	348,905
Leeds South	102,980	239,663
Leeds West	141,298	327,704
Middlesbrough	369,076	875,866
Newcastle St. James	207,326	488,185
Newcastle East	178,137	417,973
Newcastle West	173,364	408,836
Northallerton	34,467	80,919
North Shields	144,857	337,813
Peterlee	82,730	194,254
Pontefract	78,851	186,060
Redcar	122,309	289,713
Rotherham North	69,479	164,477
Rotherham South	224,521	531,727
Scarborough	67,202	155,860
Scunthorpe	155,633	367,527
Seaham	31,603	73,912
Sheffield North East	425,798	999,133
Sheffield North West	314,504	741,002
Sheffield South East	201,597	470,613
Sheffield South West	273,698	646,101
Skipton	13,805	31,133
South Shields	182,571	427,696
Stanley	128,143	301,674
Stockton	266,774	633,039
Sunderland North	356,408	842,253
Sunderland South	219,537	517,908
Wakefield	137,333	321,751
Wallsend	115,907	270,518
Wath-on-Dearne	143,346	339,241
York	122,469	286,852
Regional total	10,145,879	23,857,950

Midlands Region

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget £*
Birmingham Bradford	137,231	326,569
Birmingham Edgbaston	252,724	596,587
Birmingham Erdington	237,874	561,325
Birmingham Handsworth	328,132	784,200
Birmingham Ladywood	194,586	461,609
Birmingham Northfield	218,514	515,618
Birmingham Perry Barr	162,426	380,387
Birmingham Ravenhurst	117,890	282,090
Birmingham South Yardley	218,255	514,772
Birmingham Sparkhill	89,736	214,121
Birmingham Washwood Heath	203,698	478,941
Boston	50,893	116,390
Burton on Trent	49,051	115,181
Cannock	84,347	201,306
Chesterfield	160,694	377,931
Corby	77,232	182,945
Coventry East	301,709	716,314
Coventry West	201,370	474,844
Derby Becket Street	89,412	210,734
Derby London Road	132,875	312,438
Derby Victoria Street	56,898	130,695
Dudley North	192,773	450,771
Dudley South	89,131	207,470
Grantham	50,702	117,260
Hereford	87,968	204,672
Ilkeston	84,490	197,631
Kidderminster	102,510	241,580
Leamington	82,908	191,463
Leicester Burleys Way	100,549	234,189
Leicester Lower Hill	153,531	358,745
Leicester Norton Street	179,752	422,836
Leicester Yeoman Street	256,424	599,448
Lichfield	134,613	319,481
Lincoln Newland	137,804	323,256
Lincoln Orchard Street	154,702	362,204
Loughborough	75,038	173,555
Mansfield	154,522	364,522
Newcastle (Staffs)	103,432	241,326
Northampton	149,281	346,992
Nottingham Castle Gate	136,689	322,966
Nottingham David Lane	155,039	367,562
Nottingham Shakespeare	196,780	462,468
Nottingham Station	151,705	356,924
Nuneaton	113,186	266,523
Redditch	75,794	178,813
Rugby	48,847	114,381
Shewsbury	123,265	287,762
Skegness	37,354	87,657

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget* £
Smethwick	214,556	503,552
Stafford	54,097	126,487
Stoke North	170,561	395,567
Stoke South	99,583	231,637
Sutton-In-Ashfield	75,927	177,166
Telford	188,018	445,166
Wellingborough	130,754	300,869
Walsall East	137,782	324,641
Walsall West	190,173	449,284
West Bromwich	243,961	573,205
Wolverhampton North	299,583	708,434
Wolverhampton South	247,631	583,906
Worcester	118,458	274,940
Worksop	98,902	233,547
Regional Total	8,964,325	21,085,851

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of the representations received from Scotland about his draft guidelines for the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: Thirteen organisations based in Scotland have commented on the draft social fund manual.

Scientists and Clinical Psychologists

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the 1987 clinical psychologists pay claim.

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring forward proposals to improve the pay of hospital scientists.

Mr. Newton: The pay of scientists and clinical psychologists is a matter for the Whitley Council. I understand that a joint meeting has been arranged for 11 November.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the members of the Disablement Services Authority have any form of disability; and what steps he is taking to arrange for disabled people to be more widely represented on the authority.

Mr. Scott: One member of the Disablement Services Authority is a double amputee and another is a wheelchair user. We have no plans for changing the present membership of the authority.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of live births and stillbirths within Easington district during the year 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: During the 1986-87 financial year (from April 1986 to March 1987) there were 1,315 live births and five stillbirths to women resident in the Easington district of County Durham.

Storm Damage

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive a full assessment of recent storm damage to National Health Service property; what steps he intends to take to ensure that the cost of repairs to National Health Service property in the Canterbury and Thanet health authority district does not detract from funds available for patient care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The regional health authorities concerned have been asked to provide information, including the estimated cost of making good the damage caused to their property on 15/16 October. We expect to receive a detailed assessment shortly, and will consider the position in the light of that assessment.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The number of operational research scientists employed in the Department for each year since 1979 is:

Operational research scientists

Date (1 April)	*Number*
1979	29
1980	30
1981	27
1982	23
1983	22
1984	19
1985	18
1986	20
1987	20
1987[1,2]	19

[1] Latest available figure.

[2] 1 October.

St. Paul's Eye Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many inter-ocular lens operations will take place at Liverpool's St. Paul's eye hospital in the remainder of the financial year 1987-88; and how many have taken place in the last six months.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to ask the chairman of the Liverpool health authority for the information.

Royal Liverpool Hospital (Funding)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on funding for the royal Liverpool hospital.

Mrs. Currie: As responsibility for the allocation of resources to the royal Liverpool hospital lies with Liverpool health authority, the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman.

Maternity Grant

Mr. Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the level of the £80 maternity grant from the social fund.

Mr. Scott: As my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 27 October the social fund maternity payment will be increased to £85 as from next April.

Sex Abuse Allegations (Leeds)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children were taken into care in Leeds for each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986 as a result of a diagnosis of alleged sex abuse.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Radiotherapy Levels

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his policy division expects to complete its review of the policy of centralising radio therapy levels; if the review will be published; and if the division has invited the submission of evidence.

Mr. Newton: The Department's internal review of its guidance to health authorities on the organisation of radiotherapy services is nearing completion. An announcement will be made as soon as conclusions have been reached.

Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when Her Majesty's Government intend to implement sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: Following the successful outcome of discussions with the local authority associations, I am pleased to be able to announce that sections 5 and 6 of the Act are to be implemented with effect from 1 February 1988. That date has been selected to give local authorities time to make the necessary administrative arrangements. The next step will be to consult the associations and the consortium of voluntary organisations who have been monitoring the implementation of the Act on draft guidance to local authorities on these two sections. This will be done as soon as possible.

The first disabled school leavers to receive statutory assessment by local authority social services departments under the terms of section 5 will mainly be those reaching the statutory school leaving age in 1990. However, I hope that local authorities will be able to apply the new arrangements on a non-statutory basis to as many as possible disabled young people who leave school in 1989.

The additional costs arising from sections 5 and 6 in 1988-89, mainly in relation to the identification and assessment of disabled school leavers, are estimated at £5 million. The local authority associations have accepted that this is covered in the proposed personal social services provision for that year. It has also been agreed that the best estimate of additional service costs arising from assessments made under section 5 is £14 million in 1989-90 and £20 million in subsequent years. These figures will be taken into account in the public expenditure discussions for the appropriate year.

There will be continuing discussions with the local authority associations on the costs of other outstanding sections of the Act.

Heating Additions

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many supplementary benefit claimants on the long-term rate of benefit were receiving heating additions at *(a)* the higher and *(b)* the lower rate on 30 September 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987; what percentages of the total numbers of claimants on the long-term rate were receiving each type of addition on that date; and what were these figures and percentages for each office of his Department within Newcastle upon Tyne;

(2) how many supplementary benefit claimants were receiving heating additions at *(a)* the higher and *(b)* the lower rate on 30 September 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987; what percentages of the total numbers of supplementary benefit claimants were receiving each type of addition on that date; and if he will give these figures and percentages for each office of his Department within Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Portillo: Information from which the number and percentage of supplementary benefit claimants in Great Britain receiving heating additions can be extracted is available only for December 1984 and February 1986. I will let the hon. Member have a reply giving these figures as soon as possible. Equivalent figures for each local office in Newcastle upon Tyne are not available.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of supplementary benefit recipients aged under 25 years in Great Britain in 1986 and in the earliest year for which figures are available in the following household categories *(a)* lone person householders, *(b)* living as members of another person's household and *(c)* paying an inclusive charge for full board and lodgings.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* The information is as follows:

	November 1979 (thousands)	*February 1986 (thousands)*
(a) Lone person householders[1]	20	129
(b) Members of another person's household	222	647
(c) Boarders[2]	5	52

[1] Excludes joint householders, and householders with dependants, non-dependants, boarders or sub-tenants.

[2] Excludes claimants in hostels or common lodging houses but includes cases where only part board is supplied (eg bed and breakfast only).

Source: Annual statistical enquiries.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, *Official Report,* column *175,* how many of the 69.7 per cent. of abortions after 18 weeks which were performed upon women with no previous children were performed upon women who had had a previous abortion.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* of the 5,770 notified abortions at 18 weeks and over gestation performed in England and Wales in 1986 on women with no previous children, 722 (12.5 per cent.) were performed on women who had had a previous abortion.

Birmingham Health Authority

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out figures for revenue spending for the Birmingham health authorities in 1982-83 at 1985-86 values together with the figure for 1985-86; and what account these figures take of demographic changes in addition to inflation.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 October 1987 c. *806*]: Allocations to the five Birmingham district health authorities are a matter for the West Midlands regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the RHA seeking information about the basis of those allocations.

The information requested on revenue expenditure is shown in the following table. Provisional expenditure figures for 1986-87 are also shown. Comparable figures for 1987-88 will not be available until after the end of the financial year. The initial 1987-88 revenue allocations which the districts received from the West Midlands regional health authority are given in the table. However these allocation figures are not comparable with the expenditure figures shown for earlier years; in particular, they exclude income generated by the authorities themselves.

Gross expenditure[1] for the five Birmingham Health Authorities

£'000s

	1982-83			*Percentage change 1982-83 to 1985-86*		*1986-87*		*Percentage change 1982-83 to 1986-87*		
	Cash	*At 1985-86 prices[2]*	*1985-86 cash*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*Cash*	*At 1985-86 prices[2]*	*Cash*	*Real terms*	*1987-88 initial cash allocation[4]*
Central Birmingham	63,388	73,403	77,172	21·7	5·1	85,035	82,543	34·1	12·5	77,832
East Birmingham	29,071	33,664	36,015	23·9	7·0	38,875	37,736	33·7	12·1	33,403
North Birmingham	30,574	35,405	35,914	17·5	1·4	[3]32,725	[3]31,766	—	—	35,922
South Birmingham	51,720	59,892	57,549	11·3	−3·9	62,519	60,687	20·9	1·3	57,450
West Birmingham	49,878	57,759	58,768	17·8	1·7	62,339	60,512	25·0	4·8	56,680
Total	224,631	260,123	265,418	18·2	2·9	281,488	273,239	—	—	261,287

[1] Based on health authorities' summarised accounts; figures for 1986-87 are provisional.

[2] Revalued using the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

[3] The 1986-87 figures for North Birmingham Health Authority are not comparable with those for earlier years as a number of hospitals managed by that Authority transferred to South East Staffordshire on 1 April 1986.

[4] Initial allocation figures are not comparable with outturn expenditure shown for earlier years.

Publicity (Departmental Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total spending by his Department on press and public relations in 1986-87; and what is the estimated expenditure for the current year;

(2) what was the total spending by his Department on television, radio and newspaper advertising and other promotional literature in 1986-87; and what is the estimated expenditure for the current year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1987, c. *667*]: My Department has no section which can be separately identified as public relations. Functions which are commonly associated with public relations are carried out by the Department's information division.

Total spending by my Department's information division in 1986-87 was as follows:

	£
Advertising and promotional literature	19,200,000
Professional manpower	936,000

Estimates for the 1987-88 year are as follows:

	£
Advertising and promotional literature	28,800,000
Professional manpower	994,000

Figures for the total spending by my Department on television, radio and newspaper advertising (but not cinema or poster advertising) and other literature in 1986-87 are as follows:

	£
Television	2,345,000
Radio	771,000
Newspapers	5,570,000
Other promotional literature	8,488,000
Total	17,174,000

Estimates for the 1987-88 year are as follows:

	£
Television	7,688,000
Radio	1,420,000
Newspapers	8,232,000
Other promotional literature	6,720,000
Total	24,040,000

Social security spending in the 1986-87 financial year centred on the changes arising from the reform of social security. In addition to the routine amendments to benefit literature, campaigns were mounted to advise potential beneficiaries of changed entitlements to maternity and invalid care allowances and the provision for extra help with heating costs because of the exceptionally cold weather.

Estimated expenditure for the 1987-88 financial year on advertising and promotional literature includes £11 million to explain and introduce the reform of social security. Approximately half of this figure will be for literature explaining the benefits. The balance will be spent on advertising to bring the changes to the attention of the public.

The major elements in health publicity spending in 1986-87 and that planned for 1987-88 include: public education campaigns on AIDS, drugs misuse, teenage anti-smoking, breast and cervical cancer and advice for people travelling abroad; together with recruitment campaigns for nurses, other NHS staff groups and blood donors.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people with a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis were discharged from mental illness hospitals in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; and how many of them were taken into local authority residential care in the same year.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	Number
1986	981
1985	1,120
1984	1,096
1983	1,037
1982	985

These figures may include patients discharged more than once in the year.

Information about how many of these people were subsequently admitted into residential care provided by health and social services boards in Northern Ireland is not available.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people discharged from hospital following a main diagnosis of schizophrenic psychosis and subsequently taken by the police under section to hospital have been refused admission in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost from each of the psychiatric units in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what research projects his Department has funded to test the effectiveness of community care for people suffering from schizophrenic psychosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: None.

Deaf/Blind People

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaf/blind and blind/deaf people there are in Northern Ireland; what advice his Department is giving to area health and social services boards as to how the needs of these groups can be met; what provision is being made by boards; what efforts are being made to provide employment for young deaf/blind people who are capable of earning a living; what provision exists for specialist training of social workers to meet the needs of deaf/blind people in Northern Ireland; what is the incidence of mental handicap among the deaf/blind; what additional needs have been identified as requiring further help; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In the absense of an accepted definition of the terms blind/deaf and deaf/blind, information about these groups and on the incidence of mental handicap among them is not available. In an attempt to provide a workable interpretation the Royal National Institute for the Blind has established a working party which is currently considering this complex issue.

In Northern Ireland, the individual needs of visually handicapped and hearing-impaired clients are met by the general range of statutory and voluntary services including the provision of home helps, aids and adaptations, and day centre and workshop activities. In the Eastern board area, specialist rehabilitation services are provided at Beechbank house and Helen Keller house. However, it is recognised that services specifically for the deaf and blind reqire improvement. In its regional strategy for the period 1987-92, the Department has advised boards that it will expect them to effect improvements either through the creation of specialist posts or through in-service training designed to ensure that existing staff, including social workers, are made more aware and capable of meeting the needs of blind and deaf people.

With regard to employment opportunities, each of the Province's 28 jobmarkets has a careers officer who has particular responsibility for guiding and advising disabled young persons on career choice and on training in the youth training programme. The programme provides financial resources for young disabled people to meet the cost of, for example specialist equipment, and for deaf and blind trainees in particular, assistance is available through the Education Support Service which has three full-time teachers specialising in their needs.

Roads

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of funding allocated to the major roads programme in the last 10 years in the areas covered by the following divisional offices: Craigavon and Downpatrick; and if he will give a geographic breakdown of funding in (i) Down district (all) (ii) Newry and Mourne district (in County Down) and (iii) Banbridge (in the electoral wards of Bannside and Katesbridge, Dromore South, Dromore North, Quilly, Garron and Croob).

Mr. Needham: Expenditure was as follows:

	£ million
Craigavon Division	14·8
Downpatrick Division	22·6
Down District	0·6
Newry and Mourne District (in County Down)	5·8
Bambridge District (electoral wards of Bannside, Katesbridge, Dromore South, Dromore North, Quilly, Garran and Croob	1·0

Housing

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of contractors' work is inspected after improvement work is carried out to Housing Executive dwellings in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2; and if he is satisfied that this process results in value for money and a proper standard of workmanship.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has advised me that all dwellings in improvement schemes are inspected on completion of the works and at the end of a defects liability period. The executive is satisfied that its inspection arrangements result in value for money and a proper standard of workmanship.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current policy on the improvement of labourers' cottages in Northern Ireland; and how many unimproved labourers' cottages are part of Housing Executive stock in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has informed me that current policy is to carry out full improvements to labourers' cottages where possible subject to normal value for money considerations. The executive is aware of only one cottage in the districts in question on which no improvements have been carried out.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new houses the Housing Executive will construct in the financial year 1987-88 in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is primarily a matter for the Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that in the 1987-88 financial year the Housing Executive expects to complete or start dwellings in the areas covered by these district offices as follows:

District Office	*Planned completions*	*Planned starts*
Downpatrick	31	31
Kilkeel	—	11
Banbridge	22	44
Newry No. 1	8	31
Newry No. 2	9	33

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many handicapped adaptations applications have been received in the areas covered by the following offices during 1987-88: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2; for what types of adaptations applications are made; how many of these have been completed; what agencies are involved in the process and how long it takes to process a handicapped adaptation.

Mr. Needham: This a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive, who has informed me that the number of handicapped adaptations applications received in respect of both private and public dwellings in the areas referred to during the period April 1987 to September 1987 was as follows:—

	Number
Downpatrick	52
Banbridge	60
Kilkeel Newry 1 Newry 2	233

Separate figures for applications received in Kilkeel and the two Newry district offices, and the numbers of these applications which have been completed are not readily available but I will ask the chairman of the Executive to write to the hon. Member on both these points.

The type of adaptations requested range from minor works such as provision of handrails or the fitting of locks and handles at convenient levels, to major renovations involving provision of an extension for kitchen, bathroom or bedroom facilities.

In dealing with such applications the Housing Executive works closely with the appropriate health and social services board, district council and Northern Ireland Fire Authority.

The time scale from receipt of an initial request to on-site completion varies considerably according to the complexity of each case. Minor works can be undertaken within a relatively short period. For major works to public sector houses, allowing for consultations, design, statutory approvals and contract period the average would be 1½ to 2 years.

Disabled People

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was his response to the Northern Ireland Council on Disability's proposals for equality of opportunity in employment for disabled people; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has any plans for further consultations with the Northern Ireland Council on Disability regarding equality of employment opportunity for people with disabilities;

(3) what plans he has for promoting equality of opportunity in employment for people in Northern Ireland with disabilities.

Mr. Viggers: Following consideration of all responses, including those received from the Northern Ireland Council on Disability, to the Government's consultative paper on equality of opportunity in employment the council has been advised that disability in Northern Ireland will continue to be addressed in the same way as in the rest of the United Kingdom. Discussions are, however, taking place between council and Government officials to examine how employment and training provision for disabled people can be most effectively administered and to consider proposals by the NICD that an equality of opportunity unit within its own organisation should be established.

Capital Grants

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why Northern Ireland has incurred a cut in the standard capital grant rate from 20 per cent. to 12·5 per cent; and what is his estimate of the percentage reduction in real terms.

Mr. Viggers: The decision to reduce the rate of standard capital grant was taken because this scheme does not provide good value for public money. Due to its automatic nature the scheme is unable to take account of factors such as the relationship between the investment and the creation of jobs or whether the project would have proceeded irrespective of grant assistance. In addition SCG has created a displacement effect whereby the grant aiding of some firms has placed their competitors, who are also dependent on local markets at a disadvantage.

The grant rate change is expected to result in a reduction in SCG expenditure this year of £1·75 million and £5 million in the next financial year. This represents some 1 per cent. and 3 per cent. respectively of the current year's planned expenditure on industrial support and development.

The Government intend that available funds should be targeted increasingly on the stimulation of new developments, the promotion of competitiveness and the introduction of better design, quality and marketing. It is intended that this change of emphasis should be achieved by greater use of IDB's and LEDU's selective assistance schemes.

Democracy

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw from the main political parties in Northern Ireland before publishing his discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland;

(2) if he will list in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland *(a)* which councils were represented by which parties and *(b)* which councils were represented by joint delegations composed of representatives of which parties.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: I received delegations, at separate or joint meetings, from the following councils and political parties: Antrim (SDLP and UUP); Ards (DUP and UUP); Armagh (DUP, SDLP and UUP); Banbridge (DUP and UUP); Ballymena (DUP and UUP); Belfast (SDLP and UUP); Carrickfergus (DUP and UUP); Craigavon (SDLP); Cookstown (SDLP); Derry (DUP); Down (SDLP); Dungannon (UUP); Fermanagh (DUP and UUP); Larne (DUP and UUP); Limavady (DUP, SDLP and UUP); Lisburn (Alliance and UUP); Magherafelt (DUP); Newtownabbey (DUP and UUP); North Down (Alliance, DUP and UUP); and Strabane (DUP). Councillors from the two unionist parties attended joint meetings, along with a number of Independent Unionists. The other political parties were represented at separate meetings.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, which of the councils involved had subscribed to the Fair Employment Agency's declaration on fair employment.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Belfast, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey councils had signed the Fair Employment Agency's declaration of principle and intent.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, which of the councils represented had limited or refused to conduct their business after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Of the councils whose members took part in the 20 meetings held, protest action against the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement resulting in some form of disruption of council business was taken by Antrim, Ards, Armagh, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast, Carrickfergus, Cookstown, Craigavon, Dungannon, Larne, Limavady, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and North Down councils.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to him, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, as to which of the delegations were mandated by their councils and which by political groups.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 October 1987]*: None.

Sheep and Lambs (Sale Restrictions)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sheep and lambs, and in what areas of Northern Ireland, are still under restriction for sale as a result of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the USSR.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: When restrictions on movement and slaughter of sheep were introduced on 15 September 1987 a survey revealed the presence of approximately 35,000 sheep in the affected areas as follows:

	Number
Glenwherry, County Antrim	8,500
Glenshane, County Londonderry	21,000
Belraugh, County Londonderry	5,500

To date approximately 4,000 sheep have been monitored and released from restriction.

Storm Damage

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has to the number of dwellings which were flooded in each council area in Northern Ireland due to the exceptional rainfall on 21 October.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Flooding of dwellings was confined mainly to the west and north-west of the Province. Details of reported major incidents of flooding are as follows:

District	*Dwellings*
Strabane	300
Omagh	84
Fermanagh	52
Craigavon	35
Coleraine	28
Banbridge	24
Armagh	16
Limavady	13

Precise numbers of flooded dwellings in other council districts are not known but are probably in single figures.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the repairs to the banking system on the River Roe which are necessary as a result of flood damage on 21 October to be completed; and what is his estimate of the cost.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Repairs to the flood bank on the River Roe have already started. Progress will depend on weather conditions and the work is likely to take up to six months to complete. Its estimated costs is £120,000.

Home Help Service

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the inflation-adjusted cost of the home help care service in the constituency of Newry and Armagh during 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 2 November 1987]*: The costs of the home help service provided in the Armagh/Dungannon and Newry/Mourne units of management are as follows:

	£[1]
1983-84	2,799,314
1984-85	2,737,926
1985-86	2,913,641
1986-87	[2]2,856,046

[1] At 1985-86 prices.

[2] Provisional.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of recipients of home help care in the constituency of Newry and Armagh in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The numbers who received home help service in the Newry and Mourne and Armagh and Dungannon units of management were:

	Newry and Mourne	*Armagh and Dungannon*
1983	1,817	1,953
1984	1,848	1,772
1985	1,958	1,987
1986	1,576	1,921

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of recipients of home help care in Northern Ireland in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The information is as follows:

28,023, 28,318, 29,602 and 29,897 respectively.

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will initiate a review of the home help care service in Northern Ireland to establish the cost of the service during 1986 and the savings achieved by the Department of Health and Social Services as a result of the home help care service reducing the number of sick, aged and disabled who would otherwise have needed to be admitted to hospital or residential care during the same period.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: No. The Department of Health and Social Services has recognised in its regional strategy for 1987-92 that a wide range of domiciliary and other community services is essential in ensuring that people are admitted to long-stay care, whether in hospital or residential accommodation, only where this is essential.

The Department has also indicated that it intends to test this strategy by means of a programme of evaluation and monitoring, but a review related only to one component of the range of services which comprise community care would not be appropriate.

Maryfield Secretariat

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South of 2 July, *Official Report*, column *161*, he will bring up to date the costs so far to public funds of the Maryfield secretariat;

(2) if he will list all the sums of over £1,000 annual cost attributable to expenditure on the Maryfield secretariat.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: The cost to United Kingdom public funds of secretariat salaries, to the end of September, was £193,000; that of running expenses £184,000. Records are not kept in such a form as to yield the further breakdown the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Intergovernmental Council

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give particulars of each of the meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council held since the signing of the Hillsborough agreement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council has continued to provide a framework for a wide variety of meetings between our two Governments. These include the meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which was explicitly set up within the framework of the AIIC. There have been a number of meetings at all the levels since the conclusion of the agreement, including those of the AIIC co-ordinating committee and its cultural and educational working group.

TRANSPORT

Catalytic Converters

87. **Mr. Livingstone** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he has taken of recent developments in catalytic converters; and if he will now reconsider the case for fitting these converters to British cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We keep in close touch with developments in vehicle technology. We will be tightening our legal emission standards when the relevant European directives have been finally adopted. We expect that catalysts will be needed in the 1990s on a substantial number of new cars registered in Britain.

Goods Vehicles

88. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase planning controls on the granting of licences for the operation of goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The environmental provisions relating to operator licensing were reviewed last year. I announced then that a number of amendments to the legislation would be brought forward when an opportunity arose. There was no recommendation for a closer link between planning and licensing law. When considering an application which involves a new operating centre the licensing authorities are able to take into account any information about planning permission.

Lean Burn Engines

89. **Mr. Ingram** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the lean burn engine to be fitted to all new cars sold in Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I cannot predict how widely the lean burn engine will be used in future. It is one of the most attractive options open to manufacturers seeking to comply with tighter emission limits, taking into account factors such as cost, performance, fuel economy and driveability.

Lead-free Petrol

90. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set a final date for Britain to have lead-free petrol only on sale.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Leaded petrol will be needed for a diminishing number of cars until around the end of the century.

Farm Vehicles

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what enforcement action is taken to ensure that farmers do not abuse the preferential treatment of farmers' vehicles to undercut boda fide professional road haulage.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Both the police and officials of this Department aim to ensure, by roadside checks and other available means, that vehicles are correctly licensed for the uses to which they are being put. I am not aware of any general difficulty relating to the licensing concessions for farmers' vehicles. Perhaps my hon. Friend could write to me if he has a particular problem in mind.

Coach Routes (Designation)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now return to local authorities the duty to designate coach routes in their areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Local authorities retain their powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to prevent public service vehicles from using unsuitable roads. The Transport Act 1985 gave them a further power to prohibit or restrict waiting by local buses.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received from the Civil Aviation Authority concerning radar, radio and telephone problems at air traffic control centres in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These matters fall within the day-to-day management responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority and it does not therefore make such reports to my right hon. Friend as a matter of routine. He is informed of major failures in the system. Improved reliability of equipment may sometimes form part of the justification for investment proposals which require his approval.

Road Humps

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of relevant applications received by his Department, to install road humps, by each local authority in England; how many have been approved; and what steps he is taking to encourage the use of these devices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have recently issued a leaflet on speed control humps to local authorities to help them assess where these might be appropriate and to advise them on technical aspects. It is for local authorities to decide where local circumstances make their use desirable. The Department does not approve or monitor individual installations of speed control humps or other local authority road and traffic measures.

M20 (Hollingbourne to Ashford)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to let the main contract for the Hollingbourne to Ashford section of the M20 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Subject to the satisfactory completion of the remaining statutory procedures, we plan to let two contracts in the spring and summer next year for completion at about the same time in late 1990.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Noise)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what research is currently being undertaken by his Department with a view to reducing noise made by heavy goods vehicles with respect to *(a)* bodies, *(b)* engines *(c)* tyres and *(d)* transmissions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The quiet heavy vehicle (QHV90) project—a joint Government and industry initiative to research and develop methods of quietening heavy goods vehicles—should be virtually completed during 1988. During this programme a range of noise reduction measures have been examined, but not tyre noise. Trials of improved road surfaces, aimed at meeting a number of criteria including reduced tyre noise, are continuing.

Shipping Registers (British Dependent Territories)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any review of the status of British dependent territory shipping registers has taken place since January 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Proposals on the British dependent territory shipping registers were published in the consultative document "Proposals for Legislation on Ship Registration and Other Matters" issued by my Department in March 1984. The Merchant Shipping Bill, introduced in the other place on 29 October, by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport carries forward these proposals, modified in the light of comments made on the consultative document and of subsequent developments. The White Paper "Merchant Shipping: Legislative Proposals" (Cm. 239) published on 30 October gives further background.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Four currently. The information is not available for previous years.

Transport Infrastructure Improvements

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is considering any proposals for making joint applications with other European Community member states for financial assistance from the European Community for transport infrastructure improvements of mutual benefit to both the United Kingdom and the other member states.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

M40 (Progress)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding progress in completing the M40 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are making good progress. Both contracts for the Warwick section are already under construction and all five contracts for the Banbury and Gaydon sections should be under way by mid-1988. A public inquiry is currently in progress into the remaining, Waterstock-Wendlebury, section. Subject to the completion of statutory procedures, we hope to begin work on this section in 1989 and to complete it during 1991.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are at present being undertaken to extend the length of electrified railway track in England and Wales; and in which British Rail regions.

Mr. David Mitchell: Work is currently under way on five projects:

	Region
Bournemouth-Weymouth	Southern
North London Line	Eastern
East Coast Main Line	Anglian/ Eastern/ Scottish
Royston-Cambridge	Anglia
Watford-St. Albans	London

A further 15 projects have been completed since 1979.

British Rail (Privatisation)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail on the privatisation of passenger services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The Government's policy towards the railways was set out in the letter on objectives sent to Sir Robert Reid in October 1986.

Skips

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish statistics showing the number of injuries and accidents which involve skips which are located on public highways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The presence of skips is not recorded on road accident reports. The information requested is therefore not available.

Airports (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport which airports have received financial assistance from Her Majesty's Government in each of the last three years; in what form; and what was the value of the assistance in each case.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following is the information:

Airport and Year	*Form of assitance*	*Value £'000s*
Belfast (Aldergrove)		
1984-85	Security grant	604
1985-86	Security grant	655
	Airport development grant	833
1988-87	Security grant	680
Birmingham		
1984-85	Airport development grant (under the terms of the now expired municipalisation agreement)	3,134
Liverpool		
1984-85	Urban programme grants	n/a
1985-86	Urban programme grants	n/a
1986-87	Urban programme grants	n/a
St. Mary's (I.of S.)		
1984-85	Assistance in respect of losses following I. of S. assumption of airport management from DTI	25
1985-86		60
Scottish Highlands and Islands		
1984-85	Assistance in respect of losses at eight Highlands and Islands aerodromes	3,364
1985-86		3,251
1986-87		2,896

n/a Not readily available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport what financial assistance is available for airports accepting scheduled or non-scheduled traffic from *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* the European Economic Community; and what criteria are used in determining elegibility for such assistance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Government financial assistance is not generally available, but some airports might be eligible for consideration under the following specific schemes:

(a) Urban programme grants. Available for inner city projects within designated areas to tackle problems of unemployment and social need.

(b) Security grants. Northern Ireland only. Compensation for additional security measures provided at Belfast international (Aldergrove).

(c) Scottish Development Department assistance to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. (a subsidiary of the Civil Aviation Authority) in respect of losses incurred at its eight aerodromes (Benbecula, Inverness, Islay, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Sumburgh, Tiree and Wick).

(d) European regional development fund. Available to projects in assisted areas designated by the Department of Trade and Industry, or serving an assisted area in such a way as to assist in the regeneration of its economy.

Airports (Civil Traffic)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will list each airport in the United Kingdom which accepts non-scheduled civil or scheduled civil airline traffic;

(2) whether he will list each airport in the United Kingdom which accepts scheduled airline traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under article 71 of the Air Navigation Order 1985, most aircraft involved in scheduled or non-scheduled public transport of passengers in the United Kingdom are required to use an aerodrome licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority, a Government aerodrome, or one owned or managed by the authority. I am sending the hon. Member a list of such aerodromes, marked to show those from which scheduled services operated in October 1987. Copies will be placed in the Library. Information is not readily available to distinguish which aerodromes accept non-scheduled traffic.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will place in the Library the text of the undertaking given by British Rail to Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The agreement on payments to be made by British Rail and SNCF for use of the Channel tunnel is a commercial matter between the Railways and Eurotunnel.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport when, and in what manner, he gave permission to British Rail to guarantee payments to Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It was entirely the Railways' decision to agree to make regular minimum payments to Eurotunnel each year once the Channel tunnel has opened in return for entitlement to use 50 per cent. of the tunnel's capacity. The Government were however, kept informed of progress on those negotiations, and were satisfied that British Rail did not go beyond what it considered would be commercially justifiable and that thus there was no question of the treaty or section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act being contravened.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what conditions have been placed by the international banks on the granting of £5,000 million loans to Eurotunnel; and if in particular they are conditional on the undertaking given by British Rail and the loan facility provided by the European Investment Bank, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: The conditions placed by the international banks on the granting of credit facilities of £5,000,000,000 to Eurotunnel are a matter for the banks themselves.

Newark Bypass

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the tenderers for the Newark bypass whose quotations he has rejected and *(b)* the tender figures offered by each of them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The firms, in alphabetical order, were:

Balfour Beatty Ltd.
Cementation Construction Ltd.
Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.
Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.
Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.
John Mowlem & Co. Plc.
Wimpey Construction UK Ltd.

It is the Department's policy not publicly to attribute unsuccessful tender prices to the firms that offered them. The prices, in ascending order, were:

£34,977,331·47
£35,224,724·00
£35,786,402·79
£35,817,341·72
£36,329,677·07
£36,801,616·86
£37,449,317·20

Public Transport (Workers)

Mr. Morley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many workers were employed within the public transport industry in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Major: I have been asked to reply.

Numbers in thousands were as follows:

	Mid year 1985	*Mid year 1986*
Public sector transport	397	383

Source: Data underlying "Employment in the public and private sectors, 1980 to 1986" Economic Trends, December 1986.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 November 1987

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

New Zealand

Mr. David Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to increase trade between the United Kingdom and New Zealand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: New Zealand is an important trading partner. The British Overseas Trade Board actively encourages United Kingdom companies to export to the market, and has a wide range of services to assist them. I visited New Zealand myself in May 1986 in order to promote United Kingdom exports and the BOTB proposes to support 15 trade missions to that country in 1988-89.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Steinberg asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to require manufacturers of aerosols to state on the can whether the product contains chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are taking steps to implement the Montreal protocol for the protection of the ozone layer, which will control the future production and use of chlorofluorocarbons. I see no need for additional measures regarding the labelling of aerosols. Individual manufacturers are free to indicate the contents of these canisters if they so wish: doubtless they will consider such action should there be any perceptible consumer preference.

Regional Aid

Mr. McLeish asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was his Department's expenditure on regional aid to industry in each of the English regions, Scotland and Wales in the last year for which full figures are available and for each year since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: The figures for my Department's spend on regional aid to industry in each of the English regions, Scotland and Wales for the years 1979-80 to 1986-87 are as follows:

Area	*1979-80 £ million*	*1980-81 £ million*	*1981-82 £ million*	*1982-83 £ million*	*1983-84 £ million*	*1984-85 £ million*	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*
North East	117·8	115·3	130·4	111·2	82·6	76·2	62·0	108·3
North West	98·1	143·0	194·1	152·7	130·7	121·8	96·3	132·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	28·3	45·3	54·2	47·0	32·3	36·5	32·5	37·1
East Midlands	3·3	3·8	8·2	13·0	16·9	10·2	8·3	10·6
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·5	9·9
South West	7·7	11·0	12·0	13·7	9·8	11·6	10·9	20·6
Scotland	71·0	114·1	144·2	288·2	144·3	72·0	2·1	0·6
Wales	63·8	106·0	123·6	124·8	73·3	58·6	1·6	0·9
Great Britain	390·0	538·5	666·7	750·6	489·9	386·9	219·2	320·9

Notes:

These figures cover regional development grants and regional selective assistance industrial and training grants. All figures are gross, before deducting domestic and European Community receipts.

The figures exclude expenditure on the provision of land and buildings through the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the exchange risk guarantee scheme and business improvement services as it is not possible to provide a breakdown of these items by English region.

In November 1984 responsibility for RDG expenditure in Scotland and Wales was transferred to the Scottish and Welsh Offices. DTI expenditure figures for 1984-85 and, more particularly, the two subsequent years are therefore not comparable with those for earlier years.

Nearly all expenditure on regional aid to industry in Scotland and Wales is now the responsibility of the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively.

Lonrho plc

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to complete his consideration of representations in relation to a possible breach by Lonrho plc of sections 204 to 206 of the Companies Act 1985 in relation to share dealings in House of Fraser plc during the period from the date of the inspector's interim report into share dealings in House of Fraser to the date of its acquisition by Al Fayed Investment and Trust (UK) Ltd;

(2) when he expects to complete his consideration of representations in relation to a possible breach of section 231 of the Companies Act 1985 by Lonrho plc in relation to its Liechtenstein subsidiaries Blorg and Contango.

Mr. Maude: The representations have been considered and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State is about to write to my hon. Friend and other interested parties on this matter.

Guinness plc

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the inspectors appointed to investigate the affairs and membership of Guinness plc to report.

Mr. Maude: The investigation continues, but I am unable to say when a report will be received

House of Fraser plc

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the inspectors appointed to investigate the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc to report.

Mr. Maude: The inspectors are pressing ahead with their investigation as quickly as possible, but I cannot say when their report will be received.

British Caledonian

Mr. Madel asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from consumer organisations on the proposed take-over of British Caledonian by British Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend has received a number of representations from organisations representing the interests of consumers. These have expressed a range of views. During the course of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into the proposal those wishing to make representations have been directed to the commission.

Dumping

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, to assist British importers, he will seek to establish for the European Economic Commission its definition of dumping, with particular reference to *(a)* the cost of production and *(b)* the price at which the goods concerned are ruled in their domestic market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The definition of dumping used by the European Commission is based on article VI of the GATT and is incorporated in the Community anti-dumping legislation — regulation (EEC) No. 2176/84. Dumping can be established by various methods including the use of domestic prices or cost of production, depending on the circumstances of the case. United Kingdom importers can obtain guidance on all anti-dumping matters from my Department's unfair trade unit.

Economic League

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the number of companies which declare donations to the Economic League in their returns to Companies House under the Companies Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Some of the individual accounts submitted to the Registrar of Companies each year may contain details of such donations by companies. These accounts are available for public inspection. However, the Department of Trade and Industry does not carry out any analysis which would provide the information requested.

Cash Limits and Running Costs

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to the Department of Trade and Industry's cash limits or running costs for 1987-88.

Mr. Butcher: The cash limit of class V, vote 2 (support for industry) will be reduced by £7 million from £471·249 million to £464·249 million. This change reflects forecast reduced requirements for the innovation programme.

The running cost limit of the Department of Trade and Industry is reduced by £399,000 from £275·771 million to £275·372 million. This reduction reflects the net effect of the reclassification out of running costs of the cost of external inspections under the Companies Act 1985 and the transfer of provision from the Department of Employment for staff in the inner cities unit and the enterprise and deregulation unit.

PRIME MINISTER

Flecknoe

Q17. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Flecknoe.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Overseas Visits

Q18. **Mr. Grocott** asked the Prime Minister how many official overseas visits she has made since 1979; and what has been the total cost.

The Prime Minister: I have made 95 official overseas visits since 1979. The total cost to date is £2,987,000.

EC Budget

Q24. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will submit proposals to the next meeting of the European Council designed to reform EEC spending within the current legal limits of expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Council in December will discuss the future financing of the Community, including proposals to improve budget discipline and management. I intend to make clear, as I did at the last European Council, that there must be agreement on effective and binding control over Community spending before the question of any changes to the current limit on resources can be considered.

Accountability

Q33. **Mr. Allen** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received about her accountability to the House through Prime Minister's questions.

The Prime Minister: None, as far as I am aware.

North-West

Q52. **Mr. Butler** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the north-west.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Space Agency

Q58. **Sir Geoffrey Pattie** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the headquarters of the European Space Agency in Paris.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Inverclyde (Enterprise Zone)

Q73. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Scottish Office and the Department of Trade and Industry about the creation of an enterprise zone in Inverclyde.

The Prime Minister: The case for an enterprise zone in Inverclyde remains under consideration, but, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has already indicated, after consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister primarily responsible, no decision can be taken until the findings on the current evaluation of the enterprise zone experiment have been fully considered.

EC (Internal Market)

Q77. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the development of the internal market in the EEC.

The Prime Minister: The Single European Act (SEA), which was before Parliament when it passed the European Communities (Amendment) Act, which received Royal Assent on 6 November 1986, writes into the treaty of Rome a commitment to adopt measures with the aim of completing the single market by 1992.

More than 100 individual measures have been agreed towards that goal during the past two years, including 48 during the United Kingdom presidency last year. Priority areas for decisions by the end of 1988 identified by the European Council meeting in Brussels last June include public purchasing, technical barriers under the Community's new approach to harmonisation, insurance, freedom of establishment for the professions and liberalisation of capital movements.

Mr. Charles Powell

Q87. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister when Mr. Charles Powell was promoted to the grade of under-secretary of state at the Foreign Office; at what age; what new functions and responsibilities he has assumed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Powell was promoted to the senior grade of the Diplomatic Service with effect from 1 May this year, while in his present post.

Vancouver Summit

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the Commonwealth meeting in Vancouver and, in particular, of the progress made in friendship, mutal respect and community of aims and interests between the member countries.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement I made on Thursday 22 October 1987 at columns 921-22.

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what was the source of the figures quoted by the British delegation in the recent Vancouver meeting of the commonwealth, regarding trade between Canada and South Africa.

The Prime Minister: The figures quoted were taken from the International Monetary Fund's "Direction of Trade Statistics" for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Wray asked the Prime Minister what representations she received from the South African Government regarding her intervention on the issue of sanctions, during the Vancouver Commonwealth meeting; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Storm Damage

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister what additional financial resources have been made available to those who suffered from the severe storms and flood damage during the month of October in *(a)* southern England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the statements made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on 21 October 1987.

In addition, the European Commission has offered £210,000 to provide assistance to those affected by the storm damage in England; and £140,000 for those affected by flooding in Wales and Northern Ireland. Discussions are being held urgently between the Government and the Commission on the distribution of this money.

In certain circumstances payments may also be available under existing social security regulations.

Sir Philip Woodfield

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what is the salary that will be paid to Sir Philip Woodfield as a staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services; and what are the terms of his employment.

The Prime Minister: The staff counsellor will receive an annual retainer of £5,000 and a daily fee of £100, and will be reimbursed for any expenses necessarily incurred in the course of his duties. These payments are non-pensionable.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if authority will be extended to Sir Philip Woodfield to look into allegations of abuses by the security services made by those outside the security service.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister what accommodation, office and secretarial facilities and by which Government Department, will be provided to Sir Philip Woodfield as staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services.

The Prime Minister: The staff counsellor will have the use of an office and such facilities as he requires in the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister from which vote and sub-head the salary and expenses of Sir Philip Woodfield as staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services will be paid.

The Prime Minister: All costs will be paid from Other Services (Cabinet Office) (Class XX, vote 2) sub-head A1.

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will arrange for all or part of the reports of the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services to be placed in the Library; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

SS Titanic

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps through international agencies to protect from further exploration the site of the SS Titanic.

The Prime Minister: I have every sympathy with those who do not wish the Titanic to be further disturbed by salvage operation. However, any action agreed through international agencies would be unlikely to be effective because it would be legally binding only in states which chose to be party to it.

Public Money (Allocations)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister what is the total overall identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to *(a)* Glasgow, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Lambeth, *(d)* Newcastle, *(e)* Hammersmith, *(f)* Cardiff, *(g)* Haringey, *(h)* Southampton, *(i)* Leicester, *(j)* Leeds, *(k)* Wandsworth, *(l)* Belfast and *(m)* Northampton (i) in total, (ii) per person, (iii) per unemployed person, (iv) per unemployed person aged under 21 years and (v) per retirement pensioner in each named district; and if she will also express these figures at 1987 prices.

The Prime Minister: Apart from expenditure which is the responsibility of the territorial departments, most public expenditure is planned on a national basis and it is not possible to identify separately expenditure allocated to particular areas.

Audit Commission Fees

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Prime Minister what information she has as to the margin by which the increase in audit fees proposed by the Audit Commission exceeds the current rate of inflation.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I understand, however, that the Audit Commission proposes an overall fee increase of 6·6 per cent. for the year beginning 1 November 1987. The rise in the retail prices index for the 12 months to September was 4·2 per cent.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Prime Minister if she will request the Secretary of State for the Environment to exercise his powers under section 21(7) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to make regulations prescribing a scale of audit fees which embodies an increase lower than the 6·5 per cent. rise proposed by the Audit Commission; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 it is for him to consider whether it is necessary or desirable to prescribe a scale of fees in place of the scale prescribed by the Audit Commission.

Engagements

Mr. McAllion asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

Mr. Fearn asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

Mrs. Ray Michie asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will indicate, area by area, the number of British Coal houses sold to financial institutions and the revenue gained from such sales;

(2) if he will indicate the costs attributed to Dawdon, Murton, Vane Tempest and Easington collieries for transporting coal and minerals by road transport and by British Rail;

(3) if he will indicate the annual costs of transporting miners in the north-east to and from work;

(4) what was the level of capital investment in the deep mines of *(a)* Murton, *(b)* Dawdon, *(c)* Vane Tempest and *(d)* Easington during the year 1986-87; and what is the projected investment during the year 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Scottish Coalfields

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make a statement on British Coal's proposals to develop the townhead coal reserves near Ponfeigh in the Clydesdale constituency;

(2) if he will give details of capital investment figures for the Scottish coalfields for the years 1988 to 1991;

(3) if he will give details of capital investment in the Scottish coalfields for opencast development for years 1988 to 1991;

(4) if he will give details as to the capital cost of developing the Dalguhandy coal site in the Clydesdale constituency.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a management matter for the British Coal Corporation. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to ensure that no private licence to develop opencast mining will be granted outside existing legislation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under existing legislation the British Coal Corporation is responsible for the granting of licences for private opencast mining operations.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give assurances that his proposals for the privatisation of the electricity industry do not result in increased costs to the consumer.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry will be designed to increase the efficiency of the industry, for the benefit of consumers.

WALES

Water

Mr. Alan W. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has on the total volume of water in Llyn Brianne *(a)* on the first day of the month for every month during the current year and *(b)* day by day for every day during October;

(2) what information he has on the total volume of water that flowed from 12 noon Sunday 18 October to 12 noon Monday 19 October *(a)* from the Llyn Brianne reservoir and *(b)* downstream through the River Towy in Carmarthen;

(3) what information he has on the catchment area in square kilometres of *(a)* Llyn Brianne reservoir, *(b)* the River Towy above Glanrhyd, Llanwarda, and *(c)* the River Towy above Carmathen bridge;

(4) what information he has on how much water in cubic metres per hour was discharged from Llyn Brianne hour by hour from 12 noon on Sunday 18 October to 12 noon on Monday 19 October.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for the Welsh water authority and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Alan W. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the capacity in millions of cu m of the Llyn Brianne reservoir.

Mr. Grist: The capacity of the Llyn Brianne reservoir is 60·39 million cu m.

Cwmbran Development Corporation

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the chairman and members of the board of Cwbran development corporation to discuss the effects of that body's wind-up in 1988 on the local community.

Mr. Peter Walker: The board of Cwbran development corporation has not asked for such a discussion and I would not expect it to do so. The effects on the local community of the winding-up of the corporation are for consideration by the local authorities and other bodies concerned with the prosperity of Cwbran.

Cancer Screening

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce a comprehensive scheme of screening for breast cancer among women aged below 50 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The breast screening programming which is currently being planned for Wales will be aimed at women aged 50 to 64. This is in accordance with the advice of a working group chaired by Professor Sir Patrick Forest, which concluded that the effectiveness of screening has so far been demonstrated only for women aged 50 and over. There are accordingly no plans at present to introduce breast screening for women below this age.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales how the existing laboratories for the testing of cervical cancer are distributed in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The distribution of existing NHS laboratories used for cervical cytology in Wales is as follows:

District health authority	*Hospital*
Clwyd	Ysbyty Glan Clwyd
	Ysbyty Wrecsam Maelor
East Dyfed	Bronglais
	West Wales General
	Llanelli General
Gwent	Royal Gwent
	Nevill Hall
Gwynedd	Ysbyty Gwynedd
Mid Glamorgan	Princess of Wales
	East Glamorgan
	Prince Charles
	St Davids
South Glamorgan	St Davids
West Glamorgan	Morriston
	Singleton
	Neath

Cervical smears taken in Pembrokeshire and Powys are tested in laboratories in neighbouring district health authorities.

Education Reform

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications and effects of the proposals in Government consultation and financial delegation documents on the national curriculum, upon physical education, including extra-curricular activity in the schools of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government recognise the importance of sport and physical education for children and for this reason the consultation document on the national curriculum proposes including it as a foundation subject.

The proposals for financial delegation do not have any direct impact upon physical education, although the consultation document recognises the need to make appropriate arrangements for the use of community facilities in schools.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had on the national curriculum and financial delegation with district and county councils concerning physical education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Copies of the consultation documents on the national curriculum and financial delegation were sent to the Welsh Counties Committee, the Committee of Welsh District Councils and to individual county councils. My right hon. Friend and I have discussed them with the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, and our officials have held a series of meetings with interested bodies. Consultation responses covered the whole range of issues raised and only one county council made any reference to the position of physical education.

Opencast Mining, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had discussions with the chairman of British Coal concerning the Opencast Executive's proposals to mine opencast coal on agricultural land adjacent to residential properties at Cheapside, Ewloe, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate an inquiry into the impact in Clwyd of opencast mining operations upon local communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. In view of my right hon. Friend's statutory responsibility to give impartial consideration to individual applications and appeals in relation to opencast coal mining, it would not be appropriate for me to set up such an inquiry.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will receive a deputation from Cheapside, Clwyd residents about the proposals of the Opencast Executive; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will visit Cheapside, Clwyd, and meet on site representatives of residents, the community, district and county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. The Opencast Executive has appealed to my right hon. Friend against the refusal of Clwyd county council to grant planning permission for opencast coal mining at Cheapside, Clwyd. Arrangements are being made for a public local inquiry to be held into the appeal and, in view of this, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to visit the appeal site or to meet local representatives to discuss the proposed development.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Zimbabwe (Railways)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will open talks with the Government of Zimbabwe, with a view to providing new locomotives and rolling stock for the Zimbabwe national railways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are ready to consider assistance for the national railways of Zimbabwe. However, when Zimbabwean and British officials met in September to discuss priorities in the allocation of British aid, the Zimbabweans did not put forward the NRZ as an area for our involvement.

Rain Forests

Mr. Jack asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to contribute to international attempts being made to stop the destruction of the world's rain forests.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government play an active part in the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forestry action plan, which is co-ordinating donor action on the problem of deforestation. The Overseas Development Administration participates in missions arranged under the auspices of the action plan to discuss the need for conservation with the Governments of affected developing countries and their requirements for institutional and financial support. This has led to the funding of projects under the British bilateral aid programme, in which aid for forestry projects has increased threefold over the last five years.

The Government also ratified the international tropical timber agreement in 1984 and are a member of the related Tropical Timber Organisation, which was established in 1986. One of the principal aims of this organisation is to encourage trade in tropical hardwoods on the basis of sustainable and renewable resources.

Food Aid

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if measures have been taken to ensure that Third world countries do not receive food aid from the European Economic Community which is damaged or totally unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. The Council of Ministers agreed a new regulation governing EC food aid during the British presidency in December 1986. A subsequent Commission regulation establishing a new system for the mobilisation of food aid, which includes provisions for quality control, became effective in July 1987.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urgently demand a review of the way in which staff at the European Commission discharge their duties of quality and price control of food distributed either commercially or as aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. The position on food aid is described in my answer to the hon. Member's previous question.

We are in touch with the Commission about the tightening up of the management of intervention stocks and we strongly support their efforts, and those of the Court of Auditors and the Budgetary Control Committee of the European Parliament, in this regard.

Jordan

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to offer further aid to Jordan in support of its five-year plan.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have offered a new loan of £5 million, on concessionary terms and tied to the provision of British goods and services, as a further contribution to the Jordan five-year plan. The finance will be spent on capital projects to be agreed between our two Governments.

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current average waiting time for a driving test at each testing centre in West Yorkshire, compared with the national average waiting time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Current waiting times in West Yorkshire are:

Test centre	*Waiting time (weeks)*
Bradford—Wibsey	17
—Eccleshill	10
—Heaton	17
Halifax	12
Heckmondwike	15
Horsforth	16
Huddersfield	16
Keighley	5
Leeds—Harehills	20
—Crossgates	19
Pontefract	27
Wakefield	19

The national average waiting time is 14 weeks.

Skips

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current regulations regarding proper lighting on skips left on the public highway; who is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of such lighting; and if he has any plans to alter the present arrangements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Section 139 of the Highways Act 1980 requires the owner of a skip deposited on the highway to ensure that the skip is properly lighted during the hours of darkness. The highway authority may impose conditions as to the manner in which the skip is to be lighted or guarded when granting permission for it to be deposited on the highway. Responsibility for ensuring that the skip is lit in accordance with any conditions imposed rests on the owner. It is a defence against a charge in respect of a lighting offence to prove that the offence was due to the act or default of another person and that the owner took all reasonable precautions to avoid the commission of the offence. In addition to lighting, the Builders Skips (Markings) Regulations 1984 require the owner of the skip to fit red and yellow fluorescent and reflective markings to the ends of the skip. There are no plans to alter the present arrangements.

Seafarers (Criminal Records)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether seafarers convicted while at sea for merchant shipping offences, but upon whom no penalty is imposed, acquire a criminal record.

Mr. David Mitchell: The powers have been repealed under which a ship's master could impose a financial penalty on a seafarer who committed a disciplinary offence. A person now charged with any offence under the Merchant Shipping Acts can be tried only in the courts. Any penalties then imposed would constitute a criminal record. A master now can impose only such penalties as are within the scope of whatever industrial agreement is relevant. Such penalties would not constitute a criminal record.

M40 (Extension)

Mr. Anthony Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's plan for the extension of the M40 from Oxford to Birmingham; and whether it will be constricted to three traffic lanes along its entire length.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is building the M40 north of Wendlebury to dual three-lane standard. Between Waterstock and Wendlebury, where traffic flows are forecast to be much lower, the Department's plans are for dual two-lane standard, but with the scheme designed to accommodate provision of third lanes when warranted by traffic levels.

Motorway Roadworks

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional action he is taking to reduce accidents by vehicles passing through roadworks on the motorway network.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is discussing with the police the use of mandatory speed limits at contraflow sites.

We are about to start a trial of a new system of closer spaced matrix signals, which automatically detects stationary or slow moving traffic, on a 50-mile stretch of the M1.

We are evaluating the video monitoring of major roadworks to allow earlier detection and warning of breakdowns and accidents.

The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has recently commissioned a study of accidents at contraflows.

We shall implement further improvements in the design of contraflow systems in the light of the findings of this study.

M1 Motorway

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of the M1 are now being repaired; how many miles are reduced to single lane; how many miles to double lane; how many miles are subject to reduced speed controls on the approaches to road works; what was the comparable situation *(a)* six months ago, *(b)* a year ago, *(c)* two years ago, *(d)* three years ago; what are the estimated completion dates for all current road works; in how many cases completion dates are likely to over-run; and what new road works are scheduled to take place in the next (i) six months, (ii) the next year and (iii) the next two years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is readily available only for major maintenance schemes. No stretch is currently reduced to a single lane because of major maintenance work. Eighteen miles are reduced to two lanes at times and subject to temporary speed limits. In addition, variable matrix speed signals are displayed as the need arises.

Comparable information for previous periods is not available. The number of major maintenance schemes at each of the dates requested was as follows:

	Number
5 May 1987	0
5 November 1986	4
5 November 1985	1
5 November 1984	0

Such schemes typically involved a two-lane contraflow not exceeding two and a half miles with advisory speed limits.

The estimated completion dates for current major maintenance schemes are as follows:

J39-40	December 1987
J14-15	*5 November 1987
J9-10	13 November 1987

*Note: end of contraflow

None of these schemes is expected to over-run

New major maintenance schemes are scheduled to take place in the following locations during the remainder of this financial year:

Bedfordshire	J12-13
Northamptonshire	J16-17
Leicestershire	J23

Five major maintenance schemes are provisionally planned for various periods in 1988-89. Further works will take place in future years; the programme for these has not yet been finalised.

Technology and Manning Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the status and remit of the technology and manning strategic planning committee, what are his intentions regarding its function; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: A strategic policy committee has been established under the aegis of the Merchant Navy training board to develop new training and certification arrangements tailored to the industry's needs in the light of the technology and manning for safe operation research report.

This committee comprises representatives from all sectors of the industry in order that the views of all concerned may be taken into account.

Ferries (Loading Doors)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the proposed change in the law relating to the closure of cargo loading doors on roll-on roll-off passenger ferries, which provides that criminal offences may be committed, is to be dealt with by means of statutory instruments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Secondary legislation can be enacted more quickly, and imposes less demand on parliamentary time, than primary legislation. Subsection (6)*(b)* of section 21 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 provides that orders made under that section may make contravention of a regulation an offence.

Ferries (Research)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the outcome of his consideration of how best to progress the research effort on roll-on roll-off survivability for which he made £1 million available for further work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: A steering committee of experienced professionals of appropriate backgrounds and interests has been formed to assist and advise the Department in the management of this research programme. The first meeting of this committee was held on 30 October and a further meeting has been arranged.

Ships (Safety)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether any research is to be conducted into the relationship between fatigue and manning, in the light of increased pressure from shipowners for the single night look-out concept; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is the intention to take up recommendation 9 of the technology and manning for safe ship operation research project and set up a new research project into the employment of bridge lookouts at night.

Ship Survey

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are his intentions regarding the retention of responsibility for ship survey within the Surveyor General's organisation and marine survey section *(a)* in respect of the United Kingdom register and *(b)* in respect of registers of dependent territories.

Mr. David Mitchell: The arrangements under which classification societies undertake certain marine survey work on United Kingdom ships on behalf of the Department are kept under regular review. Plans are in hand for the transfer of classification societies of the survey and certification of submersible craft, and the assessment of impact stability of mobile offshore drilling units. There are no plans for any further changes at present.

As regards ships registered in the dependent territories, the Department's surveyors undertake certain surveys, on a repayment basis, depending on the capacity of the administrations in question.

Spirit Class Vessels (Officers)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimate of his Department concerning likely deck officer reductions on Spirit class vessels, involving the removal of second officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 4 November 1987]*: Provided it complies with the Merchant Shipping (Certification of Deck Officers) Regulations, deck officer manning is the responsibility of the owner. The manning proposed for the Spirit class vessels complies with those regulations. It also conforms with the view of the court of formal investigation into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise.

Breath Tests

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce either random or targeted breath tests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

The courts have held that a constable may, under section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972, stop vehicles at random in order to decide whether there are grounds for requiring a sample of breath for testing. A sample may be required where the constable has reasonable cause to suspect that the motorist has alcohol in his body; that he has committed a traffic offence while the vehicle was moving; or that he has been involved in an accident. The Association of Chief Police Officers has stated that these powers are sufficient to allow the law to be enforced effectively, and the Government have no plans to amend the legislation. The use made of these powers is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Sealink Ferry (Overloading)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will order an immediate inquiry into the recent overloading of a Sealink ferry at Boulogne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: This incident has been investigated by one of my Department's marine surveyors. His report has been forwarded to the Treasury Solicitor, who is considering the possibility of prosecutions.

Arising out of a recommendation of the court of formal investigation into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise, my Department has now circulated for consultation a draft statutory instrument which would make boarding cards for these short-haul ferries mandatory. A copy of this has been placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Postgraduate Certificate of Education Courses

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the recruitment figures for each of the postgraduate certificate of education courses for 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will inform Parliament of the principal findings of the Department of Education and Science's survey of recruitment to initial teacher training, including PGCE, courses once these are available.

Teachers (Retraining)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the take-up of places in Her Majesty's Government's specially funded programme allowing qualified teachers to retrain as teachers of mathematics, physics or technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This programme is run by the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the National Advisory Body for local authority higher education (NAB). No take-up figures are available for the UGC share of the programme. Returns from the NAB suggest that recruitment under this initiative for retraining and updating courses is running at about 40 per cent. This compares with an encouraging 89 per cent. for initial teacher training places.

From April 1988, in time for the start of the first full year of courses under the initiative, the Government have ring-fenced grant aid for £4 million of expenditure by local education authorities on secondments of existing teachers to long retraining courses. This should mitigate the secondment funding difficulties associated with the changeover from the old pooling arrangements to the new training grants scheme that have been one of the causes of low take-up of places this year.

Playing Fields

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance is given by his Department to local authorities about the minimum acreage of playing fields for primary, middle and upper schools.

Mr. Dunn: The requirements for the provision of playing fields for maintained schools are set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. The areas required for individual schools are determined by the number and age of the pupils. Additional guidance on the quantity and quality of provision is offered in the Department's building bulletin No. 28, "Playing Fields and Hard Surface Areas".

Grammar Schools

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local education authorities are currently offering less favourable treatment to girls in the provision of grammar schools; and if he will give the names of grammar schools in each local education authority concerned as well as the number of places offered to (i) girls and (ii) boys in each of the schools mentioned.

Mr. Dunn: No information is available centrally as to the number of places offered for entry to grammar schools. There were 28 local education authorities in England in January 1987 that had grammar schools of which only Birmingham LEA had more boys' grammar schools than girls'. The number of grammar schools in Birmingham LEA was eight, of which five were boys' schools and three were girls' schools as follows:

Sutton Coldfield Girls' School
Handsworth Grammar School for Boys
Kind Edward VI Aston School
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys
King Edward VI Camp Hill Girls' School
King Edward VI Five Ways School
King Edward VI Handsworth
Bishop Veseys Grammar School

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Blackwood County Court

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Attorney-General if he will make available in the Library correspondence between the Lord Chancellor's Office and Blackwood county court, Gwent, in the case of Webber *v.* Webber in 1981-82.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's office did not correspond with Blackwood county court in the case of Webber *v.* Webber in 1981-82. There was correspondence in 1983 consisting of a request for, and a reply giving, factual information which formed the basis of the Lord Chancellor's reply to the hon. Member dated 1 June 1983, which was copied to the court with a formal acknowledgment of the reply.

Conveyancing

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Attorney-General what is the position with regard to the implementation of the provisions of part II of the Administration of Justice Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As far as the provisions of part II of the Administration of Justice Act 1985 are concerned, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers has been established with the power to issue licences to persons qualified to provide conveyancing services to the public. The first licences have been issued and the council, with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor, has made certain rules regulating entry to the profession and regulating the conduct of licensed conveyancers generally. Rules to enable the council to permit corporations controlled by licensed conveyancers to provide conveyancing services have not yet been made. It is the Government's intention that all of the provisions contained in part II of the Administration of Justice Act 1985 will be implemented as soon as is practicable.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Attorney-General what is *(a)* the number of licensed conveyancers thus far registered with the Council for Licensed Conveyancers and *(b)* the number of applications made for registration.

The Attorney-General: Applications for licences are dealt with in two stages. The first stage is the giving of notice of intention to apply, and it is at this stage that consideration is given to the question of the applicant's suitability. The second stage is the submission of a formal application. By 31 October a total of 420 notices of intention to apply had been received by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, of which 158 are currently being considered, and 223 licences have been issued following the receipt of formal applications.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. John asked the Attorney-General if he will reconsider his decision not to replace the Social Security Commissioner for Wales.

The Attorney-General: The jurisdiction of each of the social security commissioners for Great Britain extends throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Hearings continue to be held in Cardiff, where appropriate, on a regular basis, although the Cardiff office was closed in 1986 for reasons of operational economy. The Lord Chancellor has no plans at present to reopen that office or to base a social security commissioner in Wales.

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Mr. John asked the Attorney-General how many social security commissioners there are for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* the Isle of Man; and if he will set out the criteria for appointment of such commissioners for a geographical area.

The Attorney-General: The jurisdiction of each of the social security commissioners for Great Britain extends throughout England, Scotland and Wales. There are currently two commissioners based in Scotland, but none in Wales. Appointments of commissioners to be based in England, Scotland and Wales are made to the extent justified by the work load arising there. The Lord Chancellor is not responsible for the Isle of Man.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what policy the Crown prosecution service has developed in respect of applications for prosecutions costs.

The Attorney-General: *[pursuant to his reply, 26 October 1987, c. 13-14:]* The policy of the Crown prosecution service is that an application for costs against convicted defendants should be made in all cases, unless in the particular circumstances of an individual case it is apparent that such an application would lack merit or that an order for costs would be impractical.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what policy the Crown prosecution service has developed in respect of prosecution of petty offences.

The Attorney-General [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 October 1987, c. *13-14*]: The general principles applied by the Crown prosecution service when considering the prosecution of any criminal offence are to be found in the code for Crown prosecutors, issued in accordance with section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985.

Having satisfied himself that the evidence is sufficient to justify a prosecution, the Crown prosecutor must go on to consider whether the public interest requires a prosecution. Whilst each case will be assessed in the light of its own particular circumstances, paragraph 8(i) of the code enjoins Crown prosecutors when considering offences, the circumstances of which are not particularly serious, to consider carefully whether the public interest would be better served by a prosecution of some other form of disposal such as, where appropriate, a caution. This applies particularly where the offence is triable on indictment, when Crown prosecutors should also weigh the likely penalty with the likely length and cost of the proceedings.

In deciding whether or not to recommend to the police that a caution might be an appropriate method of disposal, Crown prosecutors will be guided by the criteria set out in Home Office circular 14/1985 on the cautioning of offenders.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what policy the Crown prosecution service has developed in respect of breach proceedings.

The Attorney-General [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 October 1987, c. *13-14*]: As a general rule the Crown prosecution service will not be involved in proceedings for breaches of probation, supervision or community service orders. The exception to this is that the Crown prosecution service has a role in such matters where the breach consists of the commission of a further offence and the proceedings are associated with a prosecution for a criminal offence which the Crown prosecution service is conducting.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what policy the Crown prosecution service has developed in respect of supplying of information to the probation service.

The Attorney-General [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 October 1987, c. *13-14*]: Although the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 does not confer any statutory duty upon the Crown prosecution service to supply information to the probation service, the Crown prosecution service endeavours to assist the probation service wherever possible. The supply of information will be one of the matters which will be discussed at a forthcoming meeting between representatives of the Crown prosecution service, Home Office and the probation service.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what, at the latest date available, was the establishment of lawyers, lawyers' clerks and administrators in each of the 31 areas of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 October 1987, c. *13-14*]: I take the hon. Gentleman's question to refer to the complement of the relevant categories.

The establishment of lawyers, law clerks and administrators in each of the 31 areas of the Crown prosecution service as at the end of October 1987 is given in the table.

	Establishment 28 October 1987				*Staff in post 30 October 1987*		
	Lawyers	*Law clerks*	*Admin. (support)*	*Total*	*Lawyers*	*Admin. staff*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	42	17	45	104	30	48	78
Cambridgeshire-Lincolnshire	34	12	36	82	23	42½	65½
Cheshire	31	9	31½	71½	24	38½	62½
Cleveland-North Yorkshire	46	17	47	110	37½	62½	100
Derbyshire	28	9	32	69	20	39	59
Devon and Cornwall	37	14	29	80	31	36	67
Dorset-Hampshire	66	21	63	150	50	75	125
Essex	32	13	36	81	21	41½	62½
Gloucestershire-Wiltshire	27	9	32	68	21	37	58
Greater Manchester	122	38	91	251	77	124	201
Hertfordshire-Bedfordshire	47	12	48	107	28	56	84
Humberside	25	8	34	67	18	40	58
Kent	44	17	44	105	30	58	88
Lancashire-Cumbria	66	17	59	142	57	70	127
Leicestershire-Northamptonshire	38	16	43	97	20	58	78
London (Inner)	130	124	209	463	86	266	352
London (North)	96	58	109	263	53	150	203
London (South and Surrey)	87	45	84	216	48½	110	158½
Merseyside	74	30	77	181	57	105	162
Norfolk-Suffolk	34	10	35	79	28	40	68
North Wales-Dyfed Powys	40	9	45	94	35	50½	85½
Northumbria-Durham	70	28	75	173	53	93	146
Nottinghamshire	39	12	42	93	37	49	86
South Wales-Gwent	76	23	80	179	63½	94	157½
South Yorkshire	43	16	44	103	34½	53	87½
Staffordshire-Warwickshire	41	15	43	99	29	57	86
Sussex	41	12	40	93	30½	47	77½
Thames Valley	53	20	54	127	35½	67	102½
West Mercia	32	8	30	70	15½	37	52½
West Midlands	91	35	89	215	64	119	183
West Yorkshire	74	32	74	180	57	102	159
Totals	1,706	706	1,800½	4,212½	1,214½	2,265½	3,480

Establishment
28 October 1987

	Lawyers	*Law Clerks*	*Administrators*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	42	17	45	104
Cambridgeshire/Lincolnshire	34	12	36	82
Cheshire	31	9	31½	71½
Cleveland/North Yorkshire	46	17	47	110
Derbyshire	28	9	32	69
Devon and Cornwall	37	14	29	80
Dorset/Hampshire	66	21	63	150
Essex	32	13	36	81
Gloucestershire/Wiltshire	27	9	32	68
Greater Manchester	122	38	91	251
Hertfordshire/Bedfordshire	47	12	48	107
Humberside	25	8	34	67
Kent	44	17	44	105
Lancashire/Cumbria	66	17	59	142
Leicestershire/Northamptonshire	38	16	43	97
London (Inner)	130	124	209	463
London (North)	96	58	109	263
London (South and Surrey)	87	45	84	216
Merseyside	74	30	77	181
Norfolk/Suffolk	34	10	35	79
North Wales/Dyfed Powys	40	9	45	94
Northumbria/Durham	70	28	75	173
Nottinghamshire	39	12	42	93
South Wales/Gwent	76	23	80	179
South Yorkshire	43	16	44	103
Staffordshire/Warwickshire	41	15	43	99
Sussex	41	12	40	93
Thames Valley	53	20	54	127
West Mercia	32	8	30	70
West Midlands	91	35	89	215

	Lawyers	*Law Clerks*	*Administrators*	*Total*
West Yorkshire	74	32	74	180
Totals	1,706	706	1,800·5	4,212·5

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what is the estimated annual cost of employing agent lawyers to cover shortages in Crown prosecution staffing.

The Attorney-General [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 October 1987, c. *13-14*]: The cost of employing agent lawyers in magistrates courts in 1987-88 is expected to be some £14 million. Not all of this is attributable to staff shortages. Even if it had been fully staffed throughout the year, the Crown prosecution service would probably have found it cost-effective to spend some £4 million on agent lawyers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Arms Control

Mr McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy toward the implications for the United Kingdom of the current round of negotiations between the superpowers on the reduction of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Mellor: We warmly welcome the intermediate nuclear force agreement now in prospect. We and our NATO allies regularly assess the level of forces required to maintain our strategy of flexible response and are currently considering the implications of an INF agreement for NATO policy. We look forward to further progress in the talks aimed at achieving a 50 per cent. cut in the strategic offensive weapons of the United States and Soviet Union.

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current arms control negotiations.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 21 October.

James Abra

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about James Abra, the Briton held by the Libyan authorities.

Mr. Eggar: There is an appeal outstanding on Mr. Abra's behalf against his sentence of life imprisonment for spying. The appeal may be heard in November. I also understand that Mr. Abra's family lodged an appeal for clemency with the Libyan authorities in August this year.

Western European Union

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards reforms to the institutions and practices of the Western European Union; and what was the outcome of talks in The Hague for resiting the offices in London and Paris in some other capital city of a member state.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy is that Western European Union institutions should be structured to enable the organisation to be an effective forum for joint security consultations between WEU Foreign and Defence Ministers. The Paris agencies should be responsive to council requirements and merged into a single, streamlined unit under one director reporting to the secretary general. The London secretariat should be strengthened so that it can service the council efficiently. Both bodies should be collocated in one city to form an integrated, flexible, and cost-effective unit. Ministers at The Hague agreed that collocation should take place, but did not agree on a site. This question will now be pursued further, with the aim of drawing up detailed recommendations for the spring ministerial meeting.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the current waiting lists for spouses applying to join husbands or wives in Britain at high commissions and embassies in *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Sri Lanka, *(d)* Kenya, *(e)* Uganda and *(f)* Bangladesh.

Mr. Eggar: The table sets out the number of spouses awaiting interview in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Uganda as at 30 September 1987:

Post	*Numbers in Queue*
New Delhi	320
Bombay	460
Calcutta	No queue in operation
Madras	No queue in operation
Islamabad	965
Karachi	78
Dhaka	1,780
Colombo	No queue in operation
Nairobi	60
Kampala	No queue in operation

HOME DEPARTMENT

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

3. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch or equivalent schemes are currently in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: There are now over 42,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in operation in England and Wales, three times the number of those known to us 15 months ago. We are greatly encouraged by the increasing willingness and commitment which this shows on the part of the general public to be involved in preventing crime.

Police Establishments

10. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications he is currently considering from police forces in England and Wales requesting an increase in their establishment.

Mr. Hurd: Nineteen police authorities in England and Wales have asked me to approve increases totalling 737 in their establishments in this financial year. I shall be taking decisions on these applications in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

48. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with chief constables about further increases in constabulary police establishments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police establishment matters are often discussed with chief constables during visits to police forces and on other occasions.

Broadwater Farm Estate

13. **Mr. Bernie Grant** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's current policing policy towards the Broadwater Farm estate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The policing of the Broadwater farm estate is a matter for the Commissioner. I understand from the Commissioner that there has been no change in his policy towards the estate. The area continues to be policed by a dedicated team of officers and the police are always ready to meet representatives of the local community to discuss concerns about policing on the estate.

Knives

17. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had over proposed legislation to compound further the possession of knives.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During our recent study of the law relating to the possession of knives, we consulted chief officers of police and some trading interests. We also took account of the views of right hon. and hon. Members, other police officers and the public.

24. **Mr. Flynn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received to his proposals to control the carrying and possession of knives and other offensive weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government's proposals to strengthen the law on carrying knives in public and to take powers to prohibit the manufacture, sale and importation of specified offensive weapons for which there is no legitimate use seem to have been well received generally.

Juveniles (Custody)

18. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Home Department if he will make a statement on the limitation Her Majesty's Government are taking in replacements for custody for juveniles.

Mr. John Patten: Whilst custody must remain available for the most serious offenders, it is the Government's policy to encourage more use of non-custodial measures for offenders under 21. There has been a positive response to this approach with juvenile offenders under 17, and the Government are considering how the use of such measures might be developed for 17 to 20-year-olds.

53. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to raise the age at which boys are liable to penal custody to that currently applying to girls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government propose to replace detention centre orders and youth custody sentences with a unified custodial sentence for young offenders. The Criminal Justice Bill has been amended to include the necessary provisions. The new sentence will be available for boys aged 14 and girls aged 15.

Firearms

19. **Ms. Primarolo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will change the onus of proof for the possession of firearms in the same way that he proposes for the carrying and possession of knives and other offensive weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend said in the debate on firearms in the House on 26 October, at columns 28 to 69, the burden of proof on the carrying of firearms in a public place already falls on the individual concerned. Section 19 of the Firearms Act 1968 makes it an offence for any person, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse (the proof whereof lies on him), to have with him in a public place a loaded shotgun or loaded air weapon, or any other firearm (whether loaded or not) together with ammunition suitable for use in that firearm. To be in possession of firearms an individual must satisfy the requirements for the issue of a certificate.

20. **Mr. Graham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further discussions he has had with the Police Federation regarding the tightening of controls over the ownership and use of firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not discussed this matter recently with the Police Federation but my right hon. Friend is very much aware of their views.

28. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to bring shotguns within the scope of his proposals on the ownership and use of firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has already announced that we intend to bring self-loading and pump action shotguns under the same controls as rifles and handguns. We also intend to impose a statutory obligation on shotgun certificate holders to store their weapons securely when they are not being used.

29. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has received to his proposals for the reform of gun controls.

33. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has had to his proposals to tighten controls over the ownership and use of firearms.

61. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding reform of the gun control laws.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor).

31. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to consult those representing rural interests before introducing new firearms legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We recognise the important role that shooting plays in rural communities, both as a sport and, for many people, as a necessary means of vermin control. We have written to a number of organisations representing rural interests to request their views on our proposals. These include the National Farmers Union, the Countryside Commission, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Association of County Councils, the Association of District Councils and the British Deer Society.

34. **Mr. Illsley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in order to encourage co-operation from firearms users, any future firearms legislation will include proposals to compensate those owners whose firearms would thereby be rendered illegal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is one of the matters currently under consideration.

40. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firearm certificates were issued in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1986, 12,074 new firearm certificates were issued in England and Wales, compared with 11,663 in 1985 and 11,413 in 1984. The table shows, by police force area, the number of certificates on issue and the number of dealers registered at 31 December 1986. More detailed figures on the issue of firearm and shotgun certificates will be published shortly in a Home Office statistical bulletin.

Table

Firearm and shotgun certificates on issue and firearms dealers registered at 31 December 1986, by police force area

England and Wales

Force	*Number of certificates on issue*		*Number of dealers registered*
	Firearm	*Shotgun*	
Avon and Somerset	6,159	30,160	79
Bedfordshire	1,410	9,479	21
Cambridgeshire	3,075	19,311	42
Cheshire	2,689	17,708	31
Cleveland	900	3,766	10
Cumbria	4,248	15,180	36
Derbyshire	2,389	16,893	40
Devon and Cornwall	9,560	47,471	111
Dorset	2,902	15,022	40
Durham	2,355	8,543	17
Essex	5,205	27,063	110
Gloucestershire	2,836	15,447	47
Greater Manchester	2,623	14,314	44
Hampshire	5,828	30,115	67
Hertfordshire	1,897	13,912	43
Humberside	4,858	15,235	50
Kent	7,428	31,060	97
Lancashire	3,530	18,732	61
Leicestershire	2,124	15,791	50
Lincolnshire	4,644	23,185	54
London, City of	59	68	6
Merseyside	2,064	6,257	25
Metropolitan	9,084	41,814	287
Norfolk	3,912	30,335	44
Northamptonshire	2,403	12,656	33
Northumbria	7,023	14,417	42
North Yorkshire	6,398	24,154	58
Nottinghamshire	1,963	14,856	38
South Yorkshire	1,718	11,460	18
Staffordshire	3,316	19,152	51
Suffolk	3,968	23,016	55
Surrey	2,723	15,623	72
Sussex	6,097	29,759	100
Thames Valley	7,199	33,284	138
Warwickshire	1,655	12,390	42
West Mercia	5,225	38,038	100
West Midlands	2,760	15,997	99
West Yorkshire	3,589	16,580	86
Wiltshire	2,765	14,383	41
Dyfed Powys	4,255	28,160	51
Gwent	852	10,213	15
North Wales	2,495	21,250	33
South Wales	2,102	18,702	39
Total	160,285	840,951	2,523

54. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will summarise the principal conclusions he has drawn from the representation of gun clubs so far received in the preparation for new firearms control legislation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The consensus of opinion expressed by the gun clubs is against most of the proposals we have announced. We believe that, whilst the interest of legitimate shooters must be taken into account, a substantial shift in the balance of firearms law is necessary to meet the needs of public safety.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce a Firearms Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend indicated during the recent debate on firearms controls — 26 October 1987, columns 28-69—we hope to be able to announce a comprehensive package of measures on firearm controls by the end of November with a view to introducing a Bill before Christmas.

Nationality

21. **Mr. Darling** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend beyond 31 December the period available for registration as British citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to do so.

26. **Mr. James Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider reducing or withdrawing the requirement under the British Nationality Act 1981 that every adult registering as a British citizen pay a fee of £60 and every family pay a fee of £180.

46. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reduce or cancel the fee of £60 payable by people seeking to register as British citizens under the provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981 on the grounds of its disincentive effect on poor people.

Mr. Renton: No. This would not be fair to all other applicants who have paid the full fee.

36. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he now proposes to make for those in receipt of state benefits who wish to apply for registration or naturalisation under the Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Renton: The Government believe that it is right that those who wish to become British citizens should meet the cost of processing their applications and there are no plans to make any exceptions to this general principle.

Mr. Vaz asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total income received by Her Majesty's Government from those persons applying for registration to become British citizens for 1987 (interim), 1986 and 1985.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not available.

Net fee receipts in respect of all applications under the British Nationality Act 1981 (including those for naturalisation as well as registration) were as follows:

Financial year	*Receipts*
1985-86	£3,269,000
1986-87	£4,241,000
1987-88[1]	£5,120,000

[1] To end October.

Mr. Vaz asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total numbers of persons applying for registration as British citizens pursuant to the British Nationality Act 1981 for 1987 (interim figure), 1986 and 1985.

Mr. Renton: The precise information requested is not available. The following table gives the number of registration applications received in the Home Office for British citizenship, British Overseas citizenship and British subject status.

	Applications received
1985	33,756
1986	37,873
1987[1]	63,000

[1] Estimate to end September.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether those people who are eligible to register as British citizens by the 31 December deadline, and fail to do so will *(a)* lose their current civil rights including their right to vote, *(b)* lose, as a consequence, their current rights to any social benefit payments and *(c)* increase their risks of deportation.

Mr. Renton: If people do not apply for registration before the end of the year, their failure to do so will not affect their right to vote, their current rights to social benefit payments or their current immigration position.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate what effect the £60 cost of registering as British citizens will have on the number of people failing to register by the 31 December deadline.

Mr. Renton: It is not possible to make any such assessment.

Telephone Tapping

22. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest judicial review of telephone tapping.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister presented to the House in March this year the first report of the commissioner appointed under section 8 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 (Cm. 108). The Act requires the interception commissioner to report to my right hon. Friend

"as soon as practicable after the end of each calendar year".

I expect my right hon. Friend to present the report for 1987 to the House in February or March 1988.

Tape Recording

23. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement about the programme of tape recording of interviews with suspects; and how soon this will be available in all police areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the completion of field trials in six areas, police forces throughout England and Wales are now making arrangements for the introduction of the tape recording of interviews with suspects. The speed at which tape recording can be introduced within a force area will depend on a number of factors including resource implications for the police and for other agencies in the criminal justice system.

Broadcasting Standards Council

25. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has drawn up the terms of reference of the Broadcasting Standards Council.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 23 October at column *893*. We are currently consulting interested organisations about our plans for the Broadcasting Standards Council, and will announce further details in due course.

Basildon (Courthouse)

27. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the building of a new courthouse in Basildon.

Mr. John Patten: Essex county council is responsible for providing the new magistrates' courthouse, in consultation with the magistrates' courts committee. We set a cost limit for the scheme earlier in the year and authorised Essex county council to go to tender without further reference to the Home Office.

Crime Prevention

30. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has drawn up terms of reference for the proposed national crime prevention organisation.

Mr. John Patten: We are not yet ready to do so formally, but it seems likely that the functions of the new body will include identifying good practice in local crime prevention and ensuring that it is promulgated widely, advising local communities, businesses, voluntary bodies and local authorities on strategies for tackling local crime problems, raising and distributing pump-priming funds for initiatives on local crime prevention and advising both central and local government on local crime prevention issues.

62. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the composition of the national crime prevention organisation.

Mr. John Patten: We hope to be able to do so before the end of this year.

Licensing Law

32. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received in respect of his proposals to amend the licensing law in England and Wales.

43. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the Bill on the reform of licensing hours; and how many representations have been made to him thereon.

44. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to introduce the Licensing Bill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of the Government's proposals for the reform of the licensing law were published on 4 August and 528 representations relating to the proposals have been received since that date.

The Licensing Bill was introduced in this House on Thursday 29 October.

45. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that companies owning licensed premises do not require their tenants or managers to maintain opening hours at all periods permitted by law.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is a matter for negotiation between the parties concerned. I understand that negotiations are in progress and the parties are hopeful that a satisfactory solution will be found.

Gambling Machines

35. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to impose a minimum age limit of 16 years on users of gambling machines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The research announced into this subject on 6 May is now well under way. When we have received the results of that research we shall be in a better position to judge whether it is necessary or desirable to introduce fresh legislation.

Electoral Registration

37. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding improving electoral registration.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations in the recent past on three matters:

1. That the autumn canvass for the register should be advertised on television;
2. That people could not vote at the last general election because they had been omitted from the register;
3. That people resident overseas, who would be entitled to vote, found the procedure to be included in the register unduly difficult.

It would be unduly expensive to implement the first suggestion. We are looking, in consultation with the political parties, at the second and third matters to see what changes might be made. We have already taken a range of initiatives to improve the accuracy of the register and we shall continue to work for improvements.

Fresh Start Scheme

38. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce fresh start into Her Majesty's prison, Maidstone.

Mr. John Patten: We are firmly committed to introducing fresh start at all establishments as soon as possible. Implementation at Maidstone now depends on agreement locally.

Horse Racing

39. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the introduction of horse racing on Sundays.

Mr. John Patten: Provided suitable arrangements are made for betting to take place lawfully, we see no reason to stand in the way of horse racing on Sundays. That is the view we have expressed on the Bill introduced in another place by Lord Wyatt of Weeford and we are following the debate about that Bill and the public debate which has arisen with interest. We have no plans at present to introduce legislation on this subject.

British Broadcasting Corporation

41. **Mr. Menzies Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairman of the board of governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation; and what subjects they discussed.

Mr. Renton: On 29 and 30 September, to discuss the portrayal of violence and sex on television and the independent production initiative respectively.

58. **Mr. Grocott** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the British Broadcasting Company; and what matters he will raise with him.

Mr. Renton: We will be keeping in close touch with the chairmen of the BBC and the IBA in the coming months over a range of broadcasting policy issues. Topics we have discussed with them in recent weeks include the portrayal of violence and sex on television and the independent production initiative.

Murder (Convictions)

42. **Mr. Mullin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the persons whose convictions for murder have subsequently been quashed on appeal or who have otherwise been released before completion of their sentences because of doubts about the safety of the convictions during the period 1979 to the present day.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not readily available in the form requested regarding those who have had their conviction for murder quashed on appeal. However, there have been three cases since 1979 where such convictions were quashed following reference to the Court of Appeal by Home Secretaries under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. These are Albert Edward Taylor, conviction quashed on 13 March 1979; Mervyn John Scott Russell, conviction quashed on 6 December 1983; and Geoffrey Mycock, conviction quashed on 20 June 1984. In 1980 David Cooper and Michael McMahon were released early from their life sentences for murder by exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy.

Terrorism

47. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent evidence he has about the effectiveness of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Hurd: In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 8 April, at column *239*, I announced that I had asked Viscount Colville of Culross to carry out a general review of this Act. I hope to be able to place Lord Colville's report before the House shortly.

Heysel Stadium (Trial Costs)

49. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs to his Department have arisen as a result of the extradition of the Heysel stadium defendants.

Mr. John Patten: The costs that have fallen on the Home Office relate mainly to the time spent by officials who are employed in the division responsible for extradition. No exceptional costs were involved.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

50. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners, either convicted or on remand, are currently being held in police cells; and whether industrial action by the Prison Officers Association is still preventing these prisoners' admission into prisons.

Mr. John Patten: On Wednesday 4 November 810 were held in police cells, in England and Wales, most of whom would have been on remand.

Visitors (Residence Applications)

51. **Mr. Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the principles he applies when considering applications to remain in the United Kingdom from persons who have continuously been in the United Kingdom for at least 10 years and against whom no deportation order has been made but whose leave to remain has expired.

Mr. Renton: We have recently reviewed our policy on the exercise of discretion to grant leave to remain after lengthy residence in the United Kingdom. Except where the grant of leave would not be in the public interest, a case in which continuous residence exceeds 10 years will be considered on its merits for the grant of indefinite leave to remain. Among the factors to be taken into account are the strength of ties with the United Kingdom and elsewhere, the total length of continuous residence and the proportion of it which has been lawful. In considering possible deportation we have regard to the matters set out in paragraphs 156-159 of the Immigration Rules (HC 169), a copy of which is in the Library.

Teenage Crime

52. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he proposes to take to combat teenage crime.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have a comprehensive strategy for tackling all forms of crime of which measures to reduce offending by young people are an important part. The police, courts, probation and prison services all have a contribution to make; so have local authorities, social services, schools and voluntary organisations together with parents and responsible citizens. Most counties and large towns now have specific projects aimed at reducing crime, usually with teenage crime as one of the main targets and typically involving co-operation between the relevant services and agencies. The Staffordshire police activity and community enterprise run by the Staffordshire police in my hon. Friend's constituency is one example. These projects are constantly being developed with the Government's encouragement and in many instances financial support. The standing conference on crime prevention will later this month receive reports from working groups which have been examining various aspects of teenage crime; and the national crime prevention organisation, about which we hope to make an announcement before the end of the year, will no doubt make this one of its first priorities.

Conservative Party Conference

55. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding policing costs for the 1987 Conservative party conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations from the Lancashire county council and police authority and from 14 hon. Members and one member of the House of Lords seeking a special payment from central

Government towards the additional policing costs of the 1987 Conservative party conference. We have considered these representations carefully but concluded that we would not be justified in departing from normal police funding arrangements in this case, by which the Government meet the greater part of any additional costs.

Police Recruitment

56. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the objectives and current progress of the review of the police initial recruitment test.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The purpose of the review is to examine the feasibility of replacing the existing PIR test with a new test of the same standard which is directed more accurately to the abilities which police officers need to do their job. The first stage of the review required a job evaluation of the tasks performed by police constables. That part of the works is now nearly complete.

Prisons

57. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the present conditions in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. John Patten: Overcrowding, especially in local prisons and remand centres, creates substantial difficulties for management and staff in maintaining satisfactory conditions. We are working to improve conditions through our major programmes for new prisons and refurbishment of existing establishments, the recruitment of more officers and fundamental changes in working practices under fresh start.

Drug Trafficking

59. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assets have been seized as a result of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to a reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 2 November at column *539*.

Prison Statistics

60. **Mr. Harry Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current prison population; by how much this has been reduced by his amnesty measures announced in July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 30 October 1987 47,815 persons were held in prison department establishments. The prison population was reduced by about 3,000 prisoners as a result of the increase on 13 August 1987 in remission to one half for prisoners sentenced to 12 months or less announced by the Home Secretary on 16 July at columns 1292-1305.

Prison Building (Northern Region)

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on work in the prison building and refurbishment programme since 1983-84; what this expenditure was in each standard region; and how much of this expenditure since 1983-84 was placed with *(a)* architects and *(b)* quantity surveyors located in the northern standard region.

Mr. John Patten: The total expenditure on the prison building and refurbishment programme from 1983-84 to end September 1987 was £325·16 million, of which £166·68 million was on new prisons, and £158·48 million on the refurbishment and extension of existing prisons. These figures do not include professional fees. Regional figures are available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage, by value of work in the prison building and refurbishment programme in the years since 1983-84, was undertaken in the northern standard region; and what percentage, by value of work, in the prison building and refurbishment programme in the years since 1983-84, was placed with *(a)* architects and *(b)* quantity surveyors in firms located in the northern standard region.

Mr. John Patten: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Television Licences

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of television licences issued in the years 1957 and 1986.

Mr. Renton: The information available in respect of 1957 relates to the number of licences in force at the end of the 1957-58 financial year: 8,090,003. The number of licences in force at 31 December 1986 was 18,904,617.

Anton Gecas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on what action he intends to take in respect of the alleged war criminal Anton Gecas, a resident of Edinburgh.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to a question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 26 October at column *15*.

Fines

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to legislate to link court fines to the ability of offenders to pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Under section 35 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, courts are already required to take the offenders' means into consideration when fixing the amount of a fine. We are setting up experiments to see whether means assessment can be improved so that fines can be linked more closely to the capacity of less well-off offenders to pay them.

Forensic Science

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current grades and pay scales of forensic scientists employed by his Department; how many scientists are employed at each grade; if he has any proposals to increase the pay scales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The current grades, numbers in grades, and pay scales of scientific staff in the forensic science service are as follows:

Grade	*Numbers in grade as at 12 October 1987*	*Current pay scale £*
4	1	28,975 29,725 30,475
5	5	24,765 25,815 26,965 28,215
6	8	18,786 19,685 21,335 23,185 25,335
7	53	15,030 15,630 16,280 16,980 17,730 18,530 19,380 [1]19,500 20,292

[1] Interim point from 1 October 1987: Staff on this point proceed to maximum of unified grade 7 (£20,292) on 1 April 1988.

From 1 April 1988 there will be accelerated incremental progression for the best performers and for those in grades SO grade 4 who have reached their scale maximum additional increments will be available to reward outstanding or otherwise specially deserving performance.

Grade	*Number in grade*	*Pay scale from 1 September 1987*	*Revised pay scale from 1 April 1988*
Senior Scientific Officer (SSO)	124·5	11,557 12,024 12,505 13,005 13,526 14,066 14,629 15,214	12,024 12,505 13,005 13,526 14,066 14,629 15,214 15,823
Higher Scientific Officer (HSO)	97·5	9,219 9,687 10,154 10,622 11,089 11,557 12,024 12,505	9,687 10,154 10,622 11,089 11,557 12,024 12,505 13,005
Scientific Officer (SO)	125	7,816 8,284 8,751 9,219 9,687 10,154	8,284 8,751 9,219 9,687 10,154 10,622
Assistant Scientific Officer (ASO)	57·5	4,004 4,585 5,250 5,618 6,431 6,881 7,349 7,816	4,004 4,585 5,250 6,011 6,881 7,349 7,816

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to increase the establishment of forensic scientists employed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is considering an increase in the complement of the forensic science service to improve turn-round times and to provide new services. But 49 per cent. of the cost of the forensic science service is borne by police authorities and we shall therefore wish to consult them before reaching final decisions.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recruitment policy of his Department's forensic science service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department's policy is to recruit suitably qualified staff to maintain the complement of the service. Staff in the scientific grades above assistant scientific officer are recruited on behalf of the Department by the Civil Service Commission in accordance with the principles of fair and open competition. The directors of forensic science laboratories have delegated authority from the Department to recruit assistant scientific officers locally, when vacancies arise, in accordance with these principles.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average period of delay between the submission of samples by the Metropolitan police for examination at the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory and the provision of the results of such examination; what were the corresponding periods for 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the relevant figures for 1984 and 1987 are as follows:

	1984 Days	*1987 Days*
Chemistry (Criminalistics)	45	65
Biology	28	41
Chemistry (Drugs possession)	28	140
Chemistry (Toxicology)	21	21
Firearms	58	70
Document examination	70	70
Drink driving	2 to 3	2 to 3

The above figures conceal wide variations, since the time taken to deal with cases varies according to the complexity of the case. Figures for 1985 and 1986 are not readily available.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many forensic scientists are employed currently by the Metropolitan police and his Department, respectively; and what were the corresponding figures for 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Date	Number of staff in post
Forensic scientists in the Home Office	
1984—Figures not readily available	—
31 December 1985	480
31 December 1986	469
12 October 1987	471·5
Forensic scientists in the Metropolitan police	
31 January 1984	211
31 January 1985	204
31 January 1986	204·5
31 January 1987	199·5
31 October 1987	195·5

Forensic Science Laboratory

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average period of delay between the submission of samples by the North Wales police for examination at the Home Office forensic science laboratory at Euxton and the provision of the results of such examinations; what were the corresponding periods for 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current average period between the submission of crime samples by the North Wales police to the Home Office forensic science laboratory at Euxton (Chorley) and the provision of the results is 44 days. For drink-driving cases, the average period is six days.

The corresponding periods for the three preceding years were as follows:

1984 Crime cases: 35 days; drink-driving: 5 days;
1985 Crime cases: 33 days; drink-driving: 5 days;
1986 Crime cases: 42 days; drink-driving: 6 days.

Neighbourhood Watch Groups

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide the necessary funds for signs to be erected on street lights to indicate the existence of a neighbourhood watch group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 29 October 1987 at column *382*.

Economic League

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the use made by the police of files maintained by the Economic League as the source of information for their inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police obtain information from many sources in the normal course of their duties. Details are not held centrally of the way in which the police use such information.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cross-border Trade

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in accordance with article 10 of the Anglo-Irish agreement, he has raised in the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference, or otherwise, the restriction imposed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland on cross-border trade, whose conditions have been declared illegal by the European Commission.

Mr. Tom King: Yes.

Extradition

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for extradition to the United Kingdom of persons in the Republic of Ireland are being processed by the authorities in the Republic and how many of these applications are in respect of terrorist-type offences in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: I have been asked to reply.

Figures are not available for the total number of warrants now being processed, but they include warrants relating to eight persons whose return has been requested in connection with terrorist offences.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been extradited to the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland for terrorist-style offences *(a)* in the two years prior to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and *(b)* since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Hurd: I have been asked to reply.

The Home Office does not have records of individual cases, but I understand that two people were returned to the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland for terrorist offences in the two years prior to the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement. No one has yet been returned since the agreement was signed.

Anglo-Irish Conference

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the dates and locations of all meetings of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference and the Ministers and officials from the British and Irish Governments who attended them, together with a breakdown of costs involved for each meeting, covering security, administration, transport and logistical support, stating which vote these costs were met from and what proportion of each of the costs was met by the Irish Government.

Mr. Tom King: Joint statements issued after each meeting of the conference, copies of which are in the Library, set out details of dates, location and attendance. It is not the practice to give the names of officials attending. It is not possible at reasonable cost to identify the additional costs to United Kingdom public funds of conference meetings. Costs incurred by the Irish Government are a matter for them.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South of 2 July, column *161*, there has been any increase in the number of officials employed by the Anglo-Irish secretariat; what is the number of support staff; what information he has as to how many are employed by the Irish Government, the number of support staff, the cost to public funds and the proportion of this cost paid by the Irish side; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The work of the United Kingdom side of the secretariat is still undertaken by three officials, along with six support staff. As to the running costs of the United Kingdom side of the secretariat, I refer the hon. Gentleman to a reply I gave to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) on 4 November. The staffing and expenditure of the Irish side is a matter for the Irish Government.

Democracy

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, those proposals which were *(a)* proposed and *(b)* supported by which delegations.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 2 November 1987]*: The purpose of my meetings was to explore views on what might be done in response to widespread concern about the problems posed by the presence in council chambers of councillors who support violence. Given the exploratory and wide-ranging nature of our discussions, it would not be practical or appropriate to attribute specific views to individual delegations. All views were, however, taken into account in preparing the discussion paper.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will assess the surplus in cereal production in the European Community and make representations to the European Economic Community to halt the imports of cereal substitutes from outside the Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Average Community cereals production over the past three years has been about 20 per cent. above the level that can be absorbed on the Community market.

For the Community to halt unilaterally the import of cereal substitutes from third countries would be contrary to its international obligations and would not be consistent with the commitments that the Community has undertaken in respect of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Research and Development

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy towards maintaining the public sector agricultural research and development base provided by his Department and the Agricultural and Food Research Council, and towards the maintenance of a public sector advisory service to the rural community through the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The July 1987 White Paper on civil research and development (Cm. 185) made it clear that we are intensifying our review of R and D priorities in order to increase the contribution which Government-funded work can make to the efficiency, competitiveness and innovative capacity of the United Kingdom economy. My Department is currently looking at its activities and those of the AFRC against this background and the Government's general view that industry should contribute to the cost of work from which it benefits.

Prawns and Frozen Shellfish

Dame Peggy Fenner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on discussions and deliberations on the ice level on prawns and frozen shellfish.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are at the closing stages of considering the comments made on the recommendations in the Food Advisory Committee's Report on coated and ice-glazed fish products, one of which suggested that there should be an indication of net weight of fish core prior to glazing on all glazed products. I expect to make a further announcement shortly.

Research

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the Government plans for the future funding of his Department's research budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The new planning provisions for expenditure on agriculture, fisheries and food, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement, include reductions of £5 million and £10 million respectively for 1989-90 and 1990-91 to reflect the changing balance between public and industry funding which the Government consider desirable for research and development work.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many farms or parts of farms in Cumbria had sheep movement restrictions reimposed in 1987;

(2) how many farms or parts of farms had sheep movement restrictions placed upon them for the first time in 1987 in Cumbria.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 November 1987]*: There are a number of staff in my Department using operational research techniques as part of their work, but there is not a specialist grade. The information is not therefore available in the form requested.

International Cocoa Council

Mr. Andrew Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals Her Majesty's Government will be making to the International Cocoa Council at the end of November in order to reactivate the buffer stock of the international cocoa agreement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 November 1987]*: The Government will be seeking implementation of the provisions of the international cocoa agreement for a downward revision of the price range for cocoa, taking into account current market developments and long-term trends, so that the remaining resources of the cocoa buffer stock are used as effectively as possible to promote long-term stability in the cocoa sector.

EMPLOYMENT

Safety Inspectors (Visits)

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cycle of farm visits by safety inspectors; and what cuts there have been in the limits of inspectors mileage to make such visits.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspections and visits to farms by the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate are prioritised and carried out according to the known hazard and the number of persons at risk. Labour-employing establishments are inspected approximately every four years, and other categories less frequently. The budget allocated to the agricultural inspectorate for travel and subsistence has remained the same for the last two years, during which time the number of farm visits has increased slightly.

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the 176,000 self-employed non-labour premises in farming, forestry and horticulture were visited last year by health and safety inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's HM agricultural inspectorate carried out 8,105 inspections of non-labour employing premises last year.

Pesticides Contractors

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many aerial and ground pesticides contractors are known to the Health and Safety Executive; how many complaints there were about their activities in the last year; and how many were visited *(a)* following a complaint and *(b)* in the course of a formal average visit frequency.

Mr. Nicholls: There are 35 holders of aerial application certificates known to the Health and Safety Executive; ground crop spraying contractors are not required to be registered.

The other information is not kept in the form requested but 17 complaints about aerial spraying and 24 complaints about ground spraying involving pesticides were investigated by HSE's HM agricultural inspectorate last year. For further information a copy of the inspectorate's annual report of pesticide poisoning and other incidents investigated in 1986 is available in the House Library.

Non-agricultural Undertakings (Visits)

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many known non-agricultural undertakings, involving fish farms, maggot farms, riding schools and kennels, are recorded by the Health and Safety Executive; and how many visits per year the average premises may expect, particularly to check on YTS trainees and the health of young people.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's HM agricultural inspectorate is responsible for 48,000 non-agricultural undertakings, involving fish farms, maggot farms, riding schools, kennels, contractors, landscape gardeners, golf courses etc. Inspections are planned and carried out according to known hazards on particular premises and according to the number of persons at risk. A total of 800 inspections of non-agricultural premises are planned in the coming year: there is no set visiting cycle for these premises.

Specific visits are not normally made to check on YTS trainees or young persons but during an inspection an inspector examines the health and safety conditions in which all persons work giving particular attention to the needs of all young people, and also to others who may be affected by the work activity.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the increasing cost of proceedings before industrial tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I am aware that some employers are concerned about the cost of proceedings before industrial tribunals. Industrial tribunal procedures are kept under constant review to ensure that they are as simple as possible. Measures have been and will continue to be taken in the context of the Government's deregulation policy to achieve an acceptable balance between the need to preserve the essential employment rights of the individual and the need to reduce unnecessary burdens on employers.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men applied to start their own business under the enterprise allowance scheme in each of the past years since 1983; and how many (i) women and (ii) men were given an allowance award for each of these years.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of entrants to the enterprise allowance scheme for each year since 1983 is shown below, by sex. The number of applications received during the same periods is also shown, but no analysis of these by sex is available.

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Total number of applications	37,922	53,939	68,280	103,193
Entrants	27,629	46,037	60,036	86,751
Female entrants	4,034	9,392	14,579	22,902
Male entrants	23,595	36,645	45,507	63,849

Women Entrepreneurs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish the results of his Department's current research into the problems facing women entrepreneurs; and whether he will give the terms of reference for this project.

Mr. Nicholls: The terms of reference for the study of female entrepreneurs commissioned jointly by my Department and Shell UK Ltd. are as follows:

1. To establish the personal characteristics, motivations and social context of women who become successfully established in business;

2. To identify the specific problems faced by women in running a business and the methods whereby these are resolved;

3. To examine what advice, training and other support women entrepreneurs need and can obtain at the various stages of setting up and operating a business;

4. To provide an account of the different ways women can become engaged in enterprise and to identify particular factors which contribute to business viability;

5. To advise on, and where possible, implement methods of dissemination of the research findings so that they reach the client group in question;

6. To advise on ways in which initiatives and programmes can be moulded to facilitate women's effective participation in enterprise.

It is expected that the study will be completed by the end of 1987 and results are likely to be available in early 1988.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of *(a)* women who are self-employed, *(b)* men who are self-employed, *(c)* women who are employed and *(d)* men who are employed for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Employed labour force in Great Britain

June of each year	Self employed Males	Self employed Females	Employees in employment Males	Employees in employment Females	Her Majesty's Forces Males	Her Majesty's Forces Females	Employed labour force Males	Employed labour force Females
1977	1,463,000	380,000	13,077,000	9,036,000	313,000	14,000	14,853,000	9,430,000
1978	1,478,000	364,000	13,097,000	9,152,000	303,000	15,000	14,878,000	9,531,000
1979	1,494,000	348,000	13,176,000	9,435,000	299,000	15,000	14,969,000	9,798,000
1980	1,567,000	383,000	13,012,000	9,421,000	307,000	16,000	14,886,000	9,820,000
1981	1,641,000	417,000	12,275,000	9,087,000	317,000	17,000	14,233,000	9,521,000
1982	1,647,000	462,000	11,930,000	8,966,000	309,000	15,000	13,886,000	9,443,000
1983	1,652,000	508,000	11,674,000	8,882,000	306,000	16,000	13,633,000	9,406,000
1984	1,849,000	586,000	11,627,000	9,104,000	310,000	16,000	13,786,000	9,706,000
1985	1,923,000	628,000	11,709,000	9,295,000	309,000	16,000	13,941,000	9,939,000
1986	1,936,000	631,000	11,653,000	9,446,000	306,000	16,000	13,894,000	10,093,000
1987[1]	1,994,000	875,000	11,725,000	9,646,000	302,000	16,000	14,022,000	10,337,000

[1] The latest date for which whole economy, employees in employment estimates are available. The self-employment estimates are projections based on the growth rate from 1981 to 1986. The figures, with the exception of those for Her Majesty's forces, are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variation.

Employment Rights

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he has any plans to increase the number of hours that an employee must work each week before she or he can qualify for the main employment rights such as claims for unfair dismissal and statutory redundancy payments;

(2) whether he has any plans to change the obligation on employers of more than five employees to allow a woman to return to the same or a suitable alternative job at any time within 29 weeks after the birth of a child;

(3) whether he has any plans to introduce a requirement for applicants to an industrial tribunal to pay a fee.

Mr. Nicholls: Proposals or suggestions on these matters were set out in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794). They are still under consideration.

Community Programme

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to change the eligibility rules for entry to the community programme to allow the participation of women who are currently prevented from doing so because they are disqualified from receiving benefit.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Training Schemes

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to extend the system of child care payments to single parents on the job training scheme, to single parents on the community programme and youth training scheme; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There are no plans to extend the system of child care payments currently being piloted on the new job training scheme to single parents on the community programme or the youth training scheme. However, the new job training scheme pilot is being closely monitored and the situation will be reviewed on its completion.

Job Advertisements (Age Requirements)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to legislate to prevent age requirements being mentioned in advertisements for employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Government do not believe that legislation of this nature would be beneficial or practical.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many factories in the west midlands, east midlands, northern and Yorkshire regions were visited by factory inspectors for each of the last five years for which figures are available; what percentage this figure represents of the total number of factories in each of the areas; how many factory inspectors are in post in each of the areas; and if he has any plans to increase the present number of factory inspectors in the areas mentioned.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested as the Health and Safety Executive area boundaries do not coincide with those of the Department of Employment regions. It is not possible, without disproportionate cost to separate the number of visits made to factories from those made to other premises where the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is enforced by the factory inspectorate. The information available is as follows:

(a) *The number of visits made by factory inspectors to premises subject to HSWA:*

HSE Area	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
East Midlands	10,374	10,421
West Midlands	9,963	10,466
Marches	8,041	9,768
North Midlands	7,779	6,803
South Yorkshire and Humberside	9,043	7,893
West and North Yorkshire	11,445	13,261
North West	10,118	8,358
North East	10,465	10,639

(b) Not all premises subject to the HSWA are required to send notification to the Health and Safety Executive. The percentage figures are therefore not available.

(c) On 1 October 1987, the number of factory inspectors in post in each of these areas was as follows:

HSE Area	*Number of inspectors*
East Midlands	24·5
West Midlands	33
Marches	23·5
North Midlands	21
South Yorkshire and Humberside	24
West and North Yorkshire	31·5
North West	23
North East	28

It is hoped to increase the number of factory inspectors in the field during 1988-89, but their location remains to be decided.

Redundant Workers (Benefit)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State For Employment if following the result of a test case involving a former British Shipbuilders worker in September 1986, he will publish the number of former British Shipbuilders employees in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* England and Wales who have now received payment of unemployment benefit for the first 13 weeks of their redundancy; what has been the average payment; what has been the total amount paid so far to those so entitled to this payment of benefit; what estimate he has of the number still to receive this payment and when they will receive such payment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer, 26 November 1987]:* No record is kept of unemployment benefit payments arising from claims made in any particular set of circumstances.

Claims for unemployment benefit made by ex-British Shipbuilders employees and disallowed because of the 13-week payment received have been reviewed and those claimants who have not already been paid 312 days of unemployment benefit (the maximum amount payable in any period of unemployment) have received a payment of the arrears due. In addition my Department is now making special payments to certain ex-British Shipbuilders employees who at the time of their redundancy did not make a claim to unemployment benefit on the advice of their unemployment benefit office. It is too early to say how many people have received the special payments. However it is anticipated that the average amount of these payments will be approximately £314.

THE ARTS

British National Bibliography

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Arts what is the number of items in the present backlog of accumulated material awaiting entry to the British National Bibliography.

Mr. Luce: As at 30 October 1987, the total number of deposited items which have not completed processing for entry in the British National Bibliography is approximately 39,000.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Arts what is the average time between the publication of a British book and its entry details appearing in the British National Bibliography.

Mr. Luce: As at 30 October 1987, the average length of elapsed time between the deposit of all newly published British publications at the British Library and the appearance of entries for them in the British National Bibliography is six months.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to eliminate the British National Bibliography's backlog of unregistered books.

Mr. Luce: This is a matter for the British Library, which, following its consultative paper "Currency with Coverage", has recently announced plans to eliminate backlogs and enable its bibliographic services to keep pace with the rising annual numbers of new publications forecast.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement as to whether all descriptive entries for all new British publications appear in the British National Bibliography.

Mr. Luce: Descriptive entries appear in the British National Bibliography for all items deposited, except certain categories of publications as listed in the preface to the "British National Bibliography 1986" annual volumes. The exceptions include printed music (covered in another British Library publication), maps, and certain types of official and other "non-trade" publications.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister for the Arts if he will consult representatives of libraries, booksellers and publishers on the future of the British National Bibliography.

Mr. Luce: The British Library's consultative paper on the future development of the British national bibliographic service invited comments from interested parties, and I understand that further consultations with libraries and with the trade are planned.

Funding Levels

Mr. Jessel asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will announce levels of funding for the arts in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I announced at Newcastle in July the start of a long-term plan for the funding of the arts. The aim of the plan is to maintain the level of support from public funds, but to encourage subsidised bodies to become more self-reliant in their development and growth. I am glad to announce today a new departure in arts funding which will carry that plan forward.

The new departure consists of a three-year settlement of the arts budget. This is a special arrangement providing firm figures not only for the next financial year but for a three-year period from April 1988 to March 1991. This is to give arts bodies a firm base on which to plan their future activities, and if they are successful their future growth. In order to create the right atmosphere and to get this new approach off to a good start, I am providing a substantial increase in funding in the first year.

The three-year settlement covers much the greater part of my central Government arts programme, including the national museums and galleries; the Arts Council, British Film Institute, Crafts Council and other arts bodies; the running costs of the British Library and the public lending right. It excludes the National Heritage Memorial Fund, for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced a special injection of £20 million this year on 23 October. It also excludes the costs of the British Library capital project at St. Pancras, which will continue to be reviewed annually in the usual way. But it covers all the rest.

The essence of the three-year settlement is that the figures for the period up to March 1991 will not be reviewed in the course of the 1988 and 1989 expenditure surveys unless the situation changes substantially in ways that cannot be foreseen today. The Government will consider in 1988 what provision to make for the last year of that survey, that is for 1991-92; and similarly in 1989 what provision to make for 1992-93. We intend a rolling three-year programme.

Thus, arts bodies will be able to plan their own future on a firm basis. We want them to know what the Government are going to do for them—and what they are not going to do; to plan the fund-raising [illegible] income generation which they should undertake on their own account; and to match their plans and priorities to a realistic view of the total resources that they can secure for themselves over the three-year period.

That part of my budget to which the three-year settlement applies will rise from £336 million in the current year to £394 million in 1990-91: an increase of £58 million or 17 per cent. To get the new approach off to a good start, the increase in the first year will be 10 per cent. It will not be evenly spread over all my client bodies; most will go where I judge the case to be strongest. My central Government programme as a whole, including the NHMF and the British Library's capital needs, will rise to £440 million over the three-year period. That is a rise of £79 million or 22 per cent. in total.

The table shows the main allocations over the three-year period. The Arts Council's grant will rise from £138 million in the current year to £150 million next year, £155 million in 1989-90 and £160 million in 1990-91. Over the three years, this is a rise of over 15 per cent. From this increase I shall expect the Arts Council to deal with the financing of overseas tours by our major companies and to set aside sums rising to £7 million by the third year for incentive funding schemes and for increased touring in the regions outside London. The grant to the British Film Institute will rise to £12 million by the third year, an increase of nearly 20 per cent. The grant to the National Film and Television School will rise by 50 per cent. to £1·7 million. The Crafts Council's grant will rise by nearly 19 per cent. to £2·4 million.

I am increasing the provision for the business sponsorship incentive scheme from £1·75 million to £3·0 million.

The provision for public lending right will rise from £2·75 million to £3·5 million, a rise of 27 per cent, which will bring the fund to its highest level in real terms since its inception.

The provision for the running costs of the British Library will rise from £51 million in the current year to £56 million by 1990-91, a rise of nearly 10 per cent.

The total provision for museums and galleries will rise from £126 million in the current year to £141 million next year and £146 million by the third year. I shall make a further statement before Christmas on the allocation of these sums between institutions. But not less than £6 million of the increase in the first year will be devoted to strengthening the building and maintenance programme of the national museums and galleries—a rise of over 20 per cent. The grant to the Museums and Galleries Commission will rise to over £6·8 million by the third year, a rise of over 11 per cent.

These measures combine a substantial increase with a firm limit. They offer an opportunity to aim for, and secure, a broadening of the base of support for the arts in this country. As living standards rise, we should aim to ensure that increasing numbers of people not only have access to the arts but participate by their own choice in supporting them. My proposals are designed to help to create the climate in which artists and arts bodies can win that support.

Table of main allocations

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Arts				
Arts Council	138·40	150·00	155·00	160·00
British Film Institute	10·03	11·30	11·50	12·00
NFTVS	1·13	1·60	1·65	1·70
Crafts Council	2·02	2·25	2·35	2·40
Government Art Collection	0·16	0·20	0·22	0·24
BSIS	1·75	3·00	3·00	3·00
Arts Marketing	0·25	0·25	0·25	0·25
Research and supporting services	0·22	0·70	0·70	0·70
Heritage				
NHMF (OAL share)	1·50	1·50	1·50	1·50
Acceptance in lieu (OAL share)	1·00	1·00	1·00	1·00
Libraries				
British Library				
current grant	51·00	54·00	54·70	56·00
capital	22·70	32·26	39·65	44·19
New library initiatives	0·00	0·25	0·25	0·25
RCHM	0·53	0·60	0·61	0·63
Public Lending Right Scheme	2·75	3·50	3·50	3·50
Museums and Galleries				
Museums and Galleries total	125·64	140·70	142·66	145·63
of which:				
National Institutions	119·38	133·80	135·55	138·33

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Museums and Galleries Commission	6·26	6·40	6·61	6·81
Research and support services	—	0·50	0·50	0·50

Sponsorship

Mr. Wray asked the Minister for the Arts what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that partial private sponsorship of the arts does not result in financial difficulties for art expressions not associated with establishment values.

Mr. Luce: The Government are committed to the maintenance of arts funding in real terms, and they are honouring this commitment. The distribution of funding is a matter for the Arts Council and other major bodies. There is no reason why any individual arts organisation should not be able to finance the growth of its activities by seeking to increase its income from other sources. Nor is it impossible for innovative art groups to obtain sponsorship.

Arts Council

Mr. Wray asked the Minister for the Arts what is the 1982 value of the current annual grant to the Arts Council; and what was the level of grant in 1982.

Mr. Luce: The 1982 value of the current annual grant to the Arts Council is £111,018,000. The 1982-83 grant to the Arts Council was £90,850,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Storm Damage

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional financial resources have been allocated by the European Community to those areas in the United Kingdom which suffered severe storms and flooding during the month of October.

Mr. Lawson: The Commission decided on 21 October to provide 300,000 ecu (£210,000) in emergency aid to the most needy families of those who died or were injured in England as a result of the storm of 15-16 October.

On 28 October the Commission decided to provide a further 200,000 ecu (£140,000) in emergency aid for the families of those killed or in greatest need as a result of the flooding in Wales and Northern Ireland between 18 and 21 October.

BP Shares

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what form authorisation will be sought for any expenditure arising from the Bank of England's buy-back scheme for BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The shares will be paid for and held by the issue department of the Bank of England as part of the portfolio of assets backing the note issue, under the provisions of the Currency and Bank Notes Act 1928. Other additional expenses incurred which are specifically related to the share purchase arrangements will be brought to account on the vote which relates to the sale of shares in BP plc (class XIX, vote 16). Parliamentary approval for such expenses will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the vote. Pending that approval of this new service, urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. It is not possible to provide a firm estimate of the expenditure that will be incurred as this will depend on the extent to which shares are offered for sale to the Bank of England.

European Economic Community (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to the proposals presented by the EEC Commission on budgetary discipline (Com (87) 430) and in particular toward whether the exceeding of spending because of exceptional circumstances should fall to be dealt with by unanimity or majority vote.

Mr. Brooke: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 1 July, the Government consider effective and binding control over Community spending, in particular on agriculture, to be essential. We are not convinced of the necessity for any continuing provision to be made for "exceptional circumstances". The voting rules in relation to such a provision would depend on the legal base for the Council decision or regulation that gave effect to it.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will outline the manner in which decisions on the breaching of EEC budget limits because of exceptional circumstances under the agreement of the Council of 4 December 1984 have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The 1984 budget discipline agreement first came into effect with the Community budget for 1986 when the financial guideline for agricultural expenditure was set at 21,012 million ecus. On 7 July 1986 the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers agreed that agricultural expenditure in 1986 could exceed the financial guideline by an amount which could be justified mainly by the exceptional circumstances of the abnormally large depreciation of the United States dollar. The supplementary and amending budget for 1986 subsequently increased provision for expenditure on agriculture from the guideline figure of 21,012 million ecus to 22,112 million ecus.

The financial guideline for 1987 remains at 22,961 million ecus, as was stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 6 February at column *840*. It was agreed at the European Council on 29-30 June that agricultural expenditure should be kept within the guideline this year by means of an adjustment in the system of payments to agricultural intervention agencies in the member states, so that payments will in future be made in arrears instead of in advance. The necessary amendment to the EAGGF financing regulation was adopted by the Agriculture Council of 19-20 October. The Government supported this change as a step towards more effective financial control of agricultural expenditure.

Excise Duties

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the extent to which his decisions on excise duties are restricted by EEC policy decisions on convergence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The package of tax measures recently put forward by the European Commission contains proposals for the convergence of excise duty rates in the Community. These have not yet been discussed in the Council of Ministers and no decisions have been taken.

Official Report

Mr. Sumberg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the price of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Brooke: Following a review by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, I have authorised an increase of 75p in the price of the daily part, with proportionate increases in the prices of the weekly part and fortnightly index. The price of Standing Committee debates will be increased by £1·05, bound volumes by £3·00, and the volume index by 30p. Subscription rates and the scale of charges for reprints of Members' speeches appearing in the *Official Report* will also be raised. Despite these increases, *Hansard* will still receive a substantial subsidy.

Board of Banking Supervision

Dr. Twinn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Board of Banking Supervision will be set up on a statutory basis.

Mr. Lawson: The board, which has operated since May 1986 on a non-statutory basis, has now been established under section 2 of the Banking Act 1987. I am grateful to the independent members of the non-statutory board (Sir Donald Barron, Mr. Andrew Caldecott, Mr. Deryk Vander Weyer, Mr. Nigel Robson, Mr. Harry Taylor and Mr. Alan Hardcastle) for indicating their willingness to serve on the new board. The Governor of the Bank of England and I have jointly appointed them to be the independent members of the new board.

Eurotunnel

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the liability to stamp duty and the stamp duty reserve tax of the units offerred for sale by Eurotunnel.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The companies, the stock exchange and other interested parties have discussed the offer with the Inland Revenue.

The Eurotunnel group will be offering for sale to the public units comprising one share in Eurotunnel plc and one share in Eurotunnel SA. They will require that these shares are issued and transferred together, as a single unit, in order to link United Kingdom and French participation in the tunnel project. This arrangement would, however, give rise to complex charges to stamp duties and stamp duty reserve tax. The taxes would sometimes apply to the unit and sometimes to the Eurotunnel plc share only. These results were not envisaged when the legislation was introduced, and would complicate dealings in the units. The next Finance Bill will therefore include proposals to make the unit chargeable security for stamp duty and reserve tax purposes, and to remove the initial charge to bearer instrument duty on the issue of units and warrants to acquire units abroad.

The intention of these changes is to treat the units for stamp duty and the reserve tax in the same way as a single share.

ENVIRONMENT

Estate Action Team

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to extend the facility of his Department's estate action team to housing associations and housing societies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Estate Action was set up in June 1985 specifically to help local authorities tackle the problems of their rundown estates. We focused on the local authority sector because all our evidence suggested that the major difficulties lay in this area. At present I have no plans to extend the activities of the Estate Action team to housing associations and housing societies.

Assured Tenancy Scheme

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of private residential tenancies created under the assured tenancy scheme for each year since 1980.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The number of assured tenancy lettings on 1 April each year since 1983 was:

	Number
1983	44
1984	244
1985	405
1986	609
1987	2,998

Sewerage

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the agency agreements between water and local authorities under the Water Act 1973, whereby some district councils retain sewerage functions.

Mr. Moynihan: Following a review by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the statutory basis of these agreements was changed by section 6 of the Water Act 1983. We have since decided to privatise the utility functions of water authorities, and it is inconsistent with the aims of privatisation for local authorities to continue to have the presumptive right to act as sewerage agents. Our proposals for the future of these agreements were set out in a consultation paper in November 1986. I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

Home Loans

Mr. French asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the effectiveness of the promotional campaign for the Government's home loan scheme for the purpose of increasing the percentage of eligible first-time buyers who participate in the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government already make a full range of promotional material for the scheme available on request to the savings and lending institutions which operate it. Growth in owner-occupation has been very marked in recent years and very large numbers of people are buying a house for the first time each year. In 1986-87 there were 670,000 first-time buyers—the highest ever annual figure. In deciding on priorities for publicity expenditure, it would be difficult to justify more resources for an area of housing which is already developing satisfactorily.

Rating Reform

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if the community charge per adult in Lancaster were to be £190 per annum, what estimates he has to indicate what would be the rate of local income tax that would be required to raise an equivalent overall sum assuming that taxpayers in Lancaster are on a similar tax base to taxpayers in Lancashire as a whole for (1) persons earning £100 per week and (2) persons on the average national wage.

Mr. Howard: I estimate that a community charge of £190 in Lancaster would be equivalent to a rate of local income tax of 4·9p. The impact on particular households would depend on their circumstances, but a single person earning £100 per week would pay up to £140 a year of LIT on this basis; a single person earning the average national wage would pay up to £400.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of "Paying For Local Government—The Need For Change" his Department has had published; what was the cost involved; and what other expenditure has been incurred in publicising his proposals for the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 29 October, at column *438-39*.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the organisations in Scotland which have notified him of their support of the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Howard: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) asked for comments on the Government's proposals from individuals and organisations in Scotland to be sent to the Scottish Office.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes a system of rebates for small business under the unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: No. Small businesses will benefit from our guarantee that the rate poundage will increase by no more than the retail prices index. There will be generous phasing arrangements for those businesses facing increases on the move to the uniform poundage.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to make arrangements for contributions to local authority services from foreign diplomats following introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: We will announce details of the proposed arrangements in due course.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what he considers will be the appropriate time to make an estimate of the number of staff required to administer the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: In accordance with convention, an estimate of the staffing implications of the rates reform proposals will be included in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information will be available to electoral registration officers as to the reasons names appear on the poll tax register, but not on the electoral register.

Mr. Howard: Electoral registration officers will know that the community charges register and the electoral register serve different purposes; the former is a list of those liable to pay the community charge in an area; the latter a list of those entitled to vote.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for what purposes it is proposed that electoral registration officers will have access to the poll tax register.

Mr. Howard: Electoral registration officers will have access to community charges registers to assist them in checking the completeness of electoral register.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek the permission of those organisations which have submitted comments following publication of Cmnd. 9714 "Paying For Local Government" to publish their views.

Mr. Howard: No. A list of those organisations which responded is available in the Library should the hon. Member wish to approach respondents directly.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what pay scale is proposed for community charge officers.

Mr. Howard: The community charge registration officer in each area will be the officer administering the local authority's financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. They will continue to be paid on the appropriate scale.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of "Paying For Local Government — The Need For Change" have been printed; to whom they have been distributed; and what was the cost of publication.

Mr. Howard: 100,000 copies of the booklet "Paying for Local Government—The Need for Change" have been printed at a cost of £16,200. They are being distributed in response to requests from individuals or organisations for their members use. Copies are also enclosed, where relevant, with replies to ministerial and official correspondence on the rates reform proposals.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of work undertaken in respect of the paragraphs on local income tax on page 7 of his Department's leaflet "Paying For Local Government—The Need For Change."

Mr. Howard: These paragraphs were based on the consideration of local income tax in paragraphs 3·24 to 3·32 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), which was published in January 1986.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 21 October, column *817*, he estimates the information on the poll tax model for 1986-87 will be available.

Mr. Howard: Shortly.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the organisations which have notified him of their opposition to the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Poverty

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr may expect a reply to his letter of 6 August seeking information about poverty in large cities and London boroughs, which was passed to his Department on 24 August.

Mr. Howard: The Department has no record of the hon. Member's letter of 6 August. If he would like to send me a copy of his letter, I will ensure that he receives a prompt reply.

Local Elections

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Envionment if he will commission research on the relative voting turn-out at local government elections of those *(a)* in receipt of rate rebates or housing benefits and *(b)* those not in receipt of such benefit.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to commission such research.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has on the nature of the existing link between those who *(a)* vote in local elections, *(b)* use local services, and *(c)* pay for local services.

Mr. Howard: On our latest estimates there are 35·8 million electors in England, all of whom benefit from the availability of local services. Of those, just over a third pay rates directly and in full. A further 3 million pay a proportion of rates. In some areas only one voter in four pays rates directly and in full. Our proposals to reform the system of local government finance will restore the link between those who vote in local elections, those who use local services and those who pay for those services.

Wild Birds

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by species of avian predator, and for each of the last five years and 1987 to date, what was the number of licences granted for taking and the numbers of birds so taken from the wild.

Mr. Moynihan: The details of the falconry licences issued since 1983, showing the species of predator, and the number of birds reported as taken, are as follows. Similar details for 1982 are not available.

England and Wales

	1983		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*1987 (to date)*	
	Number of		*Number of*		*Number of*		*Number of*		*Number of*	
	Licences issued	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*
Sparrowhawk	50	351	47	8	41	279	47	298	35	—
Merlin	8	58	18	3	20	178	19	170	24	60
Buzzard	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kestrel	3	5	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Prairie falcon	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	—	—	—
Goshawk	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
New Zealand falcon	—	—	2	—	3	3	—	—	1	—
Red-tailed hawk	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Peregrine	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	10	1	—
Lanner falcon	—	—	—	—	2	10	—	—	—	—

Scotland

	1983		*1984*		*1985*		*1985*		*1987 (to date)*	
	Number of		*Number of*		*Number of*		*Number of*		*Number of*	
	Licences issued	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*
Sparrowhawk	4	2	6	4	1	—	—	—	3	—
Merlin	1	10	—	—	2	48	2	35	2	—
Prairie falcon	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

"Tenants Choice: the Government's Proposals"

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to distribute the document "Tenants Choice: the Government's Proposals" to right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Waldegrave: Copies of the document "Tenants' Choice", which explains the Government's proposals for legislation to give council tenants a right to opt for new landlords, were placed in the Library of the House on 3 November.

Councillors (Decl[illegible]tions Against Violence)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce legislation to provide for elected councillors in England and Wales to sign a declaration abjuring violence along the lines of that proposed for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business recommended that all local authority councillors in Great Britain should have to make a declaration before exercising their office; that this should have a status similar to the oath sworn, or affirmation made, by juries; and that consideration should be given whether this declaration should be specific as to what the public duty of being a councillor entails. We are considering this recommendation.

Welsh Footballers

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Welsh Football Association about the refusal of the Football League to cancel certain matches in which Welsh footballers are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received a letter from the Football Association of Wales and from the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on its behalf.

This is a matter for the two football authorities. I do, however, sympathise with the position of the Football Association of Wales and hope, even at this late stage, that the Football League can reconsider the matter.

Homelessness

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy for dealing with homelessness.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 4 November to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Additional resources to tackle homelessness and other items in the current financial year were announced by my right hon. Friend on 3 November in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick).

Dog Wardens

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is a needs element in grant-related expenditure of local authorities relating to the provision of dog wardens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Grant-related expenditure assessments fully allow for local authorities' need to spend. As with many other services on which there is relatively low expenditure, there is however no specific indicator related to provision of dog wardens.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Adoption

63. **Miss Lestor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what responses he has made to the Council of Europe's report and recommendation on the traffic in children for adoption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Parliamentary Assembly's report on the traffic in children and other forms of child exploitation which includes the traffic in children for adoption, is presently in draft form. It is due to be considered by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Deputies in December 1987. We shall not be in a position to respond to the report or to make a statement until it has been examined in detail by the committee.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to assist the World Health Organisation strategy of health for all by the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: the Government have fully endorsed the principles underlying the "Health for All" strategy which are:

—the provision of a health care system in which primary health care is recognised as playing a vital role. The Government have conducted a wide ranging review of primary health care services and will shortly be publishing a White Paper setting out proposals for updating these services;

— promotion of healthier lifestyles and encouraging individuals to look after their own health — an emphasis which is making progress in this country and is exemplified in our national campaigns on drug abuse, smoking, AIDS and coronary heart disease and the creation of the new Health Education Authority;

—reduction of preventable conditions—for example, the Government's emphasis in relation to children and young adults on the reduction of perinatal and maternal mortality, progress in immunisation rates, new cancer screening programme;

—development of the necessary supportive measures such as our improved management and planning structures, our development of new information systems and the increases in the numbers of those working in the health services.

The strategy sets out a valuable framework for all those responsible for health service planning to use in the light of local circumstances and we shall be taking it fully into account in preparing future planning guidelines to health authorities.

Bedford General Hospital

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total expenditure derived from central Government sources on Bedford General hospital south wing during each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend will be interested to see the figures which follow:

Total Expenditure on Bedford General Hospital South Wing

Financial Year	*Regional Managed Capital Schemes* £	*District Delegated Capital Schemes* £	*Revenue* £
1982-83	800,867	161,071	10,997,777
1983-84	404,367	17,660	12,305,440
1984-85	235,000	108,645	13,182,516
1985-86	207,000	81,112	14,005,133
1986-87	1,230,000	278,650	15,098,368

Allocations to hospitals are a matter for the district health authority, and detailed information is not held centrally. For any further information my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of North Bedfordshire health authority.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present formula for making extreme weather payments; whether he proposes to make changes to the formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 30 October 1987 at column *468-9*.

AIDS

Mr. Butler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the date to which the United States Surgeon-General has projected the cases of AIDS infection in that country; and whether he will make it his policy to make similar projections for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: The United States Public Health Service has published estimates of the numbers of AIDS cases in that country up to 1991. These estimates have wide margins of error which increase towards the later years. Our policy is that predictions should be made only as and when justified by the available scientific data.

Local Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Illsley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of local appeal tribunals which took place in 1986 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Barnsley; and in what proportion of those tribunals the claimant was successful.

Mr. Portillo: Administrative statistics show that a total of 125,838 appeals were heard and decided in Great Britain in 1986. Of these, 31,675 (25·2 per cent.) were determined in the claimant's favour.

National administrative statistics of social security appeals are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region. In the north eastern region in 1986, a total of 20,040 appeals were heard and decided, of which 4,653 (23·2 per cent.) were found in favour of the claimant.

Nurses (Accommodation)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many units of nursing accommodation there are in each health district of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information in respect of health authorities in England is not held centrally.

Cancer Screening

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans legislation further to control private clinics offering cancer screening facilities.

Mrs. Currie: We are considering the issues involved in ensuring that users can be confident of private screening services, including the possibility of statutory control. Meanwhile we welcome the steps the private sector is taking to devise guidelines for the accreditation of, and quality assurance in, clinics and laboratories offering cancer screening services.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions are made concerning waiting times when determining the number of *(a)* consultants and *(b)* beds in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The need to improve waiting times is one of the objectives taken into account by health authorities when deciding how best to provide and develop services for patients. Numbers of consultants or beds would form part of those service plans.

Community Care Grants

Mrs. Fyfe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether women leaving Women's Aid refuges on being rehoused will be entitled to community care grants, under regulations for the social fund;

(2) whether the circumstances of domestic violence will be included in the guidelines for community care grants under the regulations for the social fund;

(3) whether women who have suffered domestic violence will qualify as high priority applicants for community care grants; and whether they will be entitled to the maximum sums available under those grants, under the regulations for the social fund;

(4) what amount of community care grant will be payable under the regulations for the social fund to women victims of domestic violence on leaving Women's Aid refuges to move to independent housing; and whether this will be stated in the guidance for social fund officers;

(5) whether women victims of domestic violence who flee to Women's Aid refuges will be entitled to a community care grant to replace clothing destroyed during the marital or cohabitation breakdown under the regulations for the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Community care grants from the social fund will not be subject to regulations but will be awarded at the discretion of the social fund officer, in accordance with the law and Secretary of State's directions and taking account of the Secretary of State's guidance. Guidance about awards in cases of domestic violence is included in part 6 of the social fund manual, a pre-publication copy of which is in the Library.

Dentists (Computers)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will take steps to inform general dental practitioners about their rights relating to the Dental Estimates Board computer at Bournemouth;

(2) if he will take steps to inform dental practitioners of the degree of protection given under the terms of the Data Protection Act to records concerning them held by the Dental Estimates Board.

Mrs. Currie: Publicity about the provisions of the Data Protection Act is the responsibility of the Data Protection Registrar, who is mounting a publicity campaign to inform all data subjects of their rights. The rights of general dental practitioners and their patients in relation to the Dental Estimates Board's computer records are the same as those of any person whose record is maintained on a computer.

Abortions

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for the most recent years for which figures are available, the different conditions, syndromes and diseases diagnosed in foetuses aborted under statutory ground 4 at 18 weeks gestation and over, together with the numbers of each condition and in each case the numbers expressed as a percentage of all abortions at 18 weeks and over.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Mentions of medical conditions for notifications of abortions carried out under statutory ground 4 of the 1967 Abortion Act to residents and non-residents at 18 weeks and over gestation, England and Wales 1986: numbers and percentage of all operations performed at 18 weeks and over

ICD number and condition	*Medical conditions[1] (mentions)*	*Percentage of all abortions 18 weeks and over*
655 Known or suspected fetal abnormality affecting management of mother	635	7·67
655·0 Central nervous system malformation in fetus	297	3·59
655·1 Chromosomal abormality in fetus	175	2·11
655·2 Hereditary disease in family possibly affecting fetus	19	0·23
655·3 Suspected damage to fetus from viral disease in the mother	9	0·11
Rubella (056)	7	0·08
Rubella contact (VO1·4)	1	0·01
Rubella immunisation (VO 4.3)	—	—
655·5 Suspected damage to fetus from drugs	8	0·10
655·6 Suspected damage to fetus from radiation	3	0·04
655·8 Other known or suspected fetal abnormality, not elsewhere classified	96	1·16
655·4 Suspected damage to fetus from other disease in the mother and		
655·9 Unspecified fetal abnormality	28	0·34

[1] These figures represent the number of medical conditions reported (mentioned) rather than the number of operations.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action the Government have taken to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations for reducing the number of late abortions put forward by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in their study; "Late Abortions in England and Wales 1984".

Mr. Newton: The Department has discussed the findings of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists report with regional general managers and regional medical officers, and health authorities have been encouraged to improve their administrative referral systems. Earlier this year family planning and pregnancy counselling projects were set up with central funding in City and Hackney, Milton Keynes and South Sefton district health authorities. These will continue until March 1989. They are being independently evaluated by Isobel Allen of the Policy Studies Institute and we expect to disseminate her findings to the National Health Service when they have been studied.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions were performed on residents and non-residents during 1986 at each of the following gestational ages; 18 weeks, 19 weeks, 20 weeks, 21 weeks, 22 weeks, 23 weeks, 24 weeks and 25 weeks and over, respectively; on what grounds these were performed; what were the ages of the women; and what was the number performed in the National Health Service and the number performed in approved places.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Number of notifications of legal abortions performed on residents and non-residents at gestation weeks: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and over, by statutory grounds, age-group of mother and category of premises 1986

	Gestation weeks							
	18	*19*	*20*	*21*	*22*	*23*	*24*	*25 + over*
Statutory grounds								
All grounds	2,611	1,553	1,389	753	876	880	185	29
1 (with other)	4	3	3	1	2	2	1	—
2 (alone)	2,306	1,338	1,187	657	788	829	158	7
3 (with or without 2)	144	79	43	27	30	16	3	—
4 (alone)	131	125	138	60	52	28	20	19
5 (with any other except 1)	26	8	18	6	4	5	3	3
5 or 6	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—
Age group								
All ages	2,611	1,553	1,389	753	876	880	185	29
Under 15	27	15	15	12	18	24	2	—
15	81	46	50	28	29	38	8	—
16—19	802	454	416	214	243	291	47	5

	Gestation weeks							
	18	*19*	*20*	*21*	*22*	*23*	*24*	*25 + over*
20—24	877	519	453	238	296	276	72	11
25—29	414	245	212	113	140	114	22	10
30—34	226	124	101	74	68	63	18	2
35—39	126	105	81	46	55	47	9	—
40—44	47	38	52	24	22	24	7	1
45 + over	11	7	9	4	5	3	—	—
Unknown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Category of premises								
NHS	452	219	267	84	75	37	23	22
Non-NHS	2,159	1,334	1,122	669	801	843	162	7

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will break down the number of abortions by the social class of the mother for the latest available date.

Mr. Newton: Information on occupation status, from which social class data are compiled, is not collected on the abortion notification form.

Rating Reform

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that personal details on Department of Health and Social Security computers will not be used for the purpose of implementing the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

Our policy is to maintain the confidentiality of social security records and to disclose them only in certain limited circumstances. One circumstance where we would consider such disclosure would be to safeguard public funds. No decision has been taken on whether we should provide for the disclosure of any details of certain social security claims to local authorities administering the community charge.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the National Health Service of a hearing aid.

Mr. Scott: The National Health Service provides a range of different types of hearing aids but the Department does not collect this information centrally. Responsibility for supplying hearing aids in England and Wales was transferred to Mersey regional health authority on 1 April 1985.

The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the regional chairman direct.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines were issued by the attendance allowance board to delegated doctors concerned with assessing claims following the Court of Appeal decision in the case of Moran *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services; and whether he will deposit copies of the guidelines in the Library.

Mr. Scott: Guidance on the approach to continual supervision at night, taking account of the Moran judgment, has been included in the overall revision of the attendance allowance board's guidelines for delegated medical practitioners which was already in hand: copies have been placed in the Library. As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 26 October 1987 at columns *199-200*, the guidelines will be published as a priced document after Parliament has completed consideration of the current Social Security Bill —including any further amendments which may then be necessary.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for attendance allowance based upon the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the case of Moran *v.* the Secretary of State for Social Services have now been determined; and how many claims were successful.

Mr. Scott: Following the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the case of Mrs. Dorothy Moran, about 73,000 claims to attendance allowance involving continual supervision at night have been decided. In most of these cases the outcome was the same as it would have been before the judgment, but in some 700 cases the claimant received an allowance, or a higher rate of allowance, which would not have been awarded but for the Moran judgment.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people he expects to lose all entitlement to unemployment benefit from the reduction from 60 to 55 years of the age at which that benefit is abated against an occupational pension.

Mr. Scott: About 27,000 a year.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people are expected to lose from the tightening of the first condition for receipt of unemployment benefit;

(2) how many are expected to lose from the tightening of the second condition for receipt of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that about 280,000 people a year would lose some benefit from the tightening of the second contribution condition for entitlement to unemployment benefit if it was introduced in isolation. About 350,000 would lose some benefit from the tightening of both contribution conditions simultaneously. I regret that no reliable estimate is available of the number who would lose benefit as a result of tightening only the first condition.

Single Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount paid in single payments to someone leaving institutional care at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: A special survey of single payment claims made in a sample of offices in October 1986 recorded an average payment of £304 to a small sample of claimants moving from institutional care into the community.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the level of single payments made in each year from 1980 to 1986.

Mr. Scott: The level of single payments is as follows:

Year (May-April)	*Number of payments (thousands)*	*Total cost (£ million)*
1980-81	1,049	48
1981-82	1,186	57
1982-83	1,473	98
1983-84	2,129	166
1984-85	3,316	241
1985-86	4,375	335
1986-87	4,230	330

Source: Management Information System (100% count). Provisional only for 1986-87.

Family Credit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value of the cash element included in the rates of family credit to compensate for the loss of *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* welfare milk.

Mr. Scott: An amount of £2·55 is included in each of the child credit rates and the same amount therefore goes to each child or young person in the family irrespective of whether it is in replacement of free school meals or free welfare milk.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the basis on which the assumption is made that take-up of family credit will be 20 per cent. higher than take-up of family income supplement.

Mr. Scott: The assumption reflects that used in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691). Because family credit is a more generous benefit than family income supplement and will go to many more families we expect it to become much better known. There will also be extensive advertising and other publicity when the new scheme starts, as part of our communications strategy. Overall, therefore, potential claimants should become more aware of family credit and the generally higher levels of benefit which are payable.

Passported Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings he expects to make from the non-payment of passported benefits with bridging allowance.

Mr. Scott: A person who would have been entitled to income support, and so to passported benefits, but for the proposed withdrawal of general entitlement from 16 and 17-year-olds would be entitled to those benefits on low income grounds while receiving a bridging allowance. There would therefore be no savings for this reason.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings he expects to make from paying child benefit rather than income support to school leavers living at home.

Mr. Scott: The saving on income support will be around £84 million in a full year, net of the higher costs of child benefit and child dependency additions.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of housing benefit will lose benefit owing to the exclusion of emergency alarms from eligible service charges; and what savings will accrue from this change.

Mr. Portillo: The draft regulations for the reformed housing benefit scheme ensure, in line with current policy, that housing benefit will be available to help with the costs of alarm systems where they are provided in accommodation which is particularly suitable for and occupied by elderly, sick or disabled people. Our guidance to local authorities on the current housing benefit scheme makes it clear that housing benefit should only meet the cost of accommodation-related, as opposed to purely personal services. Accordingly we would not expect any loss in benefit, or expenditure savings where local authorities have followed that guidance.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people lost all entitlement to housing benefit as a result of changes in tapers in each year from 1982 to 1986.

Mr. Portillo: We do not have separate figures for loss of entitlement through taper changes where other changes were made to the housing benefit scheme. The table shows the numbers estimated to lose all entitlement as a result of changes to the housing benefit scheme between 1983 and 1985; there were no taper changes in 1982 or 1986. The numbers shown should not necessarily be regarded as cumulative.

Housing benefit: Households losing all entitlement 1983-1985
Great Britain *thousands*

April 1983 taper change	*April and November 1984 changes to tapers, minimum and child's needs allowance*[1]	*November 1985 rate taper change*[2]
400	500	450

[1] The figures include those affected by the non-dependant deduction changes.

[2] The figures refer to rate rebates only; some households may still have received assistance with rents.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are expected to lose entitlement to housing benefit as a result of changes made in 1987.

Mr. Portillo: An estimated 110,000 households lost all entitlement to a rent rebate or allowance in April 1987 as a result of the increase in the rent taper from 29 per cent. to 33 per cent. A significant proportion will still qualify for a rate rebate.

Single Childless People

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the most recent figures for the numbers of single childless people under 25 years drawing the householder rate of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 4 November.

Widows

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many widows are expected to lose benefit by the payment of a lump sum instead of weekly widow's allowance; and what the savings will be in a full year.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that in 1988-89 about 1,000 widows will receive the widow's payment of £1,000 who would under the current scheme have been entitled only to widow's allowance for 26 weeks at £57·65 a week, without a succeeding benefit. Because of other alterations in the structure of widows' benefits, a further group of younger widows without dependent children—estimated at about 2,000 — will receive widow's payment only whereas under the current scheme they would have received weekly benefits. The extent of loss, as compared with the current scheme, will depend on the widow's tax position and her age. The changes in widows' benefits will cost in total an additional £24 million in the first year but savings will accrue thereafter, rising to some £120 million at November 1985 prices by 2033-34. It is not possible to isolate the expenditure effects of the replacement of the widow's allowance from the wider effect of structural changes.

Board and Lodging Allowances

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when allowances for ordinary board and lodgings were last increased; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Supplementary benefit personal allowances for people living in ordinary board and lodging accommodation were last increased in April this year at the same time as the general uprating of benefits. Supplementary benefit, for the cost of board and lodging, increases to meet any rise in charges provided they do not exceed limits introduced in April 1985. The limits range from £45 to £70 a week depending on the area in which the accommodation is situated.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking, following the commissioner's decision in the Clarke case, to ensure that severe disablement allowance is paid as from 22 December 1984 to women who would have qualified for non-contributory invalidity pension but for the household duties test.

Mr. Scott: In the light of the judgment by the European Court of Justice, and the subsequent decision by the Social Security Commissioner on Mrs. Clarke's claim to severe disablement allowance, we estimate that about 3,400 other women who claimed SDA in the transitional period from non-contributory invalidity pension may be affected by the court's judgment. All of them are being identified from departmental records and we will write soon to those who may be entitled, to let them know that we are aware of their claim. It will be necessary to examine each case individually to establish the precise entitlement: about one third of the women involved may since have been awarded SDA on other grounds—or other benefits—which will affect what extra is now payable as arrears or current benefit. It may be some months before the process is completed in all cases.

Computer Network

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Service if he will make a statement on his plans to put out to contract the design, programming and operation of a combined social security computer network; which companies have progressed to tender stage; and how many of these are United Kingdom-based companies.

Mr. Portillo: Design and programming work in some areas is already being done by contractors, working alongside civil servants. I have no present plans to extend this or to put operations work out to contract.

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy not to enter into any contract for computer operations with Electronic Data Systems.

Mr. Portillo: There are no contractual arrangements with Electronic Data Systems pending or in prospect.

Computer Systems (Training)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to ensure that his Department's staff are sufficiently trained to enable them to operate the computer systems envisaged in the operational strategy.

Mr. Portillo: The Department provides a wide range of training courses for its computer staff engaged on both operations and development work. Plans for training the future users of the various operational strategy systems are currently being prepared.

Disability Premium

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will ensure that the new disability premium is set at a level to guarantee that all dialysis patients on supplementary benefit and currently receiving a heating, bathing and diet allowance totalling £18 a week will continue to receive at least the same amount in total benefit.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend announced on 27 October at columns *179-81* that the new disability premium will be set at £13·05 for a single person and £18·60 for a couple. Those claimants whose entitlement is less than their current benefit entitlement at the point of change will have their existing benefit level maintained.

Private Residential Establishments and Nursing Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures to show the total funding through his Department of private residential establishments and nursing homes by local authorities in Wales for each of the last five years and the estimates for 1987.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not directly fund private residential care or nursing homes but people in these homes can claim supplementary benefit to help meet their fees if they have insufficient resources of their own. Information on the amount of benefit paid to people in homes in Wales is not available.

Afro-Caribbeans (Mental Institutions)

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what actions he intends to take over the MIND report which indicates that a disproportionate number of Afro-Caribbeans are held in Britain's mental institutions.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful for this report, which officials will study with great care, together with other relevant information bearing on psychiatric services provided to ethnic minorities, which were discussed last month by the Department's mental illness research liaison group.

Health Authorities (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total of the additional funds which he made available to health authorities to assist them with pay rises in the current financial year; when the payments were made; and if he will publish a list of the authorities and amounts concerned.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) announced on 23 April 1987 that the Government were providing an additional £264 million for the hospital and community health services in England to help meet the cost in 1987-88 of the pay review body awards for doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and the professions allied to medicine. The additional funds were allocated as follows:

Regional Health Authorities	*£ million*
Northern	16·7
Yorkshire	18·8
Trent	23·2
East Anglian	9·8
North West Thames	18·8
North East Thames	23·8
South East Thames	20·9
South West Thames	16·9
Wessex	13·9
Oxford	10·9
South Western	16·4
West Midlands	26·6
Mersey	13·5
North Western	22·9
RHA Total	253·1
Special Health Authorities and others	10·9
Grand Total	264·0

It was for each region to determine how the funds should be allocated to their districts.

Payments (Credit Transfers)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to offer payment by credit transfer to retirement pensioners and child benefit recipients.

Mr. Scott: The issue of invitations to retirement pensioners and child benefit recipients to consider the advantages of payment by credit transfer, which was suspended in 1984, is to be resumed. Invitations to retirement pensioners will recommence this month and to child benefit recipients in January 1988.

Benefits

Mr. Blunkett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside about the case of Mr. and Mrs. Ellis of 21 Valentine crescent, Sheffield; and what assessment he has made of the implications of this case for his policy of reducing dependency on the state.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer, 29 October 1987]:* The hon. Member wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 2 September and 14 September, and to my hon. Friend the Minister of State on 23 September. I replied to those letters on 29 September, and explained that supplementary benefit is not designed for full-time students, such as Mr. Ellis, who have withdrawn from the employment field to embark on a course of study, nor is it intended for people such as Mrs. Ellis, whose contact with the employment field has been less than six months. These principles are consistent with the Government's policy of reducing dependency on the state.

People receiving a Manpower Services Commission training allowance are not required to be available for work as a condition for receiving supplementary benefit. If Mr. Ellis were accepted for a course of study which was sponsored by MSC, his income would be adequate for his family because he would receive an MSC training allowance which would be topped-up by supplementary benefit if necessary. There are several MSC-sponsored computer courses in the Sheffield area.

SCOTLAND

Parliament Act

Mr. Menzies Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of convictions in Scottish courts for contraventions of the Parliament Act in the last three years for which such information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Sexual Offences (Evidence)

Mr. Darling asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate when he will make proposals to amend the law of evidence in Scotland in relation to the prosecution of sexual assaults; and what further consultations he proposes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no immediate plans for further change. However, the Scottish Law Commission is considering the law of evidence in criminal proceedings. In particular my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate who has ministerial responsibility for the law of evidence, has asked the commission to consider what reforms might be made to lessen the burden of giving evidence by witnesses who are considered to be particularly vulnerable, such as children.

In accordance with its normal procedure the commission will in due course produce a consultative memorandum providing an opportunity for those interested in this matter to give their views.

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the existing rules and procedures adopted by the relevant local authorities and other statutory bodies interested in the application and development of a coherent valid signposting policy for tourism in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following discussions with the Scottish Tourist Board and other interested bodies, the Scottish Development Department issued circulars (numbered 17/83, 29/85 and 29/86) which set out the criteria for tourist signs and the procedures to be followed by applicants for signs. The Department, in consultation with tourist interests and local roads authorities, continues to monitor the effects of existing policies and to examine the merits of further innovations. In general, I am satisfied that the procedures are working well.

Forestry

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to provide for a statutory consultation procedure in relation to applications to the Forestry Commission for planting approval under the forestry grant scheme and to require the commission to take account of any observations and representations made by voluntary bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is not persuaded that such legislation is necessary or desirable.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for forestry planting licences in Scotland were objected to by local authorities and other statutory bodies, respectively, in each of the last five years and 1987 to date; and how many were refused as a result.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no system of forestry planting licences. The following table gives the information in relation to applications to the Forestry Commission for grant-aid for planting:

Year	*Number of applications objected to*	*Number of objections from*		*Decisions taken on these applications*
		Local authorities	*Other statutory bodies*	
1982	1	—	1	Approved
1983	2	—	2	1 Refused 1 Approved
1984	7	1	6	4 Refused 3 Approved
1985	5	4	3	3 Refused 2 Approved
1986	1	1	1	Approved
1987 to date	13	9	7	4 Refused 4 Approved 5 Pending

Mr. Buchanan-Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications he has received under the forestry grant scheme since the relaxation in March 1986 of policy toward land clearance for afforestation; what area of land is covered by these applications; how many applications have been approved; what area of land is covered by these approvals; and what proportion of the applications and of the approvals are from owners of estates and from farmers farming their own land, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the period 1 April 1986 to 30 September 1987 the Forestry Commission received 1,448 forestry grant scheme applications in Scotland, covering approximately 147,000 hectares of land. Within that period 1,080 applications were approved, relating to approximately 110,000 hectares. Information about the status of applicants is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his legislative proposals following consultation on the document "Scottish Homes."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A White Paper will be published shortly which will set out the Government's intentions for future housing policy. It is hoped to introduce legislation, in so far as that is necessary, as soon as practicable.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for house building by the public and private sectors *(a)* in Scotland, *(b)* in Glasgow and *(c)* in Glasgow, Provan.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest figures were published in table 8 of Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSIU No. 31, "Housing Trends in Scotland: Quarter ended 31 March 1987," a copy of which is available in the House Library. Information held centrally does not identify areas other than at district council level or their aggregates.

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for people on housing lists in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* the constituency of Glasgow, Provan.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 29 October 1987.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what security of tenure existing tenants in Scottish Special Housing Association homes will be given if their homes are sold to private landlords;

(2) if he will make a statement on the effect on Scottish Special Housing Association houses of his private sell-off proposals;

(3) if he will list the categories of municipal housing which Her Majesty's Government do not intend to put on the private market.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has already made it clear that tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association will remain public sector tenants, with all of the statutory rights which this Government have conferred on such tenants, under the Government's proposals to create a new unified housing development agency for Scotland, Scottish Homes. The Government's proposals for the future development of housing policy will be set out in full in a White Paper which it is intended to publish shortly.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all organisations, voluntary bodies and local authorities which made submissions during the consultation process on Her Majesty's Government's consultative document called "Scottish Homes".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 26 October, at columns *149-53.*

Stonehouse and Law Hospitals

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when the vacancy for an anaesthetist at Stonehouse hospital will be filled; and when the vacancy occurred;

(2) what is the reason for the delay in appointing an anaesthetist at Stonehouse hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Appointments to individual posts are a matter for individual health boards. However, I understand that anaesthetic services at Stonehouse hospital are provided by the division of anaesthetics based at Law hospital, and that there are currently no vacancies in that division.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give assurances that ear, nose and throat facilities will be maintained at Law hospital;

(2) if he will give assurances that the gynaecology ward will not be closed at Stonehouse hospital;

(3) if he will give assurances that ear, nose and throat facilities will be maintained at Stonehouse hospital;

(4) if he will give assurances that the gynaecology ward will not be closed at Law hospital;

(5) if he will give assurances that emergency facilities will be reinstated during the night at Stonehouse hospital as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: These are matters in the first instance for the Lanarkshire health board.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the nurse-to-patient ratio yearly from 1979 at Stonehouse hospital;

(2) if he will give the nurse-to- patient ratio yearly from 1979 at Law hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This specific information requested by the hon. Member is not available centrally, but the following table shows the ratio of the number of whole-time equivalent nurses at 30 September of each year to the average number of occupied beds in the year to 30 September in each case:

Year	*Stonehouse hospital*	*Law hospital*
1979	0·8:1	0·8:1
1980	0·8:1	0·8:1
1981	0·9:1	0·8:1
1982	1·0:1	0·9:1
1983	1·1:1	1·0:1
1984	1·1:1	0·9:1
1985	1·1:1	0·9:1
1986	1·1:1	1·0:1
[1]1987	1·1:1	1·0:1

[1] 31 March 1987.

Ambulances

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the roadworthiness and safety of ambulances in Clydesdale constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such representations have been received.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the number of ambulances in the Clydesdale constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are 12 ambulances at Carluke, four at Douglas and two at Biggar. A further 77 ambulances may carry patients to and from Clydesdale depending on origin destination, vehicle availability and urgency.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of ambulances over *(a)* three, *(b)* five and *(c)* seven years old used in the Clydesdale constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of ambulances in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area; and how many of these are over (i) three, (ii) five and (iii) seven years old.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Sixty-two ambulances are based in the Tayside health board area, 23 of which are based in the area of the city of Dundee district council. The requested information on the age of ambulances is not available centrally.

A74

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on when the A74 will be upgraded to M74 status.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 October to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). The upgrading will inevitably be a long-term exercise.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of deaths occurring on the A74 annually since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of Deaths*
1979	17
1980	8
1981	17
1982	15
1983	13
1984	14
1985	18
1986	23
[1]1987	10

[1] January-October.

Crime Detection

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he is satisfied with the crime detection rate in Scotland;

(2) if he will detail the crime detection rate annually since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures are as follows:

Crimes Cleared-up 1979-86, Scotland

Year	*Clear-up rate Per cent.*
1979	30·0
1980	32·6
1981	31·2
1982	29·8
1983	30·9
1984	30·8
1985	33·6
1986	34·2

I am satisfied that the police are making every effort to maximise the clear-up rate; and I welcome the increase that there has been in each of the past two years.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many crimes of violence were committed against elderly people in the Clydesdale constituency yearly since 1979;

(2) if he will give details of the detention rate of violent crimes against the elderly, yearly since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the number of crimes reported to the police annually since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information, on crimes recorded by the police, is set out in the table.

Crimes recorded by the Police 1979-1986—Scotland

Year	*Number*
1979	344,680
1980	364,587
1981	408,204
1982	435,081
1983	448,260
1984	474,914
1985	461,970
1986	463,837

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details on the number of convictions for drug abuse in the Clydesdale constituency each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information requested is not available on a constituency basis.

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give numbers of convictions for drug abuse in Scotland each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available is given in the table.

Persons with a drugs offence proved: Scotland

Year	*Number*
1979	1,150
1980	1,155
1981	982
1982	1,373
1983	1,671
1984	2,271
1985	2,660
1986	2,657

Violent Crime

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures the Government are taking to protect the elderly in their homes from violent crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Police forces are always ready to advise individual householders about appropriate security measures to reduce the opportunities for this type of crime. Specific measures currently being taken include *(a)* the campaign to promote neighbourhood watch, which aims to prevent housebreaking and vandalism through improved physical security watchfulness and mutual help within the community; and *(b)* the national initiative by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission, under the community programme, to promote crime prevention projects including practical improvements in home security for the elderly, the disabled and the disadvantaged.

Privatisation

Mr. Hood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the effect on the Scottish coal industry of his proposals to privatise the electrical industry.

Mr. Lang: The Government are at an early stage in developing proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Scotland. The implications for the coal industry in Scotland will be borne closely in mind.

Prison Service

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans, in the light of the recent series of crises in the Scottish penal system, to give more disciplinary powers to prison officers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The punishments which a governor can award to a prisoner found guilty of an offence against prison discipline are laid down in rule 43 of the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952 (and equivalent rules for young offender institutions and detention centres). The procedures and penalties for offences against prison discipline are kept under review. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to make changes in the powers available to governors.

Abortions

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board area the number of abortions undertaken in each year since 1968.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Abortion statistics are published annually in "Scottish Health Statistics". Data from 1968 to 1973 are available only by hospital region and from 1974 to 1985 by health board area. Provisional figures for 1986 are set out in the table:

Abortions by health board of treatment

Health board	*Number of abortions*
Argyll and Clyde	552
Ayrshire and Arran	521
Borders	—
Dumfries and Galloway	246
Fife	557
Forth Valley	418
Grampian	1,224
Greater Glasgow	1,972
Highland	439
Lanarkshire	496
Lothian	2,022
Tayside	1,080
Islands[1]	22
All Areas	9,549

[1] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles Health Boards.

Contraception

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment *(a)* by contraceptive method and *(b)* by source of treatment clinic or general practitioner in Scotland for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 26 October 1987 at columns *114-16*.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. McLeish asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are on hospital waiting lists in *(a)* Fife and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information centrally available, which relates to 31 March 1987 and is provisional, shows 5,198 people on waiting lists for hospital in-patient treatment in the Fife health board area and 81,324 in Scotland.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* The Dundee district authority area who are in need of operations have been asked to wait due to lack of medical and hospital facilities for more than three months for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Schools

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all organisations, voluntary bodies and local authorities which made submissions during the recent consultation on Her Majesty's Government's proposals on school management.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. We had received some 6,500 submissions by the deadline date of 3 November. The collation and analysis of this material will take a little time.

National Health Service

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the consultative steps he proposes to take, and the organisations he anticipates contacting, in anticipation of publishing the proposed Bill on the Scottish Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The discussion document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion", which was published in April 1986, was the subject of extensive consultation by my right hon. and learned Friend. The Bill which will be introduced this Session will incorporate measures reflecting the outcome of the consultation. A White Paper to be published shortly will set out that outcome in detail.

Youth Service

Mr. McFall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the recent increase in the relevant expenditure in England and Wales, he intends to increase Government expenditure on the youth service in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Most public expenditure on the youth service in Scotland is undertaken by local authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend announced the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89 on 21 July. He informed the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 26 October that within the total rate support grant settlement provision for community education (which includes expenditure on the youth service) would be £50 million. This represents an increase of 20 per cent. over provision made in the current year's settlement.

Rating Reform

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the impact of the proposed community charge on monastic communities whose members have no income, and whose premises include accommodation for guests, workshops, and church buildings as well as accommodation for members of the community.

Mr. Lang: In general, accommodation in monastic communities which forms people's sole or main residence will cease to be subject to rates on 1 April 1989. Other accommodation will remain subject to rates, but rate increases from that date will be pegged to the level of inflation as measured by the retail prices index. Charitable and other reliefs from the remaining rates burden will continue on the present basis. People aged 18 and over who are solely or mainly resident in monastic communities, like other adults, will carry a personal community charge liability. My right hon. and learned Friend is at present considering the position of people in this category in relation to the proposed community charge rebate scheme.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an estimate of the numbers of staff that the community charge registration officer will be required to employ in order to complete registration on the community charge register of all adults in the Clackmannan constituency.

Mr. Lang: No. This is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of people in Scotland who will be totally exempt from payment of the poll tax in each of the following categories *(a)* those aged 18 years whose parents are still in receipt of family allowance, *(b)* those resident in hospitals or homes, *(c)* those in prisons and *(d)* those defined as severely mentally handicapped.

Mr. Lang *[holdng answer 26 October 1987]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has made no estimate of the numbers of people who will be exempt from community charge liability in 1989-90. At present child benefit is payable in respect of some 2,000 people aged 18 in Scotland. Figures are not available centrally on the number of people solely or mainly resident in hospitals, or in nursing homes, residential care homes and hostels providing an equivalent level of care. The number of inmates in Scottish penal establishments is about 5,500. The number of severely mentally handicapped people in Scotland is about 15,000, many of whom will be cared for in hospitals or in nursing homes, residential care homes and hostels providing an equivalent level of care.

Rates

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average domestic rates bill in the Clackmannan constituency for each year since 1978 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms showing, in each case, the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Clackmannan District Council	*Average Domestic Rate-Bill* £	*Percentage Change*	*1987-88 Prices* £	*Percentage Change*
1978-79	119		242	
1979-80	137	15	238	−1
1980-81	168	23	247	3
1981-82	224	33	299	21
1982-83	267	19	333	11
1983-84	278	4	331	0
1984-85	283	2	323	−2
1985-86	319	13	343	6
1986-87	347	9	363	6
1987-88	407	17	407	12

Note: The GDP deflator has been used to convert average rate bills to 1987-88 prices.

Kidney Patients

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many kidney patients with a treatable condition have been rejected by National Health Service hospitals in Dundee in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Suitability for treatment is a matter for the judgment of the clinician concerned. I am not aware of any problem with regard to treatment for kidney patients in Dundee.

Hospitals (Dundee)

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list new policies from his Department in the past eight years as they affect hospitals in Dundee; and if he will give details of the extra resources made available to carry out each initiative.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Guidance to health boards on overall priorities is based on the SHARE report; in addition, the Scottish Home and Health Department issues guidance on specific services from time to time. It is for each health board to determine how this guidance affects hospital services in their area. Resources available to the Health Service in Scotland have been increased in real terms by 26 per cent. since 1979. Tayside health board is the second best financed board in Scotland in relation to the needs of its area.

Tayside Health Board

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the figures for revenue spending for Tayside health board for each of the last eight years at 1987 prices; and what account these figures take of demographic change in addition to inflation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation (SHARE) formula—under which financial resources for recurrent spending on hospital and community health services are allocated among individual health boards—takes account of demographic changes as well as a range of other factors. The following table shows Tayside health board's allocation, after adjustment for inflation as measured by the GDP deflator, for each year since 1979-80.

	£ thousand at 1986-87 prices
1979-80	123,067
1980-81	136,055
1981-82	135,204
1982-83	133,266
1983-84	132,831
1984-85	134,342
1985-86	132,340
1986-87	136,123
1987-88	139,633

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out for each year since 1979 what changes have been made in the National Health Service budget for Tayside health board to achieve savings; how much was saved each year by each of those changes; by how much staffing has been cut in each year as a result of those changes and in what grades; and what plans there are for the current year in each of these respects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In each of the past three years all health boards were asked to introduce efficiency measures which would achieve savings of 1 per cent., 1·5 per cent. and 1·5 per cent. respectively in their recurrent expenditure. Tayside health board has achieved cumulative savings during 1985-86 and 1986-87 of nearly £3 million, and plans to achieve further savings of some £1·6 million this financial year. Boards retain the proceeds of efficiency improvements. No information is held centrally on detailed staffing changes within individual health boards resulting from the introduction of efficiency improvements, although general information on manpower levels is contained in "Scottish Health Statistics", published annually by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency. Copies are held in the Library.

Hospital Patients (Statistics)

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the best estimate of the numbers of patients in Dundee hospitals with treatable conditions who have become incurable in the past 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Drug Addicts

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds have been spent in Dundee to rehabilitate drug addicts for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not avilable.

Hypothermia

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Dundee as a proportion of such deaths in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Death mentioning hypothermia: Dundee city as a percentage of Scotland 1979 to 1986

	Percentage
1979	3·1
1980	4·5
1981	3·1
1982	5·1
1983	6·1
1984	2·8
1985	3·4
1986	3·3

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987 by monthly total;

(2) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Lothian region in each year from 1977 to 1986 by monthly total;

(3) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1987 by monthly total;

(4) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh, South in each year from 1977 to 1987 by monthly total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The information is as follows:

Deaths from hypothermia in Scotland

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
January	39	37	86	44	53	70	26	53	65	54	45
February	23	68	43	20	29	26	38	24	35	28	15
March	17	8	30	30	24	19	18	16	24	28	19
April	10	11	11	14	13	5	19	13	19	16	13
May	8	11	7	6	7	10	7	5	7	7	6
June	2	3	2	7	9	9	8	5	1	2	4
July	1	9	3	2	1	1	3	1	3	2	1
August	3	7	7	3	1	3	3	3	7	9	5
September	3	4	12	4	3	1	10	4	6	9	7
October	4	6	11	11	18	4	13	10	6	11	
November	20	15	26	17	11	11	11	21	32	20	
December	28	26	21	41	85	37	23	21	27	23	
Total	158	205	259	199	254	196	179	176	232	209	115

[1] Provisional.

Deaths from hypothermia in Lothian region

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
January	6	8	12	6	4	12	5	10	13	9	10
February	5	7	7	2	7	4	7	7	5	5	1
March	1	2	8	5	3	3	2	3	7	9	4
April	1	—	4	4	5	2	6	5	3	—	2
May	3	—	1	—	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
June	—	1	1	1	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
July	—	3	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—
August	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	3	2	—
September	2	—	—	—	—	1	3	1	1	1	—
October	1	1	1	—	4	—	2	3	1	—	

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
November	3	2	3	2	1	3	3	5	6	1	
December	4	4	5	8	13	10	6	3	7	8	
Total	26	28	44	29	39	38	39	40	48	36	19

[1] Provisional.

Deaths from hypothermia in Edinburgh city

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
January	6	5	8	3	4	10	2	6	11	6	7
February	4	7	5	2	4	4	4	6	4	3	1
March	1	1	7	5	3	1	2	2	7	7	3
April	—	—	4	2	4	1	4	3	2	—	—
May	2	—	1	—	1	2	1	1	—	—	1
June	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
July	—	2	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—
August	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	3	2	—
September	2	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	—	—
October	1	1	—	—	3	—	2	3	1	—	
November	2	—	1	2	1	1	3	3	5	1	
December	3	4	4	4	11	6	6	—	5	7	
Total	21	21	33	19	31	26	29	26	40	26	12

[1] Provisional.

Information is not readily available for Edinburgh, South parliamentary constituency.

Nurses

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of full-time nurses in hospitals in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Hospital nursing staff: Full-time employees at September[1]

	Hospital nurses
1974 to 1982	n/a
1983	4,007
1984	4,049
1985	3,988
1986	3,992
1987[2]	4,001

[1] Including qualified, unqualified and learner nurses.

[2] 31 March.

Information on full-time nursing staff pre-1983 is not readily available centrally. Information on nursing staff in Dundee district is not available centrally.

Ward Closures

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a detailed list of hospital wards serving *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area, which have closed due to lack of funds since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Operational management of hospitals is a matter for individual health boards. Temporary bed or ward closures may occur for a variety of reasons but there is no central record which is either comprehensive or detailed.

Doctors

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of full-time doctors in hospitals in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Number
1980	451
1981	475
1982	463
1983	471
1984	481
1985	474
1986	474

The information for 1979 is not available. No separate details are available centrally for Dundee district.

Nurse-Patient Ratios

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the nurse-to-patient ratio for each year since 1979 in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Ratio of Nursing Staff[1] *to Average Occupied Hospital Beds 30 September*

	Ratio
1979	1·1:1
1980	1·2:1
1981	1·3:1
1982	1·3:1
1983	1·3:1
1984	1·3:1
1985	1·3:1
1986	1·4:1
1987	[2]1·4:1

[1] Includes qualified, unqualified and learner nurses.

[2] 31 March 1987.

The information for Dundee district is not available centrally.

Drug Misuse

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of convictions for *(a)* drug misuse and *(b)* drug trafficking in the Dundee area for each year since 1979; and what are the corresponding figures for the rest of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available is given in the table.

Persons with a charge proved

	Dundee		*Rest of Scotland*	
	All drugs offences	*Supplying, possession with intent to supply*	*All drugs offences*	*Supplying, possession with intent to supply*
1979	73	na	1,077	na
1980	57	na	1,098	na
1981	64	na	918	na
1982	81	na	1,292	na
1983	94	na	1,577	na
1984	96	na	2,175	na
1985	78	10	2,582	224
1986	85	10	2,572	259

na = Not available. Prior to 1985, offences of supplying and possession with intent to supply were not separately identifiable from other drugs offences in the Scottish Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences.

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the funding of treatment and rehabilitation facilities for drug misuses for each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: NHS services for drug misusers are generally provided as part of the usual range of community and hospital-based services. The Government have made substantial increases in resources available to health boards since 1979 and it is for individual health boards to determine the level of expenditure on particular services from within their overall financial allocations.

In 1984 and 1985 in addition the Government provided funds to establish a range of local drug projects run by health boards, local authorities and voluntary bodies in places where drug misuse was prevalent. The support of these projects was the responsibility of the Scottish Office until April this year when this responsibility was devolved to the relevant health boards. The Government recently announced that a further £300,000 per annum was being made available, making the total allocation of funds to individual health boards for 1987-88 specifically for the support of local drug projects as follows:

	£
Greater Glasgow	415,035
Lothian	285,980
Tayside	78,900
Ayrshire and Arran	29,400
Lanarkshire	13,600

Public Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Dundee, *(c)* Aberdeen and *(d)* Glasgow (i) in total, (ii) per person, (iii) per unemployed person, (iv) per unemployed person aged under 21 years and (v) per retirement pensioner, in each named district; and if he will also express the figures at 1987 prices.

Mr. Lang: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Identifiable provision for public expenditure by Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow district councils from 1979-80 to 1987-88 is set out in the table.

	Cash prices £ million	*1987 prices £ million*
Aberdeen	317·452	394·951
Dundee	264·259	326·321
Edinburgh	638·383	774·564
Glasgow	1,918·903	2,359·128

Notes:

(1) The table includes provision by way of housing capital allocations, general services capital allocations, housing support grant and current expenditure guidelines.

(2) Expenditure financed from capital receipts is included in the provision for housing capital allocations but excluded from the provision for general services capital allocations.

Private Hospital (Clydebank)

Mr. Worthington asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he first heard of Health Care International's proposals for a private hospital in Clydebank; what advice his Department gave to locate in Scotland; and what advice the Scottish Department Agency gave about the development of this project.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* My right hon. and learned Friend first heard of Health Care International's formal proposal to build a private hospital at Clydebank in June 1987 when the company applied to proceed with construction. Under the terms of the Health Services Acts, consideration of such an application depends entirely upon the impact of the proposed development on the National Health Service, on which the Scottish Development Agency was not consulted and offered no advice. Partly in response to the hon. Member's own request for a further note on the impact of the project, the agency did, however, commission an independent study from Coopers and Lybrand on the economic and staffing implications of the project. The agency subsequently sent this to the Scottish Home and Health Department and also, I understand, to the hon. Member.

DEFENCE

European Fighter Aircraft

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated unit cost of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to disclose the estimated costs of projects before they enter full development. In the case of collaborative projects, such as EFA, the interests of our international partners must also be borne in mind.

Gulf Forces

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest weekly cost of maintaining a minesweeper force in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not practicable to separate the costs of individual fleet tasks since financial provision for manpower, fuel, supplies, and so on is made to cover the operations of the fleet as a whole.

Nuclear Defence

Mr. Ingram asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of times since 1979 that he has provided the Select Committee on Defence with confidential information relating to Britain's nuclear defence capacity.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Armilla Patrol

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in view of the five-day journey time and lack of toilet and other facilities aboard Hercules aircraft, he will arrange for crews in the Armilla patrol to be flown to leave in the United Kingdom aboard speedier aircraft with better facilities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: To date, crews of warships deployed on the Armilla patrol have generally returned to the United Kingdom either with their ships or by commercial airline.

Over the Christmas leave period we plan to use VC10s or Tristars of the RAF air transport force for this purpose. There is at present a regular weekly flight by RAF Hercules to the Gulf area, carrying freight on the outward journey. These aircraft are used to carry small numbers of service men to and from the Gulf when necessary. Travel by Hercules involves a two-day journey made up of two eight-hour flying legs with an overnight stay in Cyprus.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in view of the paucity of local facilities for rest and recreation, he will provide funds to improve furnishings and fittings in ratings mess-rooms aboard the minesweepers and other vessels of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Mess decks in vessels serving with the Armilla patrol are furnished in accordance with standards applying to, and reflecting the operational and safety requirements of, the fleet as a whole.

Within these limitations, we will continue to seek ways of reducing the particular discomforts of this task. For instance, as I told the House on 28 October at column 312, we are despatching additional air conditioning units to HMS Abdiel.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will arrange for crews of the minesweepers, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and support vessels attached to the Armilla patrol to have the same opportunities for rest and recreation in Mombasa as the crews of other Armilla patrol ships.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Unlike the destroyers and frigates of the Armilla patrol, which operate on a rotational basis allowing one to be detached for recreation and maintenance visits to Mombasa or elsewhere, the mine counter-measures vessels and support vessels are all for the time being required to remain continuously in the area of the Gulf. It is, therefore, not possible to detach them for recreation and maintenance visits elsewhere. We endeavour to arrange, at appropriate intervals, rest and recreation visits for these vessels to ports in the area of the Gulf as operational circumstances permit. We are in the course of making arrangements for a period of mid-tour leave for the naval personnel on the MCMVs and support vessels.

Overseas Allowance

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the local overseas allowance for Royal Navy crews in the Gulf has been reduced by 10 per cent.; and whether he will reinstate this cost as from the operative date of 1 October.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Seagoing local overseas allowance, which is designed to make up, where necessary, the estimated difference between the cost of essential expenditure incurred by naval personnel when ashore abroad and ashore in the United Kingdom, was reduced by 12 per cent. in sterling in the Gulf area with effect from 1 October 1987 because the basket of local currencies, from which the allowance is calculated, depreciated relative to the pound sterling in which the allowance is paid. The purchasing power of the allowance is therefore maintained at the same level.

The SLOA rates are reviewed on a twice-yearly basis and may go up or down depending on the position of the relevant exchange rates at the time of the review. The next adjustment, if any, will be made on 1 April 1988.

Household Brigade

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances officers of the Household Brigade are permitted to spend three days per week hunting in the winter and three days per week playing polo in the summer; and what implications this practice has for the proper supervision by an officer of his duties.

Mr. Freeman: Officers in the Household Cavalry have no special privileges in respect of leave or time off duty. Leave entitlement for Army officers is 42 days per annum (including Saturdays and Sundays) and is subject to approval by the relevant commanding officer. Officers may engage in hunting and polo only to the extent that it is consistent with the proper performance of their military duties. These pursuits develop equestrian skills.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 November 1987

WALES

National Museum

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when officers of the national museum of Wales asked Dr. Roderick Bowen, QC to undertake the inquiry into allegations of professional misconduct in the department of art; when these instructions were confirmed to him in writing; when members of staff of the national museum were requested to submit their statements of complaint; and what disciplinary action was taken subsequently with respect to the writer of the unauthorised letter to the president of the national museum, dated 16 September 1982, alleging professional misconduct;

(2) what were the allegations of professional misconduct in the department of art of the national museum of Wales as a result of which a senior member of its council conducted an inquiry in 1982; and when the keeper of the department of art was provided with them in writing;

(3) when the letter of intent relating to the loan of exhibits to Japan by the national museum of Wales was first received by the then acting director; when this letter was first received by the president; when the draft contract was first received by the officers; and when the treasurer undertook to check out the financial arrangements proposed in that draft contract;

(4) when the officers of the national museum of Wales gave their approval for preliminary negotiations to be undertaken by the keeper of art for the loan of exhibits to Japan; when the officers reported their action to the council of the national museum and obtained that body's approval; when the report by the keeper of art on the 1986 fund-raising exhibition in the far east and the attached draft agreements was submitted to the council for its consideration; and who undertook the technical examinations of the venues in Japan on whose judgment the council based its decision to approve the loan.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under the terms of the museum's royal charter, these are matters for which the council has direct management responsibility. I suggest the hon. Gentleman writes to the director.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the staffing recommendations of his Department's staff inspectors for the department of art of the national museum of Wales in July 1983; and at what dates each of the new posts recommended were first filled.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office staff inspectors recommended certain grading adjustments and other changes, the net effect of which would have been an increase in the complement of the department of art by one conservator grade E, one half (full-time equivalent) conservator grade G/F. The technician III post also recommended already existed. After taking account of the overall staffing situation the museum decided against implementing these recommendations.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales which consultants were employed to review the functions and management structure of the department of art of the national museum of Wales in 1986; what previous experience those consultants had of museums; and how much of their fees was met from the grant-in-aid.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Touche Ross and Co was appointed by the national museum of Wales which considered it qualified to conduct this inquiry. The fees were paid from grant-in-aid.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on why the national museum of Wales purchased advertising space in the June 1986 issues of *The Burlington Magazine*, *Apollo* and the *Museums Bulletin* to apologise for any defamation that may have accrued to its former keeper of art; how much these advertisements cost; and, in terminating his services by mutual agreement, whether any funds were expended beyond a normal severance payment.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My information is that the advertisements were of an explanatory nature and were placed as part of the severance agreement with the former keeper of art. The question of their cost should be put to the museum authorities. The severance payment comprised various moneys to which the former keeper of art had a contractual entitlement, a payment for the completion of research already begun and a £3,155 ex-gratia payment to facilitate the mutual termination of his employment.

Food (Radioactivity)

Mr. Martyn Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any regular checks made for radioactivity in human foodstuffs *(a)* in north Wales and *(b)* in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is regular monitoring of the terrestrial and aquatic environment designed to assess the impact of the discharges from the two nuclear power stations in north Wales.

In addition, since the Chernobyl accident, a general monitoring programme covering agricultural produce has been undertaken throughout Wales. Produce tested includes milk and milk products, cereals, fruit, vegetables and meat.

Ambulances (Emergency Response Times)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average waiting time for an ambulance responding to an emergency call in *(a)* rural areas and *(b)* urban areas; what arrangements exist for monitoring response times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The following table, however, gives details of the response time in minutes for 50 per cent. and 95 per cent. of calls respectively for each district health authority in 1986.

	50 per cent. of calls were responded to within (minutes)	*95 per cent. of calls were responded to within (minutes)*
Clwyd	6	17
East Dyfed	8	24
Pembrokeshire	9	26
Gwent	6	15
Gwynedd	7	20
Mid Glamorgan	10	22
Powys	11	27
South Glamorgan	7	14
West Glamorgan	7	19

School Meals

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average price of a school meal charged by each of the education authorities in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information on the prices of fixed price meals, as supplied by local authorities in September 1987, is as follows:

Welsh counties	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*
Clwyd	65p	70p
Dyfed	70p	70p
Gwent	60p	60p
Gwynedd	60p	65p
Mid Glamorgan	62p	83p
Powys	65p	75p
South Glamorgan	60p	65p
West Glamorgan	65p	[1]

[1] Fixed price meals are not applicable—a cafeteria service is offered.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children are receiving free school meals in each of the education authorities in Wales, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children taking school meals.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information obtained from a census on a specified day in September 1986 is as follows:

	Per cent.
Clwyd	34·8
Dyfed	28·8
Gwent	45·1
Mid Glamorgan	45·4
Powys	23·7
South Glamorgan	53·9
West Glamorgan	43·4

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of posts in his Department held by women, listed by grade, in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 23 July 1987, at column *393*.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing unemployed by *(a)* age group and *(b)* sex in Wales for the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Walker: Figures are published quarterly in the labour market data supplement of the *Employment Gazette*, those for July 1987 appearing in table 2.6 in the September issue.

Primary Schools

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in primary schools in Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	Total number of pupils on roll in primary schools	*Pupil-teacher ratio within schools*
1978-79[1]	303,396	22·0
1979-80	295,227	21·9
1980-81	283,435	21·7
1981-82	273,202	21·9
1982-83	262,569	21·8
1983-84	258,642	21·6
1984-85	257,295	21·9
1985-86	256,798	22·1
1986-87	257,999	22·1

[1] At January each year.

Welsh Language

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject in the proposed core curriculum.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received a total of 173 representations which refer to the position of Welsh within the national curriculum, of which 126 favour the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject throughout Wales.

Hospital Services

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of each district health authority which has contractual arrangements with a private non-National Health Service hospital to provide acute medical services, showing *(a)* the hospital with which a contract is made, *(b)* the number of patients treated by that hospital during 1986-87, *(c)* the total amount spent by the district health authority on treatment under the contract during 1986-87 and *(d)* the amount of *(c)* expressed as a percentage of the district health authority's overall budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Grist: I am not aware from the statistical returns submitted to the Department to date of any district health authority in Wales which has contractual arrangements with a private non-National Health Service hospital to provide acute medical services.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of contracts agreed by each district health authority for the following services *(a)* ambulances, *(b)* gardening, *(c)* laboratories, *(d)* portering, *(e)* hospital shops, *(f)* window cleaning, *(g)* pharmacy and *(h)* telephones; and if he will give the estimated annual savings in each case.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of all new contracts awarded since 31

December 1986 by each district health authority by hospital for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual savings for each contract awarded.

Mr. Grist: The information requested in respect of new contracts awarded by district health authorities in Wales for catering, laundry and cleaning services is given in the following table. Details of contracts relating to portering and other ancillary work are not held centrally.

New contracts awarded since 31 December 1986

District health authority and details of contract	*Estimated savings (£) per annum*
Gwynedd	
Domestic Contract: Llandudno hospital; in-house; three years from 5 July 1987	58,000
Domestic Contract: Arfon Offices; in-house; three years from 5 July 1987	100
Pembrokeshire	
Laundry Contract: district service; interim contract pending further tendering exercise	—
Powys	
Catering Contract: Phase IV Brecon War Memorial and St. Davids hospitals; in-house; three years from 1 September 1987	8,565
Catering Contract: Phase III Mid-Wales and Bronllys hospitals; in-house; three years from 1 December 1987	82,548

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services, and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Grist: The information in respect of contracts awarded to date is as follows:

District Health Authorities and Service	*Percentage by value of service for which contracts awarded*	*Estimated annual savings £*
Gwent		
Domestic	0·3	5,080
Gwynedd		
Domestic	13	58,097
Mid Glamorgan		
Laundry	100	200,000
Pembrokeshire		
Catering	100	60,468
Domestic	100	196,623
Laundry	100	82,950
Powys		
Catering[1]	100	118,113
Domestic[1]	100	89,067
West Glamorgan		
Catering	9	60,000
Domestic	11	118,010
Laundry	100	199,000
WHCSA		
Domestic	100	18,000

[1] Includes contract let for new hospital for which savings are not identifiable.

No contracts have yet been awarded by Clwyd, East Dyfed and South Glamorgan district health authorities. The information given above does not include services currently out to tender for which contracts have not yet been awarded.

Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth (Road Link)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals concerning the construction of an east-west road link from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There is already a trunk road link between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth on which the following improvements are planned:

A458 Welshpool to English Border
A483 Welshpool Relief Roads
A470 Llanidloes Bypass
A470 Diversion East of Llangurig to Wern Villa
A44 — A470 Improvement of Junction South of Llangurig

Hospital Beds

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant hospital beds there were in Wales in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Grist: The following table gives the average number of daily available beds in National Health Service hospitals in Wales. These figures exclude maternity, medical and dental beds allocated to general practitioners.

Financial year ended 31 March	*Average number of available beds*
1985	21,120
1986	20,854
1987	20,430

Rainfall

Mr. Alan W. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the information available to him on the occasions in the last 20 years in which over 3 in. of rainfall fell in Dyfed inside 24 hours.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

There were 22 occasions during the past 20 years when a day's rainfall of 75 mm (3 in.) or more was recorded at stations recognised by the Meteorological Office in Dyfed, as listed:

Date	*Place*	*National grid reference*	*Height above mean sea level in metres*
1968			
23 March	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
1 July	Golden Grove Farm Institute	22/597198	90
1971			
18 June	Cwymstwyth Pwllperian	22/773749	301
1973			

Date	*Place*	*National grid reference*	*Height above mean sea level in metres*
5 August	10 locations		
1974			
4 January	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
29 January	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
21 December	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
1977			
30 October	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
	Abergorlech	22/584337	76
1979			
10 May	Cwmrheiddl	22/709792	53
26 December	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
	Abergorlech	22/584337	76
1981			
1 March	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
1982			
8 January	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
1983			
16 August	Cwmystwyth Pwllperian	22/773749	301
8 October	Cwmystwyth Pwllperian	22/773749	301
1985			
6 October	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
21 December	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
	Maesglas	22/773556	344
30 December	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
1986			
31 January	Maesglas	22/773556	344
25 August	9 Locations		
9 November	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264
29 December	Cwmystwyth Pwllperian	22/773749	301
1987			
26 March	Troed-y-Foel	22/798238	264

ENERGY

Woolley and Redbrook Collieries

Mr. Illsley asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what has been the total amount of investment spent at British Coal's Woolley colliery since *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1980 and *(c)* 1985;

(2) what is the total amount of investment spent by British Coal on the coal preparation and washing facility at its Woolley complex;

(3) in the event of the closure of British Coal's Woolley and Redbrook collieries, to what extent capital repayments and interest charges from those collieries will fail be to carried by other collieries;

(4) what was the total amount of investments spent at British Coal's Redbrook colliery since *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1980 and *(c)* 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Energy Efficiency Year

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many inquiries Government bodies received as a result of their public awareness campaigns during Energy Efficiency Year; what savings accrued to Government bodies as a result of changes in their own practice promoted because of Energy Efficiency Year; and what was the cost to Government bodies of having an Energy Efficiency Year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department and others received numerous inquiries, but no precise record was kept of the number; however, my Department received more than 120,000 requests for Monergy information packs and distributed some 2 million copies of *Monergy News* magazine.

The heating costs of the Government's civil estate reduced by £8 million (from £34 million to £26 million) in July 1986-June 1987 by comparison with the preceding 12 months. Part of this reduction was the result of increased energy efficiency but it is not possible to say how much.

Expenditure by my Department on energy efficiency advertising and promotional and marketing activity during Energy Efficiency Year was about £12 million.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Fearn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made in the study connected with the Mersey barrage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Mersey barrage company is progressing its examination of the technical and economic viability of the scheme, its employment potential and its effect on the environment.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Northern Development Company

Mr. Cran asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the detailed objectives of the Northern Development Company; and what progress in quantifiable terms has been made in reaching these.

Mr. Atkins: This is the first full year of operation of the Northern Development Company, a partnership of regional self-help between industry and commerce, the local authorities and the regional TUC. Its objectives are to promote and market the region, and assist its economic development by encouraging enterprise. It subsumes the inward investment promotion activities of the former North of England Development Council. It is too early to quantify results, but progress to date has been encouraging.

Scaffolding Material

Mr. Warren asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consult the British Steel Corporation as to whether problems exist in the production of scaffolding materials as a result of EEC quota restrictions.

Mr. Atkins: Steel for the production of scaffolding is not covered by EC quota restrictions. The BSC has reported that demand for scaffolding has been unusually high in recent weeks, partly as a result of repairs to storm damage, but it has been able to meet all orders to it. If my hon. Friend is aware of particular difficulties, I would be very willing to ask the BSC to look into them.

Upholstered Furniture

Mr. French asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement concerning the responses he has received to Department's draft code of practice regarding the ignition resistance of upholstered furniture; and when he expects his final proposals to be operative.

Mr. Maude: The Department's code of practice proposals on the ignition resistance of upholstered furniture produced a substantial amount of corrrespondence. The majority of the replies agree with the principle of the code of practice approach though there are many suggestions for differences of detail and of timing. My officials are currently discussing the responses with officials of the Home Office. I expect to be in a position to make a further statement during the next month and to circulate draft regulations for consultation early in the new year.

Hardwood and Softwood Timber Imports

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the volume and value of imports of hardwood and softwood timber, respectively, in 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date, what was the equivalent figures for domestic production intended for use in the home market; and what each figure represents as a proportion of domestic consumption.

Mr. Atkins: The available information is in the following table:

Imports and domestic production for home market of hard and soft woods

Volume:
Imports: 000 metric tonnes
Production: 000 cubic metres
Value: £ million

	1985		*1986*		*6 months to June 1987*	
	Volume	*Value*	*Volume*	*Value*	*Volume*	*Value*
Imports:						
Hardwood	585·5	203·2	610·5	211·9	340·0	121·3
Softwood	3,702·3	675·3	4,232·9	778·1	2,203·7	422·2
Percentage of domestic consumption:						
Hardwood	[1]N/A	92·4	[1]N/A	89·2	[1]N/A	93·0
Softwood	[1]N/A	83·5	[1]N/A	82·9	[1]N/A	82·9
Domestic production for home market:						
Hardwood	133	16·8	222	25·6	N/A	9·1
Softwood	1,798	133·9	1,271	160·7	N/A	87·1
Percentage of domestic consumption:						
Hardwood	[1]N/A	7·6	[1]N/A	10·8	[1]N/A	7·0
Softwood	[1]N/A	16·6	[1]N/A	17·1	[1]N/A	17·1

Source:
Imports: *Overseas Trade Statistics.*
Production: Q2 *Business Monitor* 4610.

Notes:
1. Hardwoods defined as Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC R2) sub-groups 247.2, 247.9 (part) and 248.3 and Item 246.01 (part).
Softwoods defined as SITC R2 sub-groups 247.1, 247.9 (part) and 248.2 and Item 246.01 (part).
2. 1986 and 1987 figures provisional.
3. Figures for domestic production of hardwoods and softwoods approximated.

[1] Because of the different quantity units in which production and import figures are compiled proportional figures are not available.

Nationalised Industries (Monopolies and Mergers Commission)

Mr. Page asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in implementing the rolling programme of references of nationalised industries to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During the past 12 months reports have been published on the Post Office's procurement activities, the maintenance activities of the British Waterways Board, the Central Electricity Generating Board's transmission of electricity and British Rail's Network Southeast

On 7 September I announced a further programme of references of nationalised industries. The first reference in the programme, that of the Welsh water authority, was made on that date. I have today sent to the MMC the reference relating to the costs and efficiency of and the service provided by the Post Office's counter services at Crown offices. In due course I propose to make further references concerning the London Underground and British Coal.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Opportunities Officers

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate jobshare, part-time working and parental leave.

Mrs. Rumbold: The departmental equal opportunity officer spends about 25 per cent. of her time on work relating to equal opportunities. The equal opportunity officer is also the departmental disabled persons officer, and has other personnel management responsibilities including the management of the Department's pay budget. No specific part of the departmental budget is allocated to equal opportunities.

The equal opportunity officer meets her counterparts in other Departments at the annual meeting arranged by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and on other occasions throughout the year. No specific guidelines have been issued to the officer, or to the departmental training officer, on the operation of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act. All requests for part-time work or job-sharing are considered sympathetically. Special leave may be granted to enable staff to cope with domestic problems.

Education Costs

Mr. Boswell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will estimate for primary and secondary maintained schools in England, respectively, the current average annual cost of education, including free school transport, per pupil; and also whether he will tabulate these figures for convenient size bands of schools.

Mr. Dunn: The latest available estimate of the current cost per school pupil may be made from local authority returns of 1987-88 budgeted expenditure to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy as follows:

Estimated Expenditure[1] per pupil 1987-88

	Nursery and primary schools[2] £	*Secondary schools* £
Net recurrent institutional expenditure[3]	916	1,403
Home to School Transport	7	33
Total	923	1,436

[1] At November 1986 prices.

[2] Separate figures for primary schools are not available.

[3] Includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises running costs and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central services or the financing costs of capital expenditure.

Information on which to base the costs of different sizes of schools is not available.

Surplus School Places

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) pursuant to the answer of 29 October, how he has arrived at the figure of 720,000 surplus secondary school places; and if he will take steps to obtain the figures for each local authority;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 29 October, how he has arrived at the figure of 710,000 surplus primary school places; and if he will take steps to obtain the figures for each local authority.

Mr. Dunn: The figures were calculated by comparing the school population at January 1987 with the estimated physical capacity of maintained schools in England. It is the responsibility of individual LEAs to assess whether there is spare capacity in the schools in their area, and if necessary to make proposals for school reorganisation aimed at removing surplus places. My right hon. Friend therefore has no plans to seek information on the number of surplus places within each authority.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Devlin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has made a decision on the siting of the Teesside city technology college; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A final decision has not been taken on the location of the proposed Teesside city technology college. A number of possible sites are being investigated on behalf of prospective sponsors.

Mr. Devlin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made with raising the finance from private sources needed to put up the Teesside city technology college; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Discussions with several prospective sponsors of a Teesside CTC have taken place and my right hon. Friend has had a number of firm indications of support. He is confident that the necessary private sector finance will be available.

Schools (Cornwall)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, for Cornwall, information available to him by date and estimated cost of remedy, on schools that *(a)* date from the 19th century, *(b)* still have outside toilets and *(c)* will not, in their present condition, meet the 1981 School Premises Regulations by 1991.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister when she next proposes to pay an official visit to Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Civil Service (Parliamentary Questions)

Mr. Nelson asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the recent changes announced by her regarding the management of the Civil Service, she will list those matters relating to the Civil Service about which parliamentary questions will now be answered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and by the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The new allocation of functions previously undertaken by the Management and Personnel Office is set out in note 3 to the press notice issued from No. 10 Downing street on 7 August, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Treasury Ministers will answer questions on the matters listed in the column headed "Treasury", and the Minister of State, Privy Council Office will answer on the matters listed in the column headed "Cabinet Office". Treasury Ministers will in addition continue to answer questions on Civil Service matters transferred to the Treasury in 1981, including manpower, pay, allowances and superannuation.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister (1) on what date British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. was given approval to export weapons grade plutonium subject to non-proliferation safeguards; how Her Majesty's Government propose to ensure that such safeguards are adhered to; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what contracts for the export by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. of weapons grade plutonium, involving which countries, are currently awaiting Her Majesty's Government's approval; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 27 October 1987 at column *217*.

Information on individual contracts entered into under the guidelines laid down is, in the normal way, commercially confidential.

Written Answers

Mr. William Ross asked the Prime Minister what information she has as to the number and percentage of written parliamentary questions which are answered on the day on which right hon. and hon. Members request such answers; and what is the same information for answers from each responsible Cabinet Minister.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. F. D. Hamilton

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Prime Minister whether she has made any further representations directly to President Chissano of Mozambique about the incarceration of Mr. Findlay Dion Hamilton, a British subject, in a Mozambique gaol since 1982; and with what result.

The Prime Minister: I made representations about Mr. Hamilton to the then president of Mozambique in 1983. We have subsequently raised his case with the Mozambique authorities on several occasions. Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office raised the case with President Chissano during his visit to London in May.

The president undertook to try to help, but indicated that it was a matter for decision by the Council of Ministers.

There have been no further developments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of convictions in England and Wales for procuring an illegal abortion in each year since 1957.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Details of proceedings for procuring an illegal abortion are published annually in tables S1.1(A) and S2.1(A) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Vols, 1 and 2", under offence classification 14.

Persons found guilty of procuring an illegal abortion [1]

England and Wales *Number of persons* [2]

Year	*Found guilty*
1957	40
1958	40
1959	42
1960	42
1961	55
1962	82
1963	54
1964	63
1965	60
1966	56
1967	65
1968	60
1969	52
1970	41
1971	36
1972	26
1973	8
1974	11
1975	1
1976	4
1977	2
1978	2
1979	—
1980	4
1981	—
1982	—
1983	3
1984	2
1985	—
1986	2

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[1] Includes offences under section 59 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861.

[2] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.

Remand Centres

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the establishment of a privately managed remand centre.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering the fourth Report of the Home Affairs Committee on contract provision of prisons, in the light of my noble Friend's recent visit to the United States, in the course of which he looked at several private management custodial facilities. Our conclusions will be announced as soon as possible.

Strip Searches

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were strip searched at immigration points in 1987, 1986 and 1985; whether individuals have any right of appeal when a strip search is proposed; and whether any code of practice exists in relation to these strip searches.

Mr. Renton: Paragraph 4(3) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971 provides that an immigration officer may search the baggage and person of passengers seeking entry to ascertain whether they are carrying relevant documents, but no woman or girl may be searched except by a woman. It would be very unusual for a strip search to be necessary for this purpose, and there is no record of any search of this kind having taken place at immigration control points in the years in question.

Iranian and Libyan Nationals

Mr. Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to protect leading members of the Iranian community living in the United Kingdom and known to be opposed to the Khomeini regime, and of the Libyan community known to be opposed to the Gaddafi regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Members of the Iranian and Libyan communities living in the United Kingdom who are believed, or consider themselves, to be at risk are seen by the police and given advice about their personal security.

Police Station (Falmouth)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the provision of Falmouth with a police station; and what is the earliest date by which one can be provided.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A bid for approval to plan a new police station at Falmouth was submitted to the Home Office in 1985 by the Devon and Cornwall police authority, but the application was not approved.

Last July, the authority raised again with the Department the question of a new police station, but it was told that we did not expect to be able to invite new bids for major police building schemes until May 1988. If the authority puts forward a bid then, it will be considered with the bids received from other authorities. If its bid is successful, the authority will be authorised to draw up detailed plans, but I cannot say at this stage when building work would commence.

Police Establishments

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's approved police establishment for Devon and Cornwall; what is the estimate of the police authority of the necessary establishment; and what proposals exist to increase police establishment in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The authorised police establishment of the Devon and Cornwall constabulary is 2,794. The Devon and Cornwall police authority applied in June 1986 for increases totalling 137 police posts to be implemented over three financial years; 37 of these have so far been approved. We are giving further consideration to the 33 police posts remaining from the police authority's application for additional posts in the present financial year.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend the appropriate regulations to enable pensioners living in multi-storey accommodation, who are visited by wardens, to receive concessionary television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Pensioners living in multi-storey accommodation may already qualify for the concessionary accommodation for residential care television licence, provided that accommodation satisfies all the relevant criteria set out in the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Charges and Exemption) Regulations 1984.

Polling Booths

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, as amended by the Representation of the People Act 1985, so as to make it mandatory for district councils and London borough councils to designate only places which are accessible to disabled electors as polling booths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Since 1 October 1985 councils of districts or London boroughs in England and Wales have been required, so far as is reasonable and practicable, to designate as polling places only such places as are accessible to the disabled. Moreover, a permanently disabled voter may apply in advance to vote by post or by a proxy. In these circumstances, an alternative course being available, we have no plans for further legislation on this subject.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for the extradition of persons from the Republic of Ireland to England and Wales have been made in the years 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date; of these, how many in each year were for persons alleged to be concerned in terrorist crime; and in each category and year how many of the requests were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Hurd: The return of fugitives to and from the Republic of Ireland takes place by means of individual warrants of arrest. The table provides fugitives for the number of persons who were the subject of such warrants from England and Wales for the years 1982 to 1986. Only one request was in respect of terrorist offences; this related to Evelyn Glenholmes, and was unsuccessful. One other request was refused on technical grounds during this period. In some cases, warrants could not be executed since the fugitive was at the time serving a prison sentence in the Republic or could not be traced.

Request made by England and Wales for return of persons from the Republic of Ireland under the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965

	Requests made	*Requests granted*	*Requests refused*	*Requests not acted on for other reasons*
1982	41	17	1	23
1983	31	11	—	20
1984	29	15	—	14
1985	23	5	—	18
1986	12	1	1	10

Probation Officers

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation officers were employed by local authorities in Wales in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. John Patten: The number of probation officers employed by probation committees in Wales at the end of June in each of the three years was as follows:

Year	*Number of probation officers*
1985	307
1986	313
1987	322

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Marconi

Mr. Canavan asked the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement about the progress of the investigation by his Department's police into the Marconi company about possible fraudulent dealings with his Department.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 28 October.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* The figures are as follows:

Year	*Total £000*
1982-83	—
1983-84	1,258
1984-85	—
1985-86	6,756
1986-87	—

This expenditure relates to the costs of advertising sales of Government shareholdings, which are financed from the proceeds of such share sales. The information about expenditure with individual newspapers is commercially confidential and cannot therefore be given in the form requested.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the practice of Her Majesty's Government with regard to charging fees to the owners or operators of projects which secure loans from the European investment bank which are guaranteed by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* The Government's general practice with regard to European investment bank loans to United Kingdom borrowers is to provide guarantees only in respect of certain categories of public sector projects, in particular investment by public corporations, and not to charge fees.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many loans have been provided by the European investment bank for United Kingdom projects since the formation of the bank; and how many of these loans have been guaranteed by the British Government or by bodies regarded by the bank as of equivalent status, respectively.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* The European investment bank has made some 438 loan contracts for projects in the United Kingdom from its own resources. The bank is bound by its statute to obtain adequate guarantees for all its loans. The British Government have guaranteed some 204 of the loan contracts for United Kingdom projects.

Eurotunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what portion of the European investment bank's £1,000 million loan to Eurotunnel has been paid over to Eurotunnel; and what is the rate of interest and repayment arrangements in respect of the loan.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* None of the European investment bank's £1,000 million loan to Eurotunnel has yet been paid over. As explained in the last paragraph of the bank's press notice contained in my answer of 15 May 1987, at column *390*, the conclusion of contractual arrangements for the loan is subject, inter alia, to successful completion of the forthcoming equity issue.

The European investment bank loans will primarily be at fixed interest rates and for a range of maturities up to 25 years. The terms will reflect the prevailing market conditions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the joint stock banks which have agreed to guarantee the loan of £1,000 million given by the

European investment bank to Eurotunnel, and the amounts of the loan which each bank has agreed to guarantee, respectively.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* The European investment bank is expected to seek guarantees from among the syndicate of banks formed to co-ordinate the financing of Eurotunnel. No choice has yet been made.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he had with the joint stock banks regarding their agreement to guarantee the £1,000 million loan from the European investment bank to Eurotunnel; and what fees are being paid to the banks concerned for the guarantees they have given to Eurotunnel.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has had no discussions with the joint stock banks regarding guarantees for the European investment bank loan to Eurotunnel. Any fees involved would be a matter for negotiation between the syndicate banks concerned and Eurotunnel.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the date of the meeting of the board of the European investment bank at which formal approval was given to the loan of £1,000 million to Eurotunnel, and if he or one of his Ministers took part in the board's proceedings.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* As I informed the House on 15 May 1987, at column *390*, the board of directors of the European investment bank agreed on 12 May 1987 to lend Eurotunnel the equivalent of £1 billion or 10 billion French francs. This was on the basis that conclusion of the necessary contractual arrangements would be subject to the conditions set out at the end of the press notice by the bank, which was incorporated in my earlier answer. Ministers are not members of the bank's board of directors and did not take part in the board's proceedings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Council

Mr. Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost to public funds of the meeting of the European Council held in London in December 1986.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The total cost to public funds of the London European Council, held on 5-6 December 1986, was £234,050.

Visas

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether British visitors to Thailand and Thai visitors to Britain, respectively, are required to obtain visas.

Mr. Eggar: British passport holders may visit Thailand for up to 15 days without a visa provided they are tourists and have on arrival a confirmed onward ticket showing a departure date not exceeding that period. For longer visits, visas must be obtained in advance.

All Thai visitors to the United Kingdom must obtain a visa before travelling.

British Merchant Seamen (Persian Gulf)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit British merchant seamen in the Gulf at the request of the seafarers' unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit the Gulf. However, I am hoping to visit the area in the near future, and contact with British merchant seamen operating in the Gulf is very much in my mind.

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of punctuality in the London-Midland region of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not monitor train punctuality on the basis of BR regions.

Horne Report

Mr. Welsh asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking regarding the Horne report on public service facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's response to the Horne report, published in July 1986, accepted the great majority of its recommendations. The Department is pressing ahead with implementation. Proposals for new primary legislation are being prepared, and we shall continue to seek an early opportunity to bring it before Parliament. I announced on 29 July the establishment of the street works advisory committee.

The Department is leading negotiations on diversions of utility apparatus in consequence of highway improvement schemes. Joint working parties of local authority and utility representatives are carrying forward detailed technical work on specifications for reinstatements, training and certification of workmen and the computerised street works notice and register systems.

Roadworks

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of hours lost and the resulting costs to British industry caused by traffic delays through roadworks on dual carriageways and motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Records are not kept of total delays caused by roadworks on dual carriageways and motorways. Delay costs are only assessed on major lane rental schemes. During 1985-86 12 contracts were let on this basis. Total site occupation time was 727 days resulting in delay costs to the travelling public of about £11·5 million. Had the contracts been on a conventional basis, it is estimated that site occupation would have been 1,227 days and delay costs £19·5 million.

Lane rental has now been extended to most major maintenance schemes where there are likely to be significant delays.

London City Airport

Mr. Devlin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to license further operators to fly to London's City airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for individual air transport operators to apply to the Civil Aviation Authority for the necessary air transport licences if they consider that there is a demand for further services from London City airport.

Mr. Devlin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if approval has been given for a flight route from *(a)* Teesside airport and *(b)* Newcastle airport to London City airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No air transport operator has applied to the Civil Aviation Authority for an air transport licence to provide a service between either Teesside or Newcastle and London City airport.

Pilotage (Falmouth)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of state for Transport what progress is being made towards the resolution of the problems of future pilotage at Falmouth; and by what date he hopes to come to a decision.

Mr. David Mitchell: Within the present Falmouth pilotage district, three authorities qualify under the Pilotage Act 1987 as competent harbour authorities for pilotage purposes. Following the failure of the authorities to reach agreement locally on future arrangements for pilotage in the port, my right hon. Friend is considering whether to use the powers available to him under the Act to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made. His decision will be made as soon as possible.

Air Traffic Movements

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to limit the increase in the number of air traffic movements in the south-east of England and to further the use of airports in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no such plans in mind. The Government remain committed to the policy set out in the 1985 airports policy White Paper (Cmnd. 9542) of encouraging the maximum use of regional airports to meet regional demand.

Night Flying

Mr. Jessell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his review of night flight restrictions at Heathrow and Gatwick; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a statement on night flying quotas in the south-east; what opportunity he will provide for consultation; and when he hopes to announce new night flying quotas to replace those which end in spring 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's policies for reducing the noise nuisance from aircraft using Heathrow and Gatwick have effectively controlled disturbance at night and have brought about an improvement in the night noise climate. We have, amongst other measures, carefully restricted both the numbers and types of aircraft allowed to fly at night.

I have recently reviewed these restrictions in the light of the conclusions of research studis and the comments of people and representative bodies consulted last year. My objective is to continue to improve the night noise climate around the airports while avoiding unnecessary restrictions on the airline industry.

At Heathrow, I propose that the number of night flights should be held to roughly its present level. This represents a reduction on the present permitted number of flights as announced in 1981. The demand is increasing, but I am not convinced that it can be satisfied without adding to the levels of night disturbance near the airport, especially in the early morning. My proposals will ensure that as airlines replace their older aircraft with modern, quieter types, the level of disturbance at night will gradually improve. In addition, I propose to ban take-offs by noisier aircraft during the small hours of the morning (0030-0500).

At Gatwick one option would be to freeze the night quota at its present level. But the different mix of aircraft at Gatwick and the high proportion of charter operations there gives us an opportunity, which does not exist at Heathrow, to make a more positive improvement to the night noise climate. By encouraging airlines to replace their older, noisier aircraft with modern, quieter ones we would achieve a quicker reduction in disturbance by both night and day. And the airlines and their passengers would benefit from the flexibility which comes from being able to plan more movements at night.

Thus, my preferred option at Gatwick would be, over the next five years:

to phase out half the night flights now being made by older aircraft, and

to increase gradually the number of flights by modern, quieter aircraft.

Even so, at the end of the five-year period there would on average be no more than four more flights a night than there are now.

I am today publishing the conclusions of the review and my proposals for future night restrictions. Consultation papers for Heathrow and Gatwick will be sent to hon. Members whose constituencies are affected, and to environmental groups, local authorities near the airports, and representative bodies of the aviation industry. I have also placed copies in the Library. I have asked for comments by 23 December. I shall take carefully into account all comments in reaching final decisions. I expect to be able to announce those in early February, to take effect from 1 April 1988.

Driving Licences

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what driving test standards are necessary in order to obtain a heavy goods vehicle and a public service vehicle driving licence in the United Kingdom; and what equivalent information he has about each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To obtain an HGV or PSV licence in the United Kingdom, candidates have to pass a driving test during which they must (i) demostrate a full understanding of the principles involved in driving heavy load or passenger-carrying vehicles and of the application of those principles; (ii) demonstrate their ability to handle such vehicles competently and with utmost safety in a wide variety of situations; and (iii) show courtesy and consideration for other road users.

HGV and PSV tests incorporate manoeuvres which are conducted at the test centre; a practical drive of about 20 miles; and oral questions on the Highway Code and technical matters. The distance travelled in other EEC countries ranges from five to 20 miles. The length of a driving test is the best readily available indicator for comparing standards.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the minimum age for obtaining a heavy goods vehicle and a public service vehicle driving licence in the United Kingdom; and what equivalent information he has about each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twenty-one but below this under particular circumstances. The minimum age limits for driving vehicles carrying goods and passengers within the European Community are laid down in EC regulation 3820/85. A copy of this is available in the House Library.

Heavy Vehicles

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many detections of overloaded heavy goods vehicles entering the United Kingdom from Europe there have been in each of the last five years; and what monitoring procedures and checks are in operation to prevent this practice.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Goods vehicles entering the United Kingdom are liable to be weighed at the port of entry or at inland weighbridge sites by the Department's traffic examiners or by local authority trading standards department staff.

The numbers of foreign registered goods vehicles weighed and found to be overloaded are as follows:

	Number
1984-85	3,199
1985-86	2,794
1986-87	2,755

Earlier information is not readily available.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to seek power to assist British Rail in the event of its revenue from Channel tunnel services being less than the sums it has guaranteed to Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Supervisor of the Vote

Mr. Bermingham asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), as representing the House of Commons Commission, if, in the light of present pressures resulting from the volume of parliamentary questions tabled and problems with new technology, there are any plans to increase staffing levels in the office of the editorial Supervisor of the Vote; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: The staff of the editorial Supervisor of the Vote was increased by two posts earlier this year, in part as a response to the steady increase in questions and early-day motions during recent years, and in part in expectation of additional work arising from the changeover to computerised printing. In the event, difficulties with the new technology have been greater than expected and there has also been some sickness among the staff concerned. These are temporary problems, which are being alleviated by the ad hoc employment of staff from other parts of the House service who are working overtime.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people with a main diagnosis of schizophrenia psychoses were discharged from mental illness hospitals in Scotland in each of the last five years; and how many of them were taken into local authority residential care in the same year.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks. Central information is not collected on the movement of people after discharge. The available figures are given in the table.

Discharges of people with main diagnosis schizophrenic psychoses. NHS mental illness hospitals and units in England.

Year	*Number of discharges*
1982	24,594
1983	25,336
1984	25,934
1985	26,225
1986	26,077

AIDS

Mr. Cousins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what budget the Newcastle district health authority has for AZT in 1987-88; and if he will make additional allocations available for AIDS and haemophiliac treatment to Newcastle as he has recently done to some district health authorities in London.

Mr. Newton: The allocations to which the hon. Member refers have been made to regional, not district, health authorities. It is for Newcastle health authority to decide what budget allocations to make for particular drug treatments, in the light of competing demands for available resources. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the authority directly for the information required. We have already made additional allocations totalling £104,000 for the haemophilia reference centre at Newcastle so that it can provide specialist counselling on HIV infection for haemophiliacs and their families. We have also made an additional allocation of £95,000 to the Northern regional health authority this year for a pilot AIDS community support centre in Newcastle and for an AIDS training workshop for nurses.

Alarm Systems

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the draft regulations under the Social Security Act which provide that the cost of alarm systems for elderly, sick or disabled persons living in non-purpose built accommodation will no longer be eligible for housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 21 October 1987 at column *800*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of people living in accommodation not specifically intended for and occupied by elderly, sick, or disabled persons who receive assistance through housing benefit towards the cost of an alarm system.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that we do not have a reliable basis on which such an estimate could be made.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a proportion of the community care budget of the social fund will be allocated specifically to the provision of grants to meet the cost of emergency alarms for elderly and disabled people living in accommodation not specifically intended for occupation by elderly, sick or disabled persons.

Mr. Portillo: No. The cost of alarms is not met under existing supplementary benefit single payment regulations and we do not intend to make specific provision for this under the social fund. Housing benefit (or, for owner-occupiers, income support) may be available in certain circumstances to help with the running costs. Local authorities have powers to supply and meet the costs of alarms for elderly, sick or disabled people.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those foetal conditions, syndromes and diseases, involving the lack of a vital function or lack of vital organs incompatible with sustaining life, which have come to his Department's attention giving both numbers of recorded cases over recent years for which figures are available and expressed in each case as a percentage of live births for that year.

Mr. Newton: "Mortality Statistics, Perinatal and Infant: Social and Biological Factors for England and Wales 1984," published by OPCS, series DH3, gives the numbers of stillbirths by cause of death. "Abortion Statistics for England and Wales 1986," published by OPCS, series AB No. 13, gives the number of legal abortions by principal medical conditions mentioned. "OPCS Monitor" reference MB3 gives results from the voluntary OPCS monitoring programme of malformed births. These volumes are in the Library. More detailed information is not available.

Temporary Staff

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what control he seeks to exercise over the scale of charges made by medical employment agencies for temporary or locum staff engaged by hospital authorities in England and Wales; and what recent representations he has received from the National Association of Health Authorities on this matter.

Mr. Newton: The National Association of Health Authorities has communicated, and we have carefully noted, a resolution passed at its annual general meeting on 17 to 19 June 1987 calling for the Government to press ahead with efforts to reform the career structure of hospital doctors and to take steps to reduce the cost to health authorities of employing locum doctors through agencies. I announced measures to reform the hospital medical staffing structure on 27 October at column *258*. There are no controls on medical locum charges by agencies, but a number of health authorities are taking or considering steps to reduce their costs in this respect, and we shall carefully monitor their progress.

Telephones (Emergency Repairs)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the estimated cost would be to district health authorities of British Telecom's proposal to charge them for emergency repairs; and if his Department will compensate them for this loss.

Mr. Newton: The estimated cost to health authorities in 1987-88 will be £3·75 million. This will be paid from health authorities' general allocations.

Deaths and Discharges (Private Treatment)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1984 for each region and for England as a whole the number of deaths and discharges a month compared to the number of beds occupied.

Mrs. Currie: Information about discharges and deaths is not collected centrally on a monthly basis. The annual figures are given in the table.

	1984	
Regional health authority	*Discharges and deaths*	*Average number of beds occupied daily*
Northern	420,080	19,145
Yorkshire	499,895	21,424
Trent	557,930	23,512
East Anglian	238,332	9,959
North West Thames	415,559	20,219
North East Thames	534,760	23,277
South East Thames	487,772	20,430
South West Thames	338,587	19,405
Wessex	345,528	14,249
Oxford	284,583	10,066
South Western	399,018	18,136
West Midlands	644,202	27,119
Mersey	322,138	15,923
North Western	597,756	23,994
Special hospital areas	91,405	2,466
England	6,177,545	269,324

Private Patient Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service for the years ending 31 December 1985 and 31 December 1986, and if he will break those figures down in the categories of *(a)* medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* pre-convalescent and post operative, *(d)* convalescent, *(e)* geriatric, *(f)* disease of the chest, *(g)* maternity, *(h)* mental illness, *(i)* mental handicap, *(j)* rehabilitation, *(k)* terminal care and *(l)* others.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service in 1985 and 1986[1]
England

	In-patient cases		*Out-patient attendances*	
	1985	*[1]1986*	*1985*	*[1]1986*
Medical	1,568	1,850	7,190	7,250
Surgical	10,350	8,805	31,774	30,714
Pre-convalescent and post operative	195	166	2,011	1,959
Convalescent	6,279	5,815		
Geriatric	999	949	2,853	2,921
Diseases of the chest	1,129	1,018	2,768	3,565
Maternity	614	617	2,475	2,068
Mental illness	651	657	489	1,044
Mental handicap	452	635	23	55
Rehabilitation	372	352	8,003	7,865
Terminal care	4,645	4,979	953	1,961
Others	594	607	5,354	5,760
Totals	27,848	26,450	63,893	65,162

[1] Provisional.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of contract agreed by each district health authority for the following services *(a)* ambulances, *(b)* gardening, *(c)* laboratories, *(d)* portering, *(e)* shops in hospitals, *(f)* window cleaning, *(g)* pharmacy and *(h)*telephones; and if he will give estimated annual savings in each case.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to decide whether to seek competitive tenders for services other than catering, laundry and domestic cleaning. Information on any such local management action is not collected centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of all new contracts awarded since 31 December 1986 by each district health authority, by hospital, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual savings for each contract awarded;

(2) if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services, and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Newton: I will let the hon. Member have the information requested on catering, laundry and domestic services as soon as possible. Information on any contracts let for portering and other ancillary services is not collected centrally.

Multi-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those hospitals which reported outbreaks of multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus during 1986; which of these hospitals have reported further outbreaks so far during 1987; and which other hospitals have reported outbreaks of multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus during 1987.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available concerning outbreaks of multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus.

There is, however, a voluntary national survey of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) conducted by the division of hospital infection and communicable disease surveillance centre of the Public Health Laboratory service board. MRSA is an important example of the multi-resistant infections.

The survey is based on reported cases originating at the hospital concerned. Thus, a hospital will be included even if only one isolated case was involved, but will not normally be included if a patient with MRSA has been transferred to it.

A list of hospitals reporting on this basis in 1986 and so far during 1987 will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Medicines Act 1968

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the independent study carried out by Dr. John Evans and Mr. Peter Cunliffe into the operations of the Medicines Act 1968 to report; and when the results will be made publicly known to the interested parties.

Mr. Newton: We expect to receive the report by very early in the new year. The question of how and when to make the results known will be decided as soon as we have had an opportunity to give proper consideration to the report and its recommendations.

Sex Discrimination

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in accordance with EEC law, to end sex discrimination in the United Kingdom in respect of the retirement age.

Mr. Scott: The Sex Discrimination Act 1986, coming into force this month, prohibits discrimination between male and female employees in respect of compulsory dismissal from work on grounds of age. There is no statutory retirement age as such in the United Kingdom. State pension age is excluded from the requirements of EC directive 79/7 on equal treatment in social security and under EC directive 86/378 pension ages in occupational pension schemes may differ between men and women so long as differences remain in the state pension scheme.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital beds are now occupied by people aged *(a)* 65 years and over and *(b)* 75 years and over.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information in the form he seeks. The available information is given in the table.

Beds occupied by elderly people, NHS hospitals, England, 1986

Sector	*65 years and over*	*75 years and over*
Non-psychiatric[1]	93,000	64,000
Mental handicap[2] (excluding community units)	5,315	2,042
Mental illness[2]	34,341	21,513

[1] Estimated daily average.

[2] Number of beds occupied on 31 December.

Maternity Services

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his plans for maternity services.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: Our objectives in the maternity services are healthy babies born whenever possible at full term to healthy mothers. We aim to minimise the risks to babies by encouraging delivery in hospital preferably with access to the full range of facilities which are likely to be found only on district general hospital sites. We aim to support the services outside hospital both ante and post-natal by increasing the number of qualified staff and by other measures.

As a result there has been a fall in the perinatal mortality rate in England from 14·6 per thousand births in 1979 to 9·8 in 1985. During the same period the maternal mortality rate per thousand live and stillbirths declined from 0·11 to 0·07.

The detailed procedures and policies are as set out in the three maternity services advisory committee's report, published 1982-85, copies of which are in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Rates

Mr. Riddick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will calculate the financial effects on commercial and industrial concerns in *(a)* the Colne Valley constituency, *(b)* the Kirklees metropolitan district council and *(c)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region resulting from the introduction of the unified business rate; and what is his estimate of the likely effect in employment in these areas resulting from the introduction of the unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: On the basis of 1987-88 rate levels, introduction of the national non-domestic rate poundage would have reduced the excessive non-domestic rate bills by £10 million (22 per cent.) in Kirklees, and by £130 million (18 per cent.) in Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole; information by constituency is not available. These reductions are bound to improve employment prospects substantially in both the short and long term.

Manufacturers in the region can expect additional benefits from revaluation in 1990.

Water Industry

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposed organisation for the purposes of civil defence planning to apply to the water industry, following privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: The provisions of the Civil Defence Act 1948 will apply to the privatised water utilities and the Government will continue to pay grant-aid for civil defence functions. Arrangements for civil defence planning will be based upon present arrangements which are designed to secure co-ordinated effort across each civil defence region.

Derelict Land

Mr. Cran asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of derelict land in Humberside for the years 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; and whether this is based on up-to-date information in each case.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available for the years requested. The last survey of derelict land in England, carried out in 1982, showed that there were then 886 hectares of derelict land in Humberside, of which 632 hectares were thought to justify reclamation. A further survey of derelict land in England will take place in 1988.

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on whether the implementation of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 has resulted in any significant change in consumer preference regarding the method of delivery of those services affected by the Act.

Mr. Chope: I have no such information.

Dogs

Mr. Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the methods currently adopted by local authorities to control dogs, in particular by the use of their own licensing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: There is a range of powers available to local authorities to control dogs and dog nuisance by means of byelaws or orders. For example, dogs can be banned from certain areas or required to be kept on a lead on certain roads. Authorities may also provide a dog warden service; I understand that some 200 do so. It is for each authority to decide the extent to which it uses these powers.

Although authorities are responsible for issuing licences and keeping registers of licence holders, they do not have separate licensing systems.

Building Industry

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the problems being experienced by the building industry because of slow payment by insurance companies against repairs to property.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for the building industry to pursue with the insurance industry. I am not aware of particular problems recently about slow payment. I understand that the Building Employers Confederation is today meeting the Association of British Insurers to review the consequences of the recent severe storm.

West Sussex County Council

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that, following the special assistance for storm damage he announced after the recent hurricane, the total of Government grants, subvaluations and other forms of financial help to West Sussex county council should be increased not diminished.

Mr. Chope: The Government have announced a scheme of generous financial assistance for local authorities affected by the storm on 16 October. We are prepared to interpret reasonably and flexibly the claims made under it.

Whales

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, if he will specify the amounts in each case of whale teeth, bone, tusk, blood, powder, sperm, sperm oil and spermaceti wax imported into the United Kingdom during the last eight years; and if he will place a ban on the importation of all such products.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not readily available but I will write to the hon. Member.

PVC Window Frames

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to permit local authorities which manufacture PVC window frames for installation in properties owned by the authorities concerned to sell them to other authorities or to householders who are not their tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Whilst it is not for me to interpret the law, it appears that local authorities are already empowered, in certain circumstances, to sell window frames they have manufactured to other local authorities and certain public bodies. My right hon. Friend has no plans to provide wider powers.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Fearn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the possible impact of the Mersey barrage scheme on the beaches of Southport, Crosby, Formby and the Wirral peninsular.

Mr. Moynihan: The Mersey barrage company is currently carrying out a range of initial feasibility studies. These include hydraulic studies to assess the effect of a barrage on tidal range and currents in the Mersey estuary and will take account of the possible impact on beaches.

North West Sports Council

Mr. Fearn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase aid to the North West Sports Council in order that it may consider grant aid to establish running tracks in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have increased the Sports Council's grant-in-aid for 1988-89 by nearly £2 million to £38·832 million. The council disburses this grant according to its own policies and priorities. In 1986-87 the council allocated £1·051 million to its north-west region for the development of its local facilities. An allocation for 1988-89 has yet to be made. It will be for the regional council to consider applications for grant-aid for individual facilities.

Polling Booths

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to ensure that local authorities provide access to polling booths for disabled people at local and parliamentary elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that all local authorities send out to developers seeking planning permission the access for disabled people design guidance notes for developers issued by the Access Committee for England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Section 29A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 places a duty on local planning authorities when granting planning permission for offices, shops, railway premises, factories and buildings or premises to which the public are admitted to draw the attention of developers to the British Standard Institution code of practice for access for the disabled to buildings (BS5810;1979). Much of the information in the access committee's guidance notes is already contained in BS5810.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*, on regional losers and gainers under the poll tax, he will make the disaggregated information available so that further disaggregation by household type can be carried out.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: I cannot release the detailed family expenditure survey information without breaking the undertakings on confidentiality given to those that took part in the surveys.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how a local authority will be aware of the extent to which its assessed need to spend is grant-aided under his proposals for the new grant system to be introduced with the poll tax.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Revenue support grant will be paid into the collection fund for an area, as will payments from the national non-domestic rate pool and the community charges. It will not be necessary to attribute the receipts from each source to each authority, as authorities will receive the income they require from the collection fund generally. The extent to which the cost of local authority services is being met by revenue support grant will, however, be clear to those paying the community charge.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *822*, he will list the exaggerations and distortions in the National Council for Civil Liberties report on the poll tax.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The NCCL report is misleading in several respects. For example, it implies that the contents of the community charges register will not be covered by the Data Protection Act. That is simply incorrect. The report also claims that registration for the community charge will involve an invasion of people's privacy. In fact, the community charges registration officer will have no need to inquire into people's personal circumstances. He will merely seek to establish the names and addresses of people who are solely or mainly resident in his area.

Housing and Planning Act

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when it is intended to implement sections 6 and 8 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Playing Fields

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is given by his Department to local authorities about the minimum acreage of playing fields for primary, middle and upper schools.

Mr. Dunn: I have been asked to reply.

The sale of surplus playing fields is a matter for individual local education authorities. The Department's circular 2/81 "Falling Rolls and Surplus Places" showed how rationalisation of school provision in the light of falling rolls could involve the sale of surplus schools and land, and how the capital receipts could be used to finance improvements to school buildings and playing fields.

The Department's design note No. 36 presented a case study of an area of north-east Wiltshire aimed at rationalising playing field provision, examining possible savings and opportunities for alternative use.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactivity

Mr. William Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep and lambs, and in what areas of England and Wales, are still under restriction for sale as a result of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In England there are no restrictions on the sale of sheep. However, I estimate that some 126,000 sheep in and from part of Cumbria are still subject to post-Chernobyl movement and slaughter controls. The position in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of Becquerel readings for caesium in *(a)* grass and *(b)* sheep in west Yorkshire in 1986 and 1987, respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The results of the Minister's post-Chernobyl monitoring of caesium levels in plant and animal tissues for 1986 have been published and placed in the Library of the House. The same will be done for those for 1987 as they become available. They have shown no need to continue any special monitoring in west Yorkshire.

I am, however, aware of recent press reports concerning sampling of radioactivity levels in certain areas of west Yorkshire by private individuals and concerning rainfall in this area during the period of passage of the plume. I have therefore arranged for further intensive monitoring in this area as a double check and I expect to receive the results very shortly. These results will also be made publicly available.

DEFENCE

Browning Ammunition

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on current supplies of 0·5 in Browning ammunition.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of companies have been asked to tender for supply of 0·5 in Browning ammunition. The deadline for submission of tenders has been extended to 21 January 1988. Decisions on quantities and timing of orders have yet to be taken.

United States (Star Wars Programme)

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Britain's involvement in the United States star wars programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since the signature in December 1985 of the United Kingdom/United States memorandum of understanding governing British participation in the SDI research programme some 60 United States-funded contracts and sub-contracts to the total value of $45 million have been placed with United Kingdom companies, academic institutions and Government research establishments.

United States (Nuclear Bases)

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Defence if United States nuclear and other bases in Britain may be used without the consent of the British Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Under long-standing arrangements, the use by United States forces of bases in the United Kingdom in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision by Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Job Creation (North-West England)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest estimates of jobs provided in the north-west during 1987 as a result of defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: As a result of refining our statistical records I am now able to give a full reply.

It is estimated that in 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available, some 23,000 people were directly employed on MOD equipment contracts in the north-west.

Helicopter Orders (Westland plc)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to place helicopter orders with Westland.

Mr. Sainsbury: The helicopter orders announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 9 April 1987, at columns 470-1, will be placed as soon as service requirements have been finally defined and contractual negotiations completed.

Regiments (Officers' Visits)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, how frequently visits are made to regiments by senior visiting officers; what is the primary duty of such officers; what prior publicity is given to these visits; and how frequently complaints of bullying are made to them.

Mr. Freeman: Senior officers make regular visits to units within their command. The frequency of these visits depends upon the location of the command and their units, and the operational-training requirements at the time. The purpose of these visits is twofold: first, to allow the senior officer to assure himself that the unit is properly trained and organised; and, secondly, to allow the unit, corporately or individually, to air grievances and point out particular problems. Proper notification of such visits is given to all ranks through the publication of unit orders. No records are kept of the frequency of complaints of bullying. Such complaints—on this as on other matters—are dealt with promptly, either at the time of the visit or as soon as possible afterwards.

Courts Martial

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, who nominates the president of a court that judges a court martial; whether the commanding officer who nominates suitably qualified officers to sit on he court is free to appoint officers who belong to the same regiment as the accused; and if this happens.

Mr. Freeman: The president of a court martial is nominated by the officer who convenes the court—usually of the rank of brigadier or above. Although it is not legally precluded, it is usually thought undesirable for an officer from the accused's own unit to sit on the court martial which tries him; and this would never arise in a serious or contentious case.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, whether legal advise is available for those being court martialled and for those bringing the allegations that led to the court martial.

Mr. Freeman: Legal advice is available both to the accused and to the Army authorities involved in the court martial. Except in minor cases an accused service man is entitled to seek legal advice both before and during interview with the police, in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. He may also seek legal advice after being remanded for trial, and may apply for legal representation at trial either by a service legal officer or a civilian legal practitioner. Legal advice is also available on request to a service man making an allegation, if such advice is required for a claim for financial compensation.

Army Personnel (Bullying)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, whether information about bullying, which has either been suffered personally or has been witnessed, is treated by Army authorities as information that has not been learned in the course of official duties; and whether young recruits, who voluntarily leave the Army within six months, are free to talk publicly about this aspect of their Army experience.

Mr. Freeman: Those who believe they have been bullied are encouraged to make the facts known so that the incidents may be properly investigated. Ideally this should be done through the chain of command, but where circumstances appear to preclude this, it may be done by different means. Where ever sufficient detail is given, by whatever channel, a complaint will be fully investigated by the military authorities.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, if he will place in the Library when he received the proposals for future means of combating bullying which have been requested by December from all Army commanders by the Adjutant General.

Mr. Freeman: The responses of Army commanders to the Adjutant General's request will need to be the subject of internal consideration and decision. I do not believe it would be appropriate to place such information, the results of an internal exercise, in the Library in the form suggested. However, when the proposals have been fully considered I shall write to the right hon. Member about the outcome.

Army Personnel (Absence Without Leave)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the annual numbers of Army personnel going absent without leave who, on being found, give the following types of reasons for their absence *(a)* bullying, *(b)* other problems relating to their Army life, *(c)* family problems and *(d)* other reasons.

Mr. Freeman: Records of the numbers of Army personnel going absent without leave, and who are subsequently found, do not identify individually the reasons given for absence. However, inquiries in the past have shown that the majority of such absences arise as a result of short-term domestic or personal problems affecting the individual. Overall, the numbers of Army personnel returning from absence without leave, in each of the last four years have been as follows:

Year	*Number*
1984	2,644
1985	2,208
1986	2,006
1987	[1]1,641

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[1] To 29 October.

The figures show returns from absence of any duration. The totals are therefore significantly greater than those shown for the Army in the answer given on 2 April 1987 at column *566*, which referred only to absences of 21 days or more.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names, dates and locations of all low-flying exercises conducted in each year since 1979, advance notice of which was given to hon. Members in affected constituencies.

Mr. Freeman: According to our records, since 1979, advance notice of the following exercises have been given to hon. Members, parts of whose constituencies were likely to see a temporary increase in low-flying activity. Central records are no longer held for exercises before 1986 and it is therefore not possible to determine the location of all such exercises, without disproportionate effort.

Exercise name	*Exercise dates*
1979	
Tapper Blow 10	15-18 January
Boulmer Mineval	24-25 January
Chelsea Fortune	24-25 February
Alconbury Readiness Exercise	21-23 February
Weekend Flying	7 April
Cloudy Chorus 79	24-25 April
Priory 1/79	5-6 June
Tristar	28-29 June
Hammer Blow	11-12, 14-15, 18-22, 25-26, 28-29 June
Double Top	20-22 June
Fly Request	5-8 June
High Wood	2-13 June
OSEX 1	31 July-3 August
Hammer Blow 14	21-22 August
Alconbury Readiness Exercise	8-16 August
Paradrop	23 September
Cold Fire	17-21 September
Trial Ecology	17-28 September
Maple Flag	17-28 September
Coningsby Station Exercise	18-20 September
Priory 2/79	15-17 October
Bentwaters Readiness Exercise	22 October-2 November
Greek Pilgrim	27-30 November
Hammer Blow 17	21 November
Blue Four	27-28 November
Red Flag	12 November-21 December
Hammer Blow 18	19-21 December
Trial Dame	17-21 December
1980	
Red Flag	7-25 January
Boulmer Mineval	12-13 February
Blue Four	14-15 February
Blue Four	29 February-4 March
FACEX 30	17-19 March
Cavalcade 80/2	26 March
Maple Flag	10-28 March and 8-16 April
Green Lanyard	9-11 April
Elder Forest	15-16 April
OSEX 2	31 March-3 April
Trial Mace	9-23 April
Greek Cottontail	15-17 April
Tigerhead	28 April-4 May
Ardent Ground	20-22 May
Greek Cottontail	6 May
Double Top 80	12-21 May
Mallet Blow	10-13 June
FACEX 3	7-8 June
Wattisham Taceval	24-25 June
Cavalcade 80/3	10-13 June
Cavalcade 80/4	18 June
Priory 1-80	15-16 July
Double Top 80	21-29 July
Green Lanyard	30-31 August
Highland Reel	4-9 August
Greek Liberty	12-14 August
Weekend Flying	20 September
Cold Fire 80	22-26 September
Highland Air	4-5 October
Pegasus Trail	27 November
FACEX 70	5-7 November
1981	
Mallet Blow	8-16 January
Creek Valor	19, 22-23 January
Red Flag	January-February
Leuchars Taceval	3-4 March
Creek Beethoven	23-26 March
Lakenheath Taceval	30 March-2 April
Parker 500	22-23 April
Maple Flag 7	30 March-10 April
Priory 1/81	13-16 April
FACEX	25-26 April
OSEX	25 April
TA Training Weekend	9-10 May
Double Top 81	13-22 May
OSEX 3	5-8 May
48 TFW Flying	17-20 May
Cavalcade	2 June
Mallet Blow 81/2	15-19 June
STC Bombing Competition	15-19 June
Cloudy Chorus	25 June
Pegasus Trail II	16 June
UREX Lakenheath	22-26 June
Lakenheath Taceval	7-11 June
Alconbury Readiness Exercise	13-16 July
Priory 2/81	20-22 July
Coltishall Taceval Spring Tide	6-9 July
Double Top 81	6-16 July
OSEX 4	4-6 August
48TFW Flying	16-19 August
Alconbury Taceval	8-12 September
Coldfire	21-25 September
Ocean Venture	1 September
Priory 3/81	26-29 October
Pig Party	24 November
Lakenheath 24 Hour Flying	2-5 November
1982	
Green Lanyard	19-24 February
Mallet Blow 82/1	22-26 March
Mallet Blow 82/2	28 June-2 July
Navy Lanyard	16-17 July
TA Training Weekend	26-27 June
Priory 82/1	12-15 July
Mallet Blow 82/3	4-8 October
1983	
Mallet Blow 83/1	10-14 January
USAFE 24 Hour Flying	17-20 January
Bird Walk	5-7 February
USAFE 24 Hour Flying	7-10 February
Mallet Blow 83/2	11-14 April
Priory 83/1	26-28 April
Pegasus Trail	22-24 April
Lakenheath Local Exercise	14-17 March
Lakenheath Local Exercise	25-28 April
Pegasus Trail 1/83	7-11 May
OSEX 7	9-14 May
Lakeheath Local Exercise	23-27 May
Mallet Blow 83/3	4-8 July
Crimson Prince	14-18 July
Priory 83/2	17-21 July

Exercise name	*Exercise dates*
Salty Nation	15-18 August
JMC 832	19-21 July
NATO Taceval	6-9 September
Winged Victory	7-15 October
Neatishead Taceval	4-5 October
Gryphon's Gold	30 October-9 November
Staxton Wold Taceval	6-7 December
Boulmer Taceval	6-7 December
1984	
Mallet Blow 84/1	23-27 January
Jungle Dog	6-10 January
Elder Forest 84	5-7 March
Mallet Blow 84/2	9-13 April
Second Spring	28-29 April
Taceval	30 April-2 May
Falcon Strike	12-16 May
Lossiemouth Taceval	19-20 May
Dragon Fly	16-17 June
Norse Warrior	23-24 June
Central Enterprise 84	8 June
OSEX 9	9-12 July
Mallet Blow 84/3	2-6 July
Tam 84	2-3 July
Vite Chute	13-15 July
Northern Venture	2-5 July
Pedal Bin	2-5 July
JMC 842	18 June-2 July
Mallet Blow 84/4	8-12 October
OSEX 10	15-19 October
Priory 84	23-25 October
Scotadex	23-25 October
1985	
Ice Axe	18-24 January
Mallet Blow 85/1	28 January-1 February
Swift Drop	1-3 March
Priory 85/1	29 April-2 May
Hardy Crab	16-22 May
Feldom Moor	8-9 June
Northern Warrior	8-9 June
Central Enterprise 85	14 June
Wild Bellerophon	15-20 June
OSEX 11	15-18 July
Rampant Horde	18-25 July
Pedal Bin IV	15-18 July
Mallet Blow 85/2	29 July-2 August
Brave Defender	2-13 September
Canberra Trial	30 September
Gryphon's Gold	21 September-5 October
Mallet Blow 85/3	24-29 October
Priory 85/2	21-23 October
Purple Victory	30 October-18 November
Black Boy	18-22 November

Exercise Name	*Exercise Dates*	*Exercise Location*
1986		
Mallet Blow 86/1	27-31 January	Northern England/Borders
Ice Maiden	14-20 February	Many areas with centre on Norfolk
Key Lift 86/1	1-9 March	North Yorkshire
Gryphon's Goblet	7 March	Lincolnshire
Polar Dawn II	8-9 March	Norfolk
Mallet Blow 86/2	7-11 April	Northern England/Borders
Elder Forest 86	21-24 April	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/North East England/Scotland
Green Lanyard	18-25 April	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
Hammer 86/1	22 April	East Anglia
Central Enterprise 86	6 June	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/North East England/Borders
Long Hop 2	30 May—3 June	Many areas with centres on Salisbury Plain and Norfolk
Blue Lanyard	11-13 July	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
OSEX 12	21-25 July	Exmoor
Tactical Fighter Meet	4-8 August	Northern England/Borders
Mallet Blow 86/3	4-8 August	Northern England/Borders
Priory 86/1	7-9 October	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/North East England/Borders
Mallet Blow 86/4	20-24 October	Northern England/Borders
Gold Wing	24-30 October	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
OSEX 13	27-31 October	Yorkshire Dales
Hammer 86/2	6 October	Northern England/Borders
Key Lift 2/86	4-12 October	North Yorkshire
Gryphon's Gunner	6 october	Lincolnshire
1987		
Quicksand	15-22 March	Many areas with centre on Northumberland
Polar Dawn III	7-8 March	Norfolk
Gryphon's Gunner	6 March	Lincolnshire
Key Lift 87	7-15 March	North Yorkshire
Mallet Blow 87/1	6-10 April	Northern England/Borders
Priory 87/1	13-15 April	Cumbria/Lincolnshire/North East England/Eastern Scotland
Ardent Ground	20 April-10 May	Salisbury Plain
Grand Design	25 April-17 may	Salisbury Plain
Hammer 87/1	19 May	East Anglia/Northern England/Southern Scotland
Central Enterprise 87	1 June	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/North East England/Scotland

Exercise Name	Exercise Dates	Exercise Location
OSEX 14	20-24 July	South West Scotland
Roaring Lion	24-31 July	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
Mallet Blow 87/2	3-7 August	Northern England/Borders
Fast Buzzard	18-25 September	Many areas with centre on Salisbury Plain
Hammer 87/2	6 October	Northern England/Southern Scotland
Priory 87/2	13-15 October	East Anglia/Lincolnshire/North East England/Eastern Scotland
Mallet Blow 87/3	2-6 November	Northern England/Borders
Purple Warrior	4-21 November	South West Scotland

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used in determining whether advance notice of a low-flying exercise should be given to honourable Members in affected constituencies; and whether there has been any change in these criteria since 1978.

Mr. Freeman: The notification of exercise activity is determined on a case-by-case basis, the main considerations being whether the exercise is expected to generate an unusual increase in local activity levels, and whether there is likely to be significant activity over weekends, public holidays, or late at night. These same criteria have been used since 1979.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the minimum authorised heights for low-flying in the highlands restricted area for *(a)* Royal Air Force Tornadoes flying at night, *(b)* Royal Air Force Tornadoes flying in daylight, *(c)* United States Air Force F-111s flying at night and *(d)* United States Air Force F-111s flying in daylight.

Mr. Freeman: Unless the northern Scottish tactical training area is being used for ultra-low flying (when aircraft may be authorised to fly down to levels of 100 ft above ground level) the highlands restricted area, which is used for terrain following radar training, is subject to the same height rules as the rest of the United Kingdom low-flying system, under which aircraft may be authorised to fly down to a level of 250 ft above ground level, both in daylight hours and at night.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 22 April, *Official Report,* column *586,* if he will list the countries other than the United States of America and Canada in which exercises involving ultra-low flying by British military aircraft are held.

Mr. Freeman: There are no other countries in which such exercises are held.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 22 April, *Official Report,* column *585,* in what year the policy of concentrating ultra-low flying in specially designated, sparsely populated areas in the United Kingdom was introduced.

Mr. Freeman: The policy of concentrating ultra-low flying in specially designated, sparsely populated areas in the United Kingdom was introduced in 1979, as part of the revised United Kingdom low flying system.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 22 April, *Official Report,* column *586,* if he will list the names and dates of exercises since 1974 involving ultra-low flying by British military aircraft; and if he will indicate for each exercise whether work-up training was conducted in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: This information could not be provided without disproportionate effort.

Mr. Amos asked the Secretary of State for Defence if in the light of the recent crash between two Harrier jets in Northumberland he will establish an inquiry into the safety procedures followed during Royal Air Force low-flying training exercises.

Mr. Freeman: An inquiry into the accident on 2 November has already been set up. When the results of this are known, they will be taken into account in our continuous monitoring of United Kingdom low-flying safety procedures.

Air Exercises

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the establishment of an annual flag-type tactical fighter meet exercise in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: By "flag-type tactical fighter meet" exercises, it is assumed that the hon. Member is referring to the annual series of exercises in which the Royal Air Force participates, held in the United States and Canada under the titles Red Flag, Green Flag and Maple Flag. There are no plans for similar exercises in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Tartan Flag air exercises have been held in Britain since 1979;

(2) how many Border Flag air exercises have been held in Britain since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The names Tartan and Border Flag are names for work-up training prior toparticipation in major flag exercises in the United States of Amercia and Canada. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to establishing simulated ground threat emitter sites in the tactical training areas in north-west Scotland and central Wales.

Mr. Freeman: There are no plans to set up ground threat emitter sites in the tactical training areas in north-west Scotland and central Wales.

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence why Royal Air Force Jaguar and Harrier work-up training for Maple Flag and Red Flag exercises is not conducted from Goose Bay, Canada.

Mr. Freeman: Current training facilities available to the RAF at Goose Bay were developed primarily for use by Tornado aircraft. They are not large enough to accommodate additional Jaguar and Harrier squadrons. Nor is Jaguar and Harrier participation in Maple Flag exercises sufficiently regular to justify stationing aircraft at Goose Bay.

RAF Pilots

Dr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of fully-trained pilots in Royal Air Force fast jet strike/attack/reconnaissance squadrons in each year since 1975.

Mr. Freeman: I will write to the hon. Member.

Bullying and Brutality

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of men currently absent without leave from each of the regiments where there has been a court martial for bullying or a complaint that was substantiated.

Mr. Freeman I will write to the right hon. Member.

Defence Exercises

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans have been made for further out-of-area exercises in the United Kingdom in 1988;

(2) when planning for Exercise Purple Warrior was commenced;

(3) what is the total number of aircraft participating in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(4) at what stage in the planning of Exercise Purple Warrior it was decided to involve Canberra, Chinook and Puma aircraft in the exercise;

(5) what is the estimated total cost of Exercise Purple Warrior, including the cost of exercise operations conducted by units not currently assigned to an out-of-area role.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Detailed planning for Exercise Purple Warrior began in January 1986. The total number of aircraft, both fixed and rotary-winged, currently scheduled to take part in the exercise, including those operating from the Royal Navy vessels participating, is 116. The inclusion of RAF Canberra, Chinook and Puma aircraft was decided at an early stage of the exercise planning. The estimated costs of Exercise Purple Warrior (additional to those which would have been incurred had the exercise not been taking place) are £7.5 million; the costs of exercise activity by individual participating units have not been separately identified. There are no current plans for further out-of-area exercises to be held in the United Kingdom in 1988, although the services will continue to train in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to carry out the full range of their military commitments.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned total number of low-level sorties to be flown by *(a)* fixed-wing jet aircraft, *(b)* fixed-wing transport aircraft and *(c)* helicopters during Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Freeman: The planned maximum numbers of low-level sorties to be flown daily overland during Exercise Purple Warrior are as follows:

	Number
Fixed-wing jet aircraft	about 88
Fixed wing transport aircraft	about 2
Helicopters	about 200

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether fuel allocations for units undertaking training for a NATO role will be increased in the current year to compensate for fuel expended during Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. Exercises such as Purple Warrior are already taken into account when fuel requirements for all units are assessed each year, and allocations are made accordingly.

SCOTLAND

Hospital Services

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of each health board which has contractual arrangements with a private non-National Health Service hospital to provide acute medical services, showing *(a)* the hospital with which a contract is made, *(b)* the number of patients treated by that hospital with which a contract is made, *(b)* the number of patients treated by that hospital during 1986-87, *(c)* the total amount spent by each health board on treatment under the contract during 1986-87 and *(d)* the amount which *(c)* represents as a percentage of the overall health board budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no contractual arrangements in Scotland with private non-National Health Service hospitals to provide acute medical services. There are contractual arrangements with some hospitals to provide beds classified within the acute speciality group but these are generally for convalescent and terminal care only.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of contract agreed by each health board, for the following services: *(a)* ambulances, *(b)* gardening, *(c)* laboratories, *(d)* portering, *(e)* hospital shops, *(f)* window cleaning, *(g)* pharmacy and *(h)* telephones; and if he will give the estimated annual savings in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of all new contracts awarded since 31 December 1986 by each health board for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual savings for each contract awarded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No new contracts have been awarded since 31 December 1986 for catering, laundry or cleaning services. Information on portering and other ancillary work is not held centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each health board for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services, and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Details are given below of the percentage value of domestic and catering services put out to tender and resultant estimated annual savings for those health boards which have let contracts.

	Percentage (by value)		*Estimated annual saving £000s*	
Health board	*Catering*	*Domestic*	*Catering*	*Domestic*
Ayrshire and Arran	2·6	7·3	9	62
Borders	—	26·0	—	55
Fife	0·7	1·1	8	11
Forth Valley	—	1·2	—	9
Lanarkshire	—	10·8	—	30
Tayside	24·1	20·1	136	233

No contracts have been awarded for laundry services.

Sheep and Lambs (Sale Restrictions)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheep and lambs and in what areas of Scotland are still under restriction for sale as a result of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no restrictions on the sale of sheep. However, about 90,000 sheep on and from farms in parts of Dumfries and Galloway, Strathclyde and Central regions are still subject to movement and slaughter restrictions as a result of the Chernobyl incident.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests for the extradition of persons from the Republic of Ireland to Scotland have been made in each of the last five years and the current year to date; of these, how many in each year were for persons alleged to be concerned in terrorist crime; and in each year and category how many of the requests were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available centrally and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost. So far as can be ascertained, during the last five years, one request was made in respect of a person alleged to be concerned in terrorist crime. No requests have been refused during this period.

Hospital Patients

Mr. Wray asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many patients were hospitalised for more than seven days in Scotland for each year since 1975;

(2) how many of the patients hospitalised for more than seven days in Scotland, for each year since 1975 did so under National Health Service provisions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: Detailed information including length of stay is held currently only for NHS hospitals. Corresponding information is not held for private hospitals and nursing homes. Available information relates not to patients but to discharges of patients after seperate episodes of care. The same patient may therefore be counted more than once. The information given relates to the number of discharges of patients after a stay of more than seven days from all NHS hospitals in Scotland in each calendar year. It does not include patients who have spent more than seven days in hospital but who were not discharged within the calendar year. Thus, many long stay patients in geriatric hospitals and mental illness and mental handicap hospitals are excluded.

	Number
1975	311,430
1976	318,021
1977	311,105
1978	297,543
1979	293,205
1980	283,035
1981	290,356
1982	267,699
1983	283,511
1984	283,518
1985[1]	283,654

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[1] Provisional.

Hypothermia

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the percentage in hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1986 over the previous year;

(2) if he will give the percentage in the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Lothian region in each year from 1977 to 1986 over the previous year;

(3) if he will give the percentage change in the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh in each year from 1977 to 1986 over the previous year;

(4) if he will give the percentage change in the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh, South in each year from 1977 to 1987 over the previous year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 October 1987]: The information is as follows:

Deaths mentioning hypothermia: Scotland, Lothian Region and Edinburgh City as a percentage change from the previous year 1978 to 1986

	Scotland Per cent.	*Lothian Per cent.*	*Edinburgh Per cent.*
1978	+30	+8	0
1979	+26	+57	+57
1980	−23	−34	−42
1981	+28	+34	+63
1982	−23	−3	−16
1983	−9	+3	+12
1984	−2	+3	−10
1985	+32	+20	+54
1986	−10	−25	−35

Information is not readily available for Edinburgh, South parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Lothian as a proportion of such deaths in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1986;

(2) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh, South as a proportion of such deaths in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987;

(3) if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Edinburgh as a proportion of such deaths in Scotland in each year from 1977 to 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 October 1987]: The information is as follows:

Deaths mentioning hypothermia: Lothian region and Edinburgh City as a percentage of Scotland 1977 to 1987

	Lothian Per cent.	*Edinburgh Per cent.*
1977	16	13
1978	14	10
1979	17	13
1980	15	10
1981	15	12
1982	19	13
1983	22	16
1984	23	15
1985	21	17
1986	17	12

Information is not readily available for Edinburgh, South parliamentary constituency.

EMPLOYMENT

Agriculture Inspectorate

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment why the number of health and safety inspectors in the agriculture inspectorate has been cut from 200 to 150 in eight years; and how many of them now carry out scheduled inspections.

Mr. Nicholls: In order to contain public sector manpower and spending there have been staff reductions in the Health and Safety Executive, as in the Civil Service as a whole. In HSE this has been accompanied by improvements in efficiency with the use of sound financial management, strategic planning and careful targeting.

On 1 April 1979 there were 189 inspectors in Her Majesty's Agricultural Inspectorate. On 1 October 1987 the total was 154, of whom 142 were in the field.

A recruitment competition for factory and agricultural inspectors has just started.

Agriculture (Pesticides)

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what further resources he has made to the Health and Safety Executive in agriculture to enforce new legislation involving pesticides and their uses.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is meeting its responsibilities for enforcing the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 from within existing staff resources through a rearrangement of priorities. Recruitment to the Agricultural Inspectorate is under way.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the character of allegations made by dismissed former employees to industrial tribunals; and whether he is prepared to consider measures to inhibit the presentation of false allegations.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received representations on this subject from the chairman and chief executive of Britannia Airways.

Industrial tribunals possess wide powers to govern the conduct of the hearings and the submission of evidence. They may require witnesses to give evidence on oath and normally do so. Such evidence is subject to the Perjury Act 1911 and I do not consider that additional powers are needed.

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases of unfair dismissal have been brought by former employees before industrial tribunals in each of the years since 1983; and how many of them have been withdrawn during the proceedings.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of cases heard was as follows:

	Number
January to December 1984	7,578
January to March1985	2,112
April 1985 to March 1986	9,270
April 1986 to March 1987	9,287

Approximately 70 per cent. of all applications registered with the tribunals do not proceed to a hearing. Some are withdrawn and many are settled by ACAS. Precise details on the number of cases withdrawn during proceedings is not available.

Coal Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Cummings asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number and nature of serious injuries in the following coal mines for the last three years; Dawdon Colliery, Murton Colliery, Vane Tempest Colliery and Easington Colliery.

Mr. Nicholls: The actual number of major accidents reported to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Mines and Quarries which occurred at the mines referred to in the question are as follows:

	[1]*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Dowdon	1	6	9
Murton	2	7	13
Vane Tempest/Seaham	—	7	14
Easington	—	8	11

[1] This covers a 15-month period (January 1984 to March 1985) during which time there was a major industrial dispute. It is not comparable with previous calendar year data.

The apparent increase in 1986-87 in the number of major injuries in the industry is mainly accounted for by a change in the reportable injuries under the new Reporting of Injuries Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) which was introduced on 1 April 1986 and widened the coverage of the major injury category. Major injury accident figures from 1986-87 are therefore not comparable with those for earlier years. It is not possible to determine the nature of each reported accident without incurring disproportionate costs.

Community Programme

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and how many women he estimates will lose a place on the community programme following the increase from six months to one year as the unemployment qualifying criterion.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Claimants (Postage)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the estimated savings to his Department from the withdrawal of free pre-addressed postage facilities, formerly given to claimants living six miles or more from their nearest employment office.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The estimated annual savings, for a full year, from postal claimants paying their own postage to submit declarations of unemployment, is calculated at £600,000.

YTS

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he has received a report on the youth training scheme survey carried out by Ken Roberts, head of sociology at Liverpool university; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the findings of the youth training scheme survey carried out by Ken Roberts of Liverpool university on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* We received in 1986 a copy of Mr. Roberts' report entitled "The Changing Structure of Youth Labour Markets". The report was published by our Department in July 1987 in the research paper series.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to commission a survey on how youth training schemes have operated on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* There are a number of surveys and research studies which are carried out by or on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission concerning YTS.

Most of these are national in coverage and provide a range of information designed to improve the operation of YTS in all areas including Merseyside.

There are no YTS studies or surveys currently being conducted which are limited in scope to Merseyside alone.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consult the Manpower Services Commission with a view to increasing the numbers of single sex provision and reserved places on those YTS schemes for young women which currently have a disproportionately low level of women participants.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The Manpower Services Commission encourages YTS managing agents to run either single-sex or reserved place schemes where the law permits. At the end of August 1987, five single-sex and 41 reserved place schemes for young women were running, offering a total of 351 places of which 197 were filled. Other schemes continue to be introduced.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consult the Manpower Services Commission with a view to increasing the number of workmen on civil engineering, mechanical engineering and motor vehicle repair and maintenance YTS schemes.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The Manpower Services Commission is actively seeking to promote more training opportunities for young women in civil engineering, mechanical engineering and motor vehicle repair and maintenance. In December 1986, there were some 650 young women training in these occupational areas in YTS.

Dockers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport (i) if he will list by port the estimated number of dockers employed who are not in the dock labour scheme for each year since 1970 (ii) if he will list by port the number of dockers employed in the dock labour scheme for each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* It is not possible to give the information in the detail requested. Reports on manpower in the United Kingdom ports industry prepared by the British Ports Association and the National Association of Port Employers gave a total of 3,240 non-registered dock workers in the ports industry in March 1983, and 3,893 in March 1986. Earlier information is not available.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* Total expenditure, including production costs by my Department on all newspaper advertising in each of the past five years is set out in the table.

Figures for national newspaper advertising are not separately available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information regarding expenditure with individual newspapers is commercially confidential and cannot be given in the form requested.

Department of Employment

	£
1982-83	356,730
1983-84	497,437
1984-85	7,567
1985-86	55,255
1986-87	3,000,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Oil and Gas

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about prospecting for onshore oil and gas in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: Hydrocarbons within the area of onshore Northern Ireland are vested in the Department of Economic Development which grants licences for onshore oil and gas exploration under the Petroleum Production Act (Northern Ireland) 1964. Currently exploration work is being undertaken under licence in County Antrim near Larne and around the north and south of Lough Neagh under the supervision of two operators, Fynegold Petroleum Ltd. and North West Exploration plc. At present over 1,800 sq km of Northern Ireland is licensed for oil and gas exploration.

In response to an invitation which I issued earlier this year, several applications have been received for fresh licences. I hope to be in a position shortly to make an announcement about new licences once the technical and financial evaluations are completed.

Pathfinder

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the Pathfinder process.

Mr. Viggers: In the last year I have been seeking to stimulate a wide-ranging debate on economic development in Northern Ireland through a project which I have entitled the Pathfinder process. Following detailed consideration by six task forces within Government, on 7 July 1987 I published a discussion document, "Building a Stronger Economy" (copies of which are in the Library), setting out an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the regional economy together with an initial set of recommendations to build on the strengths and remedy the weaknesses. I have subsequently received over 40 responses from representative bodies and individuals, and a series of seminars have been organised throughout the Province to gather additional views. Some initiatives have already been implemented as a result of this process and it is intended to implement further measures as part of this practical approach to strengthening the regional economy.

Primary School Schemes

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is *(a)* the date of final planning permission, *(b)* the proposed date for invitation of tenders, *(c)* the proposed date for commencement of work on site, and *(d)* the proposed date for completion of work, for the two primary school schemes at, respectively *(a)* Ballyharry, Newtownards, and *(b)* Victoria, Ballyhalbert.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is as follows:

Ballyharry Primary School

(a) 11 July 1986.
(b) Tenders were invited on 1 June 1987
(c) Work on site commenced on 29 September 1987
(e) July 1989

Victoria Primary School

(a) Final planning permission was sought by the South Eastern Education and Library Board on 29 September 1987 but has not yet been granted.

(b)-(d) These dates can not be determined until final planning permission is granted by the Department of Environment. However, on 30 September 1987 the Department of Education gave the board approval to invite tenders for the scheme once the final planning permission has been granted.

ACE Scheme

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many posts were funded through the ACE scheme in the years 1981-82, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86. 1986-87, and 1987-88, respectively; and which organisations are presently in receipt of ACE funding.

Mr. Viggers: The number of posts provided since 1981-82 is as follows:

Year	*Average number of posts*
1981-82	430
1982-83	1,270
1983-84	2,529
1984-85	3,080
1985-86	3,890
1986-87	6,150
1987-88	[1]6,200

[1] Projected.

At 25 September there were 377 ACE projects. A list of all the organisations sponsoring these projects is available in the Library.

Mr. Jim Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which organisations in which geographical locations, have been informed of the withdrawal of ACE funding or of a decision not to renew ACE funding in the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Viggers: In the years 1985-86, 1986-87, and 1987-88 (as at 25 September 1987) funding was withdrawn or not renewed in respect of a total of 401 ACE projects. The following table gives information on a geographical basis.

Travel-to-work area	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Antrim	1	9	2
Armagh	—	1	6
Ballymena	—	9	3
Ballymoney	1	5	4
Ballynahiach	—	3	3
Banbridge	—	3	4
Bangor	—	3	4
Belfast	9	49	48
Carrickfergus	1	4	2
Coleraine	—	2	3
Cookstown	—	1	1
Craigavon	—	8	9
Downpatrick	—	6	10
Dungannon	1	2	3
Fermanagh	5	20	12
Larne	—	2	1
Limavady	2	3	3
Lisburn	—	8	4
Londonderry	5	19	13
Magherafelt	—	4	3
Newcastle	—	—	3
Newry	—	7	11
Newtownabbey	—	8	5
Newtownards	—	3	2
Omagh	4	11	6
Strabane	6	9	2
Totals	35	199	167

A full list of the projects and the sponsors concerned has been placed in the Library. It should be noted that in the majority of these cases ACE funding was not renewed because the projects concerned did not meet the priority criteria for retention in the ACE programme which are:

(i) location in a geographical area where ACE provision is under-target

(ii) projects having the capacity to improve the economy in some way, for example, creation of permanent jobs or self employment

(iii) projects which provide services for disadvantaged groups

(iv) projects which provide opportunities mainly for the "unskilled" and "low achievers" within the long term unemployed grouping.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail how much of the £68 million subsidy announced in May 1987 for Harland and Wolff will cover redundancy payments; and what part of this sum will go on the current investment programme.

Mr. Viggers: Harland and Wolff's external financing limit of £68 million was announced on 25 November 1986. During 1986-87 the company incurred £7 million on redundancies and £2·8 million on capital investment. These are unaudited figures. The company's report and accounts will be laid in the House of Commons Library as soon as they become available.

Strangford-Portaferry Ferry

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many days the Strangford-Portaferry ferry operated up until 31 March; how many days it has operated since 1 April; what are the running costs of this ferry; and what are the long term plans for the Strangford-Portaferry ferry service.

Mr. Needham: The combined passenger and vehicle ferry service operated on 349 days out of a possible 364 days during the period 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987 and on 209 days out of a possible 209 days during the period 1 April 1987 to 24 October 1987.

The net running costs (running costs less receipts from tolls) in the financial year 1986-87 were £185,000.

Currently there are no plans for major operational changes in the long term. The Department's aim is to provide an efficient and reliable service.

Roads

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many roads were adopted by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland during 1986-87 in the following district council areas (i) Down district (all), (ii) Newry and Mourne (all County Down) and (iii) Banbridge (in the electoral wards of Bannside, Katesbridge, Dromore South, Dromore North, Quilly, Garran and Croob): and what is the policy about the adoption of roads.

Mr. Needham: The figures for the areas referred to are:

	Number
Down	22
Newry and Mourne	8
Banbridge	2

The Department's policy on the adoption of roads stems from the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980. Where the development of land for which planning permission is needed requires the construction of streets, the Department determines the width, position and arrangement of the streets. When such streets are completed in accordance with the determined layout and to the prescribed standards they are adopted by the Department after a 12-month maintenance period.

Evacuated Dwellings (Purchase Scheme)

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many SPED applications were made in 1986-87 in the areas covered by the following district offices; Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district (1) and Newry district (2) and, of applications made, how many people were rehoused (i) within the district area and (ii) outside the district area in 1986-87.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that during 1986-87, the following numbers of applications under the scheme for the purchase of evacuated dwellings were received in these district office areas:

	Number
Downpatrick	8
Kilkeel	3
Banbridge	1
Newry District (1)	0
Newry District (2)	0

Applicants usually decide to purchase other dwellings in the private sector rather than request rehousing by the Housing Executive. Records are not kept of their new addresses.

Housing

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the Housing Executive policy on the fencing of old people's dwellings in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry District 2.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has advised me that fencing is provided where it is required on welfare grounds or where a danger exists or as part of an environmental improvement scheme for a particular area.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what programme the Housing Executive intends to implement to deal with rural unfitness in Northern Ireland; and, of the current stock, how many houses in the areas covered by the following offices are unfit in rural areas; Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that the executive has a range of programmes aimed at reducing unfitness generally. These include public sector replacement building where need is justified and support to the private sector through the renovation grants scheme.

In 1986 the executive relaxed the demolition guidelines to enable more rural unfit dwellings to qualify for grant aid and also introduced wind and weather-proofing grants for those unfit rural properties which still do not qualify for normal renovation grants on account of their structural condition.

Arising from the Roslea study which was published earlier this year, a copy of which is available in the Library, the executive has set up a rural action team in West Fermanagh. This provides technical and financial advice to private owners seeking to repair and improve their houses as well as the usual grants service.

The Housing Executive has no unfit dwellings in the specific areas.

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Housing Executive houses have been sold in 1986-87 in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chairman that the number of houses sold in these areas in 1986-87 was:

	Number
Downpatrick	117
Kilkeel	47
Banbridge	51
Newry 1	102
Newry 2	131

Improvements

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been allocated to private sector grant improvements in the areas covered by the following offices during 1987-88: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2; how this compares with the past five years; how many applications have been made to the Lisburn and Newry grant offices of the Housing Executive in 1986-87; of applications made, how many have been approved for grant-aid at the Lisburn and Newry grant offices of the Housing Executive; as a result of refusals, how many appeals have been made to the Commissioner of Complaints; and if he is satisfied that the applicants are aware of their rights.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by the chairman of the executive that separate allocations are not made to individual districts for improvement grants. However, the executive estimates that the total amount of money allocated during 1987-88 to the areas covered by the Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2 offices is at present, £5·1 million. Grants expenditure is demand-led and the money allocated may vary, dependent on the level of demand. Expenditure during the past five years is estimated as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	3·23
1983-84	4·418
1984-85	5·692
1985-86	5·869
1986-87	5·559

The total number of preliminary grant applications made to the Lisburn grants office and to the Newry grants office of the Housing Executive during 1986-87 and the total number of approvals made during the year are as follows:

	Preliminary applications Received	*Approvals made during 1986-87*
Lisburn	1,445	907
Newry	1,528	1,029

It is not possible to provide the number of approvals specifically related to the preliminary applications received. The time taken for inspection, and the receipt of all the necessary documents for approvals to be issued may be carried into the following year.

During 1986-87 there were no appeals to the Commissioner for Complaints concerning grant applications in the Lisburn or Newry grants offices. People whose applications are turned down are notified of the reasons for the executive's decision and that they have a right of appeal. On the basis of the use made of its complaints procedure and advice from members of its staff the Housing Executive is satisfied that applicants are aware of their rights.

Pupils (Statistics)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each primary school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh; and how many pupils there are at each secondary and grammar school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh, on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment at January 1987
Primary schools	
Annaghmore	90
College Lands	37
Tullyroan	37
Loughgall	50
St. Jarlath's Blackwaterstown	199
St. Oliver Plunkett, Loughgall	71
Tullymore	71
Kinnego	29
The Cope	91
Drumsallen	38
Salter's Grange	16
St. Colmcille's	34
Tullysarran	60
Hardy Memorial	446
Derryhale	84
Mullavilly	58
Cabra	45
St. Patrick's, Armagh	460
St. James', Tandragee	75
Mount St. Catherine's, Armagh	463
St. Malachy's Boys', Armagh	189
Killylea	75
Ahorey	38
Tandragee	358
Armstrong	444
Christian Bros', Armagh	476
Hamiltonsbawn, Armagh	93
Lislea	18
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass	88
Middletown	47
Clonalig	168
Drelincourt	39
St. Louis' Convent, Middletown	39
St. Joseph's, Armagh	116
St. Michael's, Clady	39
St. Mary's, Granemore	55
St. Mary's Boys', Keady	256
Glassdrummond	59
St. Clare's Convent, Keady	293
Tynan	26
Clare	65
St. James', Markethill	52
Callone	107
Aghavilly	81
Tullyherron	47
Lissummon	51
St. Mary's (Barr)	62
St. Mochua's, Derrynoose	79

	Enrolment at January 1987
St. Malachy's, Whitecross	86
Clay	54
Lisnadill	50
Poyntz Pass	76
Markethill	171
Foley	83
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook	369
St. Brigid's, Drumilly	86
St. Michael's, Newtownhamilton	90
St. Lawrence's, Belleeks	51
St. Peter's, Cloughreagh	293
St. Patrick's, Newry	357
St. Malachy's, Camlough	288
St. Malachy's, Carnagat	327
Drumhillery	93
Keady	66
Cladymore	64
Mountnorris	107
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	702
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	455
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry	816
Carrickrovaddy	37
Cloughoge	325
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna	267
St. Joseph's, Killeavy	165
Lisdrumcor	26
Darkley	75
Killeen	104
Kingsmills	31
Mullaghglass	62
Anamar	71
St. Mary's, Mullaghbawn	229
Dromintee	128
Jonesboro'	136
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen	357
Bessbrook	119
Newtownhamilton	90
Cortamlet, Newry	47
Newry Model	67
St. Oliver Plunkett, Forkhill	71
St. Brigid's, Crossmaglen	51
Ballynaclosha	74
Windsor Hill	244
Secondary and grammar	
Newtownhamilton	108
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	846
St. Brigid's Boys', Armagh	307
St. Paul's, Bessbrook	1,272
Tandragee Junior High	282
Markethill Junior High	420
Armagh Secondary	665
St. Joseph's, Crossmaglen	569
St. Joseph's, Newry	552
St. Mary's Girls', Newry	615
St. Patrick's, Keady	817
Newry High	639
St. Patrick's College, Armagh	374
Christian Brothers', Armagh	356
St. Colman's College, Newry	753
Our Lady's Grammar, Newry	735
Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	738
Abbey Grammar, Newry	702
Armagh Royal	622

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each primary school in the constituency of Strangford, and how many pupils there are at each secondary and grammar school in the constituency of Strangford, on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	Enrolment at January 1987
Primary schools	
Portaferry	45
Kirkistown	59
Portavogie	137
Ballyeasboro	51
Victoria, Ballyhalbert	67
St. Mary's Girls, Portaferry	354
St. Patrick's, Ballygalget	93
Kircubbin	49
St. Mary's Kircubbin	223
Ballywalter	140
Greyabbey	66
Carrowdore	168
Millisle	198
Ballyvester	77
Donaghadee	350
Cottown	38
St,. Anne's, Donaghadee	53
St. Finian's, Newtownards	218
Londonderry	245
Victoria, Newtownards	766
Newtownards Model	448
Castle Gardens	630
West Winds	289
St. Mary's, Comber	30
Comber	513
Andrews Memorial	519
Ballykeigle	49
Killinchy	227
St. Mary's, Ballygowan	68
Leadhill	195
Braniel	324
Belvoir Park	321
Cairnshill	345
O'Neill Memorial	53
Moneyrea	139
Newtownbreda	280
Carrickmannon	69
Loughries	62
Alexander Dickson	178
Secondary and Grammar schools	
Movilla High	734
Donaghadee High	365
Comber High	659
Glastry High	487
Scrabo High	516
Newtonbreda High	792
St. Columba High, Portaferry	406
Lagan College	455
Regent House	1,528

Community Relations

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why a central community relations unit has been set up; what is the expected cost to public funds; and which quangos have been *(a)* abolished and *(b)* set up, in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State established this unit because he wants to ensure that at the very centre of the decision-making process in Northern Ireland, crucial community relations issues, in their widest sense, are given the fullest possible consideration.

The unit is staffed by civil servants and has available the services of an independent academic adviser on a part-time basis. The cost, inclusive of salaries, services and accommodation, is estimated at £26,000 for this financial year and £50,000 in 1988-89.

In the last five years the Government has not established or abolished any bodies dealing with community relations work.

Bilingual Boundary Signs

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which district councils have erected, or intend to erect, bilingual boundary signs.

Mr. Needham: Fermanagh district council has erected some bilingual boundary signs at various border crossings from the Irish Republic.

Newry and Mourne district council has applied for consent to erect a bilingual boundary sign on the main Newry to Dublin road, again at the border.

Belfast Action Team

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made by the Belfast action team.

Mr. Needham: Two Belfast action teams have now been in position since 1 April 1987. The teams cover the Lower Shankill-Lower Falls and New Lodge-Duncairn areas of the inner city and are representative of Government Departments and other statutory agencies.

The teams have been examining at local level the multiple social and economic problems in both areas and, in close co-operation with the respective local communities and voluntary agencies, have been working up plans to tackle the problems involved.

I am satisfied with the progress that has been achieved so far by both teams and will be considering in the near future an extension of the action team concept to include other areas of the city.

New Building

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give figures on the budgetary allocation to new build projects in the ares covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is primarily a matter for the Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that in the 1987-88 financial year the Housing Executive's budgetary allocation to new house building projects in these areas is as follows:

	£
Downpatrick Office	634,000
Kilkeel Office	8,000
Banbridge Office	736,000
Newry No. 1 Office	307,000
Newry No. 2 Office	462,000

Local Enterprise Development Unit

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about co-operation between the local enterprise development unit and other agencies in the Province with institutions in Portugal.

Mr. Viggers: The local enterprise development unit has been invited to provide consultancy advice, on a strict commercial basis, to IAPME—Portugal's Institute for Professional and Employment Training—in relation to the establishment of Portugal's first enterprise centre on the model of Northern Ireland's local enterprise centres. I also understand that a declaration of co-operation has been signed between the Newry and Mourne enterprise agency and UNINORTE—a federation of co-operative organisations in Portugal — and that the Northern Ireland small business institute is discussing the provision of enterprise training to Portuguese managers.

Education Reform

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the national curriculum for education will be introduced in Northern Ireland and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are committed to raising educational standards throughout the United Kingdom. I am considering how arrangements similar to those proposed for England and Wales could best be applied in Northern Ireland. I shall be consulting with education interests before decisions are taken.

Storm Damage

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to ensure that land flooded due to the flood banks of the river Roe breaking can be cleared of the floodwaters within 24 hours.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* It is not feasible to plan to clear water from land flooded as a result of breaching of the River Roe floodbanks within 24 hours.

Homelessness

Mr. McGrady asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when his Department's legislation on homelessness will be published in draft form; how long will be allowed for consultation and who will be involved or invited to participate in that consultation process; and what extra funds will be allocated to carry out the functions required under the proposed legislation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland intends to publish a draft Housing (NI) Order containing provisions on homelessness in early 1988; the normal six-week period will be allowed for consultation. The draft order will be widely circulated to statutory and voluntary agencies in Northern Ireland. Funds for the implementation of the functions required under the proposed legislation will be allocated in the usual way via the annual public expenditure survey.

Stranmillis College

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why he has instructed Stranmillis teacher training colleges to sell their sports pavilion and playing fields at Shaws bridge, Belfast; what alternative sports facilities will be available to Stranmillis college; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* Because of reduced enrolments in teacher training over the last 10 years, there has been a significant reduction is usage by Stranmillis college of this sports complex. The Department of Education, therefore, could no longer justify the cost of maintaining this provision. However, funds have been made available to improve the outdoor sports facilities on the main college campus and, in addition, neighbouring facilities, such as those at Queens' university can be hired.

Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by his Department on advertising in national newspapers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by newspaper titles.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* The information requested in respect of advertising placed by Northern Ireland Government Departments in national newspapers is as follows.

Northern Ireland government department	*National newspaper*	*Subject*	*Number of advertisements*	*Cost £*
1982-83				
Department of Agriculture	The Daily Telegraph	Tenders for fertilisers	1	574·00
Department of Agriculture	The Scotsman	Tenders for fertilisers	1	61·95
Total				635·95
1983-84				
Industrial Development Board	Financial Times	Promotion of inward investment	9	46,500·00
Department of Agriculture	The Daily Telegraph	Tenders for fertilisers	1	450·00
Department of Agriculture	The Scotsman	Tenders for fertilisers	1	92·00
Total				47,042·00
1984-85				
Industrial Development Board	Financial Times	Promotion of inward investment	25	107,500·00
Department of Economic Development	Financial Times	Lignite and petroleum exploration	2	1,898·00
Department of Economic Development	The Times	Lignite and petroleum exploration	1	780·00
Department of Economic Development	The Guardian	Lignite and petroleum exploration	1	735·00
Department of Economic Development	The Daily Telegraph	Lignite and petroleum exploration	1	960·00
Total				111,873·00
1985-86				
Industrial Development Board	Financial Times	Promotion of inward investment	21	56,000·00
Industrial Development Board	The Times	Promotion of inward investment	1	9,000·00
Total				9,000·00
1986-87				
Industrial Development Board	Financial Times	Promotion of inward investment	1	9,000·00
Industrial Development Board	The Times	Promotion of inward investment	2	6,300·00
Department of Agriculture	The Daily Telegraph	Tenders for fertilisers	1	563·00
Total				15,863·00
Grand total for five years from 1982-83—1986-87				240,413·00

Salmon

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the numbers of fish, and the percentage of the total stock of salmon bound for the Foyle system taken by commercial nets inside the sea areas under the control of the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate of the numbers and percentage taken outside United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* It is not possible to make a realistic estimate of the number of Foyle salmon which are taken inside or outside United Kingdom waters.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for as many years as possible the *(a)* rod catch and *(b)* the commercial nets catch of salmon in the Foyle fisheries area and in the river Roe since the Foyle Fisheries Commission was created.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The information requested for the years 1985 and 1986 is as follows. The information for previous years is given in the annual reports of the Foyle Fisheries Commission, which are laid before Parliament.

	1985	*1986*
Reported rod catch	1,814	1,172
Total commercial catch	40,521	46,354
River Roe commercial catch	1,145	1,354

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for the use of the new prison at Maghaberry, County Antrim, Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: There are two prisons on the same site at Maghaberry, one for men and one for women. The women's prison has been fully operational since March 1986 and holds all the female prisoners in Northern Ireland. The male prison holds only a few prisoners at present, but it is planned gradually to increase its population in the near future. It will be used to house a range of short and long-term prisoners.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 121

SESSION 1987–88

26th October–6th November 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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